

THE GIRL WHO GAVE UP LUXURY — ONE OF THE 7 FINE STORIES INSIDE

GIRLS' CRYSTAL WEEKLY

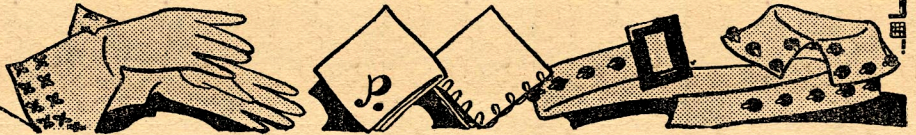
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*The
Mystery of the
Talking Statue*



PENELOPE'S PAGE OF NOVELTY NOTIONS



HELLO, EVERYBODY!—Guess who this is? Penelope, did you say? Full marks! You may all go to the top of the class, or clean the board for teacher, for being such clever girls!

Yes, here I am again, and I've quite recovered from my attack of tishoes and snuffles and groaning and moaning, thank you all who've been sweet enough to be concerned.

And it's just as well, considering Easter is so close. For you know how I hate to miss any fun that's going—or coming.

I've planned an Easter surprise or two for the family—chief among which is a new hat for the dear daughter of the house. It'll certainly startle them—though whether with pleasure, or into a state of collapse I don't know yet.

Mother will probably say: "Well, it's certainly unusual, dear. But isn't it a little—well—different?" To which I shall brightly say: "Of course, darling! That's just what I wanted you to say."

Father will pretend not even to have noticed it until mother's finished, then he'll growl: "Looks all right to me. Hats aren't meant to be sensible, anyway."

He really is the most angelic person. Dear brother mine will ignore it until he can think of what he considers a cutting remark, and then get it out before he has time to forget it again: "Don't see what's wrong with a lampshade—if you're so keen to make yourself look a sight!"

Whereupon I shall be perfectly happy, knowing that it's a success.

I shall kiss mother, pat father, and ignore Brian—my brother—unless by that time I'm able to work out a bright retort to squash him.

You see, if mother had said it was becoming or very suitable, I should have worried, thinking I looked like something from a sewing-bee—rather dowdy.

If Brian had said it was rather sensible, in fact, not at all bad, I should have known that Janet—the girl of his latest and fickle dreams—had one just like it!

And that would hardly do for your little Penelope, now would it?

But, blessed them, they'll all love it once they're used to it!

The other surprises—the real ones this time!—are some covers in knitting for father's golf clubs. Some dinner mats, embroidered by my own fair hands for mother; a sweater trimmed with his college colours for Brian.

Oh, Kathleen, my young cousin, had a marvellous time at the wedding at which she was bridesmaid! She had such good things to eat she actually said "no, thank you" to a chocolate éclair!



And the bridegroom presented her and the other bridesmaids with a perfectly ducky little pocket comb with a silver back, and in a silver case.

Jolly nice, don't you think?

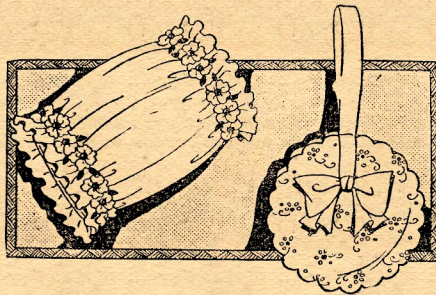
Anyhow, all this reminds me that many of you will possibly be attending weddings at this time of the year. Even if you yourself are not, I'm sure you know others who are.

So I thought me of some very pretty-to-look-at notions for bridesmaids that are as easy to make as they are winsome to wear.

First, ladies and bridesmaids, what about a cape? One yard of material only will be required, the daintier the better, so we'll rule out serges, gabardines, and sailcloth this time.

Cut a 27-inch circle and make a hole in the centre for the neck, and cut right down the front.

From the oddments of material, cut strips measuring $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches. Frill these around the cape,



and fasten it at the throat with a posy of artificial flowers.

Yes, it's as easy as that!

To complete this picture of delight, wear a wreath of tiny flowers around your hat—and this hat, pets, can be made by cutting the brim and part of the crown from any old straw one you have.

Carry a Victorian posy of artificial flowers in one dainty hand, and the wedding will be the success of the season!

Did I hear one of you say you wanted to know what that hat was like I made such a song and dance about earlier on?

I forgot—and fancy me forgetting! It's definitely Chinese-ish. Rather like a coolie hat, in brown straw, and it goes divinely with my almost-new, mustard coloured frock that has the tiniest suspicion of an Elizabethan ruffle round the neck.

Is your macintosh one of those that's always getting caught in one's things, making a very geometrical tear just where it's likely to be most conspicuous?

Well, don't despair next time this happens, and mother is sure to be cross at such carelessness.

Tell her how sorry you are, and that you won't do it again, and you did, honestly, try to take care of it, for you do know macintoshes aren't picked up in the street—and that you can mend it!

Mind you, I'm not magic, and so can't promise the tear will be completely invisible for the rest

of time. But it certainly won't show unless you look for it.

Buy a threepenny reel of adhesive tape—the surgical type for preference, from any chemist. Warm this by holding it in front of the fire for a few seconds, and then place it—sticky side down, I need hardly add—along the tear, so that both sides of the slit are kept close together.

And if you're one of those walkers who tends to kick the mud up—like I am—remember that there's nothing like a damp sponge with a suspicion of soap on it for removing said condition from macintoshes.

But back to the wedding. What shall the bridesmaids carry? Flowers? Or—what about dainty bags? Good idea! So here are two really charming ones.

The muff-bag is made from a strip of material measuring 9 inches by 36. It should be lined, and a little pocket sewn inside to hold hankie in case of tears or tickly noses.

A gather thread run along each edge and trimmed with flowers will look perfect.

The second bag is a round one—as you can see. Two 10-inch circles of material will make this.

Scallop the edges prettily and sew the edges together for half way round the circle—or for 90 degrees if you maths' experts prefer it.

A yard of silk or velvet ribbon will make a very pretty long handle to slip over your arm. The bow is for decoration and—sh!—to conceal the press-stud that fastens the bag.

Just two head-trimmings now for those who find these things a problem, though a delightful one.

A yard of velvet ribbon brought around the head, tying at the back, suits everyone. But wait until you've sewn a posy of flowers—artificial again—at the front!

You'll wish every day was a wedding day then! Decorated straw bonnet hats are terribly dear to buy, but a plain one's quite cheap to decorate yourself.

A wreath of gay flowers and a piece of ribbon will do all that's required—especially if you make the ribbon into a bow and leave the long ends hanging down your back.

I suppose you'll be breaking up from school on Wednesday or so this week. Goody, goody!

So just to celebrate, the GIRLS' CRYSTAL will be on sale on Thursday instead of Friday.

A whole day earlier than usual, and your Editor says you'll be wise to order yours in advance, especially as it's holiday time.

But that reminds me—I must fly and get his tea. See you here next THURSDAY.

PENELOPE.

P.S.—In case you were interested about my photo—you'll remember I told you I was having one done?—it hasn't come out at all badly. Perhaps I'd like it to flatter me a little more, but that's just my vanity, which shouldn't be encouraged now, should it?



The MYSTERY of the TALKING STATUE

Written by PETER LANGLEY



SCARED BY THE STONE MONK

"HALLO!" ejaculated Noel Raymond, the young detective, swiftly applying his brakes as his car sped along the lonely cliff road. "What's the trouble here?"

He referred to two figures who were racing to meet him, both of them excitedly pointing backwards.

"Girl hikers," murmured Noel, with a glance at their trim, boyish attire—khaki shorts and blouses. "Wonder what's happened?"

The two girls came racing up breathlessly, their cheeks flushed, their eyes alight with excitement. One was fair, pretty, and vivacious, the other dark and attractive in a quieter way.

But both were evidently agog with some thrilling news that they were unable to keep to themselves.

Almost before she reached the car the fair girl was speaking breathlessly.

"It spoke!" she declared. "And its eyes moved!"

Noel raised his eyebrows, smiling quizzically as he leaned out of the car. He was used to surprising pieces of information from complete strangers—but he had never encountered anything quite like this!

The young detective was taking a brief holiday after a particularly trying case, and his time was his own. These jolly girls, with their informal way of introducing themselves, interested him.

"What spoke?" he asked, smiling. "Suppose you start at the beginning?"

"Of course!" put in the dark girl, with a rather apologetic laugh. "We oughtn't to spring things on you like this! You don't even know who we are. I'm Audrey Tarrant, and this is my chum, Joan Lester. We're Londoners really, but we're on holiday here—"

"And we've just seen the most amazing thing ever!" put in fair-haired Joan Lester breathlessly. "You'll never believe us when we tell you—but it's as true as I stand here!" "I'm sure it is," said Noel, grinning. "But just what is this amazing thing that I'll never believe?"

"Let me tell you," put in Audrey. "Joan's so impulsive, and she gets things mixed up—"

"Oh, I don't!" protested Joan. "And it did speak—"

"The statue," explained Audrey, and pointed to where in the distance could be seen the gigantic stone figure of a cowed monk standing on the edge of the cliff.

Noel stared across at the statue, then smiled.

"What's the matter with the old statue?" he asked. "It's supposed to have been erected by the monks of Eldon Abbey as a landmark to ships at sea. But what do you mean when you say that it spoke—"

"It did speak!" declared Joan breathlessly. "And it moved its eyes! Audrey and I were standing close to it and we saw it, and heard it—didn't we, Audrey?"

The dark girl nodded, glancing at Noel apologetically.

"I know it sounds impossible," she said, "but we're not pulling your leg—honestly! Joan and I were picnicking there, just under the statue. Suddenly we heard a gruff sort of shout—it seemed to come from the statue's lips—and when we looked up we saw its eyes moving, watching us!"

Her companion shivered.

"We didn't wait to see any more," she put in naively. "We just dropped our sandwiches and things—and ran. Please," she added, raising her vivacious face appealingly, "will you come back with us while we fetch our things? We're not scared exactly, but—well, what would you think if a great stone statue suddenly spoke to you?"

The Cowed Monk that Scared the Girl Hikers—What Was its Secret? That is the Problem that Noel Raymond Sets Out to Solve This Week

Noel hastily bit back a smile; these girls were in real earnest in spite their rather naive manner of telling their story. Could there possibly be anything in their amazing tale, or were they suffering from some curious hallucination?

"Right-ho!" he said. "We'll go and have a close look at this surprising statue of yours. As a matter of fact," he added, his eyes twinkling, "I happen to be a detective."

The statement was greeted by two excited gasps.

"A detective?" breathed Audrey Tarrant, her eyes widening.

"I say, how perfectly thrilling!" exclaimed the irrepressible Joan, her eyes dancing. "Just think, Audrey, we stopped a real, live detective—and we didn't know it!"

Audrey laughed. She was obviously as thrilled as her chum. Together all three walked across the grassland to where the massive statue stood, gaunt and lonely on its pedestal at the cliff's edge.

"Just whereabouts were you picnicking?" Noel asked.

"Over there, on the other side of the statue," whispered Joan, pointing. "Our—our things are still there."

"Then we'd better collect 'em!" remarked Noel. "Come along!"

The girls kept close beside him as they rounded the massive statue. Noel glanced at it with interest; he had noticed it from the distance on one or two occasions, but this was his first close view of it.

It was a huge figure, grey and weather-beaten. A gaunt, monkish figure in cowl and robes, with stern features gazing sightlessly out to sea.

The old-time sculptor had imbued it with an almost sinister implication of latent power; its gigantic shadow, flung across the grass by the setting sun, seemed almost the shadow of a living thing.

Noel stared up at the figure's face, shadowed by its hood. Its features were carved in an expression of stern repose, its eyes were hollow, sightless.

"Well?" he asked, smiling at his two breathless companions.

The two girls stared fearfully at the giant statue, and both looked bewildered, a trifle abashed.

"It looks different now," whispered Audrey, flushing. "Oh, I know you'll think we're a couple of scaremongers, but, unless we were dreaming, it happened just as we told you!"

Her tone was earnest, distressed. Joan nodded vigorously in confirmation.

The young detective was perplexed. The girls were evidently convinced, and nothing he could say would shake their curious impression.

"Where exactly were you sitting?" he asked.

"Over there, by that bush," breathed Audrey. "We'd just finished our tea and were sitting in the shade, talking. I had my back to the statue, and Joan was facing me. Suddenly she gave a scream and pointed. I looked round—and saw the statue staring at us. It—it had horrible eyes. Joan swore that it spoke—"

"It did!" gasped Joan. "I heard it!"

Without a word, Noel crossed to the spot where the girls had been picnicking, and, sitting down on the grass, glancing up quickly at the statue.

The gaunt, carved features were in partial shadow; it seemed scarcely possible that the girls could have been tricked by the sunlight.

The young detective was loth to dismiss their story as fanciful until he had proved its impossibility—to his own satisfaction and to theirs.

While the two girls looked on with bated interest, he climbed on to the massive stone pedestal, and inserting one foot in a fold of the monk's robe, drew himself up on a level with the figure's face.

The eyes were solid stone, carved like the rest of the features; the hard, rather cruel-looking mouth could never have moved.

With a shrug, Noel prepared to descend—when abruptly he stiffened, his attention riveted by a piece chipped out of the stone face, high on the cheek-bones.

The chipping had been freshly done.

The young detective whistled softly, his pulses throbbing with sudden excitement. From his pocket he took a small, powerful glass, and scrutinised the carved features more closely.

Now he found other marks—scratches and small chips, barely visible to the naked eye—and quite invisible from a distance.

Noel's eyes glinted. These were no mere accidental marks caused by the weather; they had been made by some sharp instrument—and with a purpose.

All at once the amazing story of the two girl hikers took on a different complexion. Noel was convinced that their tale—incredible though it seemed—had some basis of truth.

A curious idea took possession of the young detective's mind. Turning his head, he attempted to place himself in the position of the statue—his eyes following the direction of its sightless gaze.

He found that, on one side, he had a magnificent view of the sea and foreshore—while on the other he could see a winding path leading down the face of the cliff.

Conscious of a thrill of boyish excitement, Noel climbed down from the statue and joined the two girls.

"Well?" they demanded breathlessly in chorus.

The young detective smiled gravely.

"I'll admit," he said, "that I was a bit doubtful about your story at first. But—well, now I'm not so sure. Are you game for a bit of detective work?"

"Are we!" came the delighted chorus.

"Mind," added Noel, smiling at their enthusiasm, "I don't say that we'll find anything—but we might. There's something queer about this statue business, and we're going to get to the bottom of it. We'll try the cliff path for a start."

"Why?" asked the fair-haired Joan promptly.

"Because," said Noel, "it's not visible from here—but it's visible from the eyes of the statue. A small point, but it's worth following."

Followed by his two excited companions, he led the way to the edge of the cliff.

The winding path leading down to the shore was now visible; a narrow, chalk path, overgrown by weeds, it was obviously rarely used by sightseers.

Noel's keen eyes were scanning the ground—and suddenly he bent down, picking up something that lay in the middle of the path.

"Clue number one," he murmured, with a flicker of a smile.

"A clue?" echoed Joan in thrilled tones. "Oh, do let us see!"

Smiling quizzically, the young detective opened his hand. Joan's face fell.

"Only a piece of twig!" she exclaimed.

"Only a piece of twig," agreed Noel dryly. "But it tells us something."

Audrey looked at him inquiringly. Noel explained.

"Someone has used this path this afternoon," he said. "You'll see that the twig is freshly broken—and there's mud on it."

"But why this afternoon?" countered Joan swiftly. "Why not this morning—or yesterday?"

"Because," said Noel gravely, "it rained heavily this morning, and the mud would have been washed off."

The girls looked impressed.

"Goodness," breathed Audrey, "I'd never have thought of that."

"I'm sure detecting must be quite easy, when you know how," laughed Joan. "I'm going to find the next clue!"

She hurried ahead impulsively. Noel, smiling faintly, followed with the dark-haired Audrey.

He was beginning to enjoy himself almost as much as his young companions. Then suddenly both he and Audrey pulled up in startled surprise.

Above the distant moan of the sea had come a girl's terrified scream.

"That's Joan!" gasped Audrey, her face suddenly pallid as she clutched at Noel's arm. "Something—something's happened!"

The young detective's face hardened as he broke into a run.

The pleasant adventure had taken a sudden, grimly unexpected turn.

He blamed himself bitterly for having allowed the girl to go on ahead; but not for a moment had he taken the investigation seriously.

As he raced round the corner, with Audrey close at his heels, he came to an abrupt halt.

"Well, I'll be jiggered!" he remarked tersely.

A little cry of relief escaped Audrey's lips.

"Joan!" she exclaimed.

For her fair-haired chum was standing on the beach, waving to them excitedly.

In another moment they were at her side.

"Why did you scream?" demanded Noel.

Joan stared, her eyes widening.

"I? I didn't scream. I thought it was a gull. But look what I've found! Footprints!"

Without a word, Noel dropped to his knees, staring at the clearly marked impression on the firm sand.

He knew that that cry had not been made by a gull—it had been a human cry—a girl's cry of fear!

But Joan declared that she had not screamed—and the young detective was convinced that she was speaking the truth.

The footprints in the sand told a strange tale.

His face rather grim, he rose to his feet, brushing the sand from his trousers.

"I know what you're going to say!" exclaimed Joan eagerly. "There are two sets of footprints—pointing in different directions!"

"What do you deduce from that?" asked Noel gravely, as he led the way towards the cliff.

"A man wearing heavy boots went towards the cliff and—came back again," concluded Joan rather lamely.

"But the footprints aren't the same size!" pointed out Audrey. "One man went towards the cliff—and another man came to meet him."

Both girls turned eagerly to Noel.

"Which of us is right?" demanded Joan laughing.

The young detective did not reply at once; his grave manner contrasted strangely with the light-hearted attitude of the two girls.

He stared at the footprints more closely, a grim suspicion taking root in his mind.

Try as he would, he could not dismiss the sinister implication of that trail.

With sudden determination he turned to his two companions.

"Look here," he said earnestly, "there's more behind this affair than we imagine. I'd like you to wait here for me while I scout round."

"Oh, but why?" protested Joan, pouting.

The young detective's face was grave.

"I'll be able to tell you more in a few minutes," he replied. "You'll please wait here—if you value your safety."

Audrey's face grew pale; Joan's eyes widened in bewilderment. But the young detective was obviously not joking; the ring of command in his voice could not be ignored.

Noel followed the double trail of footprints to the beetling cliff and into a shallow cave, where they ceased abruptly.

The young detective was baffled, but more uneasy than ever. He hurried out of the cave and rejoined the two girls.

"Well?" they demanded.

"Those footprints," said Noel gravely, "were made by two men—one of them walking backwards. They were carrying something between them—something fairly heavy. They entered that cave—and did not come out!"

"But why? How?" gasped Joan.

"That," said Noel, "is what I'm out to discover."

Audrey caught in her breath sharply, plucking him by the sleeve.

"What—what do you suppose they were carrying?" she breathed.

Noel looked steadily from one to the other before replying.

"I think," he said, "that they were carrying a prisoner—the girl whose scream we just heard."

THE SECRET TUNNEL

A STARTLED silence followed Noel's words; the two girls exchanged horrified glances.

Their lighthearted investigation had taken on a sudden tragic significance.

"Oh, no!" gasped Joan, her voice tremulous. "You must be mistaken—you must!"

"I hope I am," said Noel; "but, in any case, this is no affair for you girls. You've done your part in leading me on the trail; you can't do more. I'll have to push on with this on my own."

Joan tossed her head rebelliously.

"I'm not going back!" she declared. "I'll wait here! Audrey and I are quite capable of looking after ourselves. Besides, I want to know what the statue of the monk has got to do with all this."

"Joan!" said Audrey remonstratingly.

Noel smiled grimly.

"I think the monk has got quite a lot to do with it," he said; "more than is apparent on the surface. I'd take it as a personal favour if you'd do as I ask, Miss Lester, and keep out of this. Believe me, I've got a good reason for—"

A sudden gasp escaped Audrey's lips as she caught him by the arm.

"Oh, look!" she breathed. "There's someone in the cave!"

Noel spun round, his eyes narrowing, as he saw a shadowy figure flit across the mouth of the cave.

"Wait here!" he rapped.

He sprinted across the beach, groping for his revolver as he plunged into the mouth of the cave.

Then he pulled up, baffled. The cave was empty!

Was the shadowy figure just another illusion—like the staring eyes of the stone monk?

Then his gaze was arrested by an inscription scrawled in red across the chalk close to the entrance of the cave.

"The Talking Statue brooks no interference. Keep out of this cave if you value your life!"

Noel caught in his breath sharply, his eyes glinting.

If the melodramatic message had been intended to scare away chance visitors to the cave, it had merely defeated its own ends.

It confirmed the young detective's conviction that the mystery of the cave and the kidnapped girl were linked up with the statue on the cliff.

It also confirmed his suspicion that there was some other entrance into the cave which he had so far failed to detect.

Taking out his torch, Noel made a swift examination of the cave. The wall at the end arrested his attention. Although apparently of solid chalk, it was smoother than the other walls, and devoid of clinging seaweed.

Noel rapped on it and smiled grimly at the hollow echoes.

The "wall" was nothing more than a wooden door cunningly painted over. Deliberately he set to work to discover a way of opening it.

His search proved unexpectedly successful. His groping hand encountered a hidden spring, and, with a creaking groan, the door swung open, revealing a dark tunnel beyond.

Somewhere in that subterranean tunnel, Noel was convinced, an unknown girl was in deadly peril.

But he could not press forward with his search before making certain of the safety of his two young companions.

He half-regretted now having brought them with him, though he could not deny that they had been the direct means of his coming to grips with the mystery.

He stepped into the tunnel, flashing his torch on the sanded floor. As he had suspected, the double trail of footprints were continued here.

Noel made up his mind. He would send the two girls to fetch the police while he continued his search; in the open no one would dare to attack them.

He moved back towards the massive door—but even as he reached it he heard a mocking laugh behind him.

The young detective spun round, his hand on his revolver.

There came a grating sound and a dull crash that echoed through the tunnel as the door slammed, cutting off his retreat.

Noel's face paled as he flung himself at the door. He was trapped in the tunnel with an unseen opponent—and the two girls were waiting for him outside, unaware of their peril!

A shadow loomed behind the young detective; he spun round as something sprang at him from the darkness. The next moment he was at grips with an invisible assailant.

"HE'S not come back!" said Joan. "I'm certain something must have happened. Audrey, we simply can't stand here and do nothing; I'm going to the cave."

Audrey bit her lip. Though not as impulsive as her friend, she shared Joan's anxiety for the likeable young detective whose acquaintance they had made in such novel and exciting circumstances.

"All right," she breathed. "I'll come with you."

Hand-in-hand, their hearts thumping quickly, the two girls approached the mouth of the cave.

"He—he's not here!" gasped Joan.

Her voice echoed in a hollow, sinister fashion through the cave.

Audrey grasped her friend's arm, to prevent the other from darting forward impulsively.

"Be careful!" she breathed. "We'll go in together."

Fearfully they entered the dimness of the cave and stared round them. No sound reached their ears except the distant moaning of the sea.

"He must have left without our seeing him," whispered Audrey unsteadily.

"I'm positive he's in danger of some sort!" declared Joan.

She darted back impulsively to the entrance of the cave and stared across the beach. Audrey lingered, staring at the footprints on the sand, her dark eyes troubled.

"There's no one on the beach," declared Joan, "but there's a little boat out at sea. I'm sure he'd deduce something from that if he was here. He's awfully clever—"

She broke off as there came a stifled cry from behind her. She turned, then screamed.

Audrey was struggling in the grasp of a tall, hooded figure!

For an instant the wild thought sprang into Joan's mind that the statue of the hooded monk had come to life and trailed them here; then, flinging off her own fear in the face of her friend's peril, she sprang forward with a choking cry.

With a harsh laugh, the hooded figure moved swiftly towards a dark opening that had mysteriously appeared at the end of the cave, Audrey lying, white-faced and limp, in his arms.

With desperate courage, Joan raced in pursuit, plunging into the dark tunnel on the heels of the hooded figure.

With a hollow thud, the massive door slammed behind her.

"Audrey!" A choking cry escaped the girl's lips as her courage momentarily forsook her in the darkness. "Audrey! Where are you?"

A mocking laugh reached her ears—a laugh that trailed off into a strangled gasp. In the darkness came the sound of a struggle, and then the thud of a falling body. Next moment Noel Raymond's cheerful voice rang out.

"All right, Miss Lester!" he cried. "I've knocked the blighter out, and your friend's safe. This way!"

A beam of white light cut through the darkness, revealing a huddled figure lying motionless on the floor, and Noel Raymond standing, with a torch in his hand, supporting the fainting Audrey.

"That," said Noel dryly, indicating the huddled figure, "is one I owe this beauty! He took me unawares just now, and knocked me out! Then he dashed out and grabbed your friend; but, fortunately, I've got a thick skull, and I came round in time to grab him. Hallo, Miss Tarrant! Feelin' better?"

"Audrey," whispered Joan, tears of relief starting into her eyes as she bent over her friend, "are you all right?"

Audrey smiled faintly. Then she shuddered. "That dreadful man—!" she breathed.

"That gentleman," remarked Noel grimly, "is at present incapable of doing further damage. If you'll look after your friend for a moment, Miss Lester, I'll just have a squint at him."

The two girls clung together as Noel bent over the huddled figure and snatched off his hood, revealing a harsh, swarthy face.

My first job is to get you out of this tunnel; then—well, these scoundrels have got someone in their clutches, and I mean to rescue her!"

Joan caught in her breath sharply, and glanced at her friend.

"Please—please let us help you!" whispered Audrey.

Noel glanced quickly from one to the other; there was a hint of admiration in his gaze.

"You mean, you're prepared to go ahead, in spite of what's happened?" he demanded.

"Of course we are!" exclaimed Joan.

Noel drew a deep breath; there was a gleam of approval in his eyes.

"As a matter of fact," he admitted, "I haven't any choice. We're trapped in here, and we sink or swim together. Come on! Let's find out where this tunnel leads! Keep close behind me!"

Torch in hand, he pressed forward, followed by the two girl hikers, who had now almost recovered from their shock.

The tunnel wound interminably, and there were traces of crumbling brickwork, which suggested that it was of ancient construction.

It was as they rounded a bend in the passage that a stifled moan reached their ears.



The hikers drew back in startled surprise as Noel played his torch on the niche in the wall. Standing there, bound and gagged, was a girl.

The man's eyes were closed, and he was groaning.

"H'm!" commented Noel. "We may as well make sure of him while we're about it."

Ripping off a piece of the man's robe, he secured the other's wrists and ankles. This done, he tried the door that led into the cave, but it was securely fastened. Quizzically he gazed at the two girls.

"Well," he remarked, with a flicker of a smile, "it looks as though we're doomed to go through with this adventure together, young ladies. And we're not through with it yet—not by a long way!"

His expression became suddenly grave.

"There's obviously another way out of this tunnel," he said, "and I've no idea how many of this gentleman's friends are lying in wait for us; but we'll have to take a chance. Are you game?"

"Yes!" breathed Audrey quickly.

"Of course!" added Joan breathlessly. "Mr. Raymond, what—what do you think it all means?"

Noel shrugged, his expression grim.

"It means," he said, "that you girls have stumbled by accident on a scoundrelly plot, and this attack on Miss Tarrant was an attempt to silence you. Exactly how the statue of the hooded monk comes in I haven't discovered.

Noel sprang forward, flashing his torch into a dim recess in one of the walls.

A stifled ejaculation escaped his lips, and he attempted to screen his discovery from his two companions.

But the girls had already seen.

Standing stiffly in the alcove, bound hand and foot and securely gagged, was a girl—a beautiful girl of rather foreign appearance, her face as white as death, her eyes closed.

TRAPPED INSIDE THE STATUE

"OH!" gasped Audrey, starting forward.

"Is she—is she—"

Noel was bending over the girl. "She's alive," he rapped, "and drugged! The scoundrels!"

Swiftly he cut the ropes that secured the motionless girl to an iron stanchion in the wall and lifted her in his arms.

"Take this!" he jerked, thrusting his torch in Audrey's hand.

His own fingers had fastened on the butt of his revolver.

"Quickly!" he rapped. "There's a flight of stairs here! We'll see where it leads!"

They mounted the winding stairs, Noel leading with his motionless burden.

The stairs led to a square, cell-like apartment hollowed out of the chalk.

There was a rough bench, a few chairs, a rug, and traces of food.

On the far side of the cell was another flight of stairs.

Noel placed the unconscious girl in one of the chairs, wrapping her in the rug.

Then he thrust his revolver into Joan Lester's hand.

"You girls stay here and keep guard," he jerked, "while I reconnoitre. I fancy that the danger's in front of us. I shan't be a minute."

He leapt up the steps two at a time—to find himself in a narrow, circular stone alcove of peculiar design.

A startled ejaculation escaped his lips as the truth dawned on him.

He was inside the statue of the cowed monk!

"So that's how it was worked!" he muttered. "But what's their game?"

In the wall were two narrow slits, blocked by pieces of stone.

The monk's eyes!

Noel removed the stones and peered through the slits.

He found himself staring across the bay, now glowing in the last rays of the setting sun.

And out at sea—some few hundred yards from the shore—was a small motor-launch, its white paint gleaming.

As Noel stared at it, his eyes narrowing, he saw a flash—twice repeated.

A signal!

"Morse!" muttered Noel, his eyes glinting. "It's worth trying."

With his torch, he flashed an answering signal.

"All clear!"

He smiled grimly as the reply came, in short and long flashes:

"Stand by! We're coming!"

"Coming for what?" thought Noel. "For the girl!"

"Put your hands up!" snarled an unpleasant voice behind him. "Move a step, and I'll put a bullet through you!"

The young detective spun round, raising his hands involuntarily.

Standing in an opening behind him was a cowed figure—taller and broader than the man he had knocked out in the cave.

He was trapped!

Noel's eyes narrowed as he determined to take a reckless chance.

Three helpless girls were in the room below him—one of them unconscious.

Ducking unexpectedly, he leapt forward; there was a deafening report.

The next moment the young detective and his opponent were locked in a deadly embrace.

The cowed figure found his clinging robes a handicap, but he was abnormally strong, and, athlete though he was, Noel found himself hard pressed.

Desperately he tried to bring into service one of his famous ju-jutsu throws, but his assailant was as slippery as an eel, as full of fight as a wildcat.

Suddenly he managed to trip the young detective, and, with a bone-jarring crash, Noel tumbled to the floor.

With a triumphant snarl, the cowed figure flung himself on top of the detective, and the man's strong hands clutched at Noel's throat.

Though his brain was beginning to whirl, though his lungs seemed to be on fire, Noel refused to give up the fight.

He must win it. Defeat would mean added danger for the three girls in the room below. The thought gave him new strength, and, with a sudden, frenzied wriggle, he threw off his assailant and staggered to his feet.

Next moment the pair were again struggling angrily, fighting for the mastery.

"HARK!" gasped Audrey. "What—what was that?"

"A shot!" whispered Joan, her face chalky white. "It came from up there."

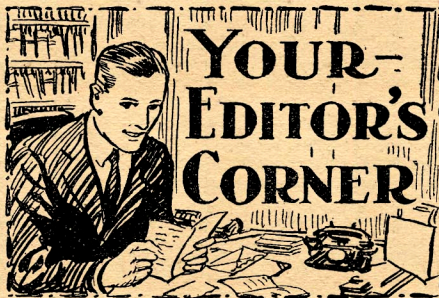
Huddled together, the two girls stared towards the narrow stairs.

"What—what shall we do?" breathed Joan. "We must stay and guard her," whispered Audrey, with a glance at the motionless figure wrapped in the rug. "Those are our orders."

Joan nodded, biting her lip.

The minutes dragged past interminably—and there came no other sound.

Then, startlingly, there came a rush of foot-



Girls' Crystal Office,
The Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street,
London, E.C.4.

HALLO, GIRLS!—Are you getting excited at the approach of Easter?

I know I am. Easter to me is the biggest landmark of the year. It always makes me wonderfully optimistic, for I know winter's behind me and there's the summer to look forward to.

It's round about Easter-time, too, when the holiday list comes round. At the present moment all the GIRLS' CRYSTAL staff is trying to decide when and where they are going this year.

Every time I pop my head into one of the other offices I hear stray fragments like these:

"Oh, no! I don't like big seaside resorts. I'm going abroad this year."

"Know anything about Torquay? I've heard it's a topping place."

"Yes, the Mediterranean is just gorgeous in August."

And so on. Even the office boy is making exciting plans for a fortnight's tour, though at the moment he's undecided whether to trust himself to the tender mercies of his old bike or whether to play for safety and go on foot.

NEXT WEEK'S STORIES

This spring feeling seems to have had its effect on our authors, too. They're simply bubbling over with high spirits these days—that is why, I expect, they are all turning out such really tip-top stories. Certainly you will regard next week's batch as extra-special ones.

Noel Raymond encounters danger at a seaside fun fair, and, incidentally, runs into the most fascinating mystery even he has encountered.

Tony the Speed Girl goes exploring the Balkans, and finds herself kidnapped by brigands. As for the Madcap Form-mistress and the girls of the Fourth, they also experience a thrilling adventure, as you will guess from the title—"The Fourth-Form Castaways."

Poppy Binks will be right on top of her form, so you can depend upon having a good, hearty laugh, while our three serials need no recommendation.

Make certain of getting your GIRLS' CRYSTAL by ordering it in advance. By the way, owing to the Easter holidays, our next issue will be on sale a day earlier than usual—on Thursday instead of Friday.

So won't you be able to have a jolly time this Easter?

For there's nothing like a good read, is there? Even if the weather's gloriously sunny—as I sincerely hope it will be!—there will still be moments when you'll long for nothing more than to settle yourself down with some pieces of Easter Egg and the GIRLS' CRYSTAL!

Cheerio till next week.

Your sincere friend,

THE EDITOR

steps in the cave below; a group of swarthy seamen burst into the cell, headed by the burly ruffian whom Noel had trussed up in the cave.

"There is the princess," he panted, pointing to the figure lying motionless in the rug. "These girls—they try to interfere. We kill them—yes?"

"Stand back!" gasped Joan, with desperate courage, as she raised her pistol. "If you don't, I'll—I'll shoot!"

The man gave a harsh laugh as he sprang forward, wrenching the pistol from her hand.

"The chief—you had his signal?" he demanded, addressing the others.

"Where is he?" came the growling response. "We want our orders."

"You'll have them in one minute!" rapped a husky voice.

A tall, cowed figure descended the stairs that led down from the hollow statue.

"Take the princess down to the beach!" he growled. "Those girls will come with us."

The motionless princess was lifted and carried down the stairs. Joan and Audrey were hustled between a crowd of ruffians.

"Why doesn't he come?" whispered Joan brokenly. "What has become of Noel Raymond?"

Audrey made no reply.

White-faced, her lips trembling, she was trying to keep up her courage.

On the beach, the cowed figure confronted the ruffianly crew.

"The boat is ready?" he demanded.

There came a growling response.

"You know where to take her?"

"To the yacht waiting outside the bay," muttered one of the men. "What about these girls, chief?"

"They can go!" rapped the cowed figure.

There came a protesting shout.

With an unexpected movement, the cowed figure whipped out a revolver, covering the startled men; with his other hand he jerked off his hood, to reveal the grim face of Noel Raymond!

"They can go," snapped the young detective, "to fetch the police! You scoundrels will stand just where you are! I warn you, I'm a dead shot—and I'll shoot to kill!"

He turned to the two astounded girls.

"And you might bring a doctor," he added. "The princess will probably require treatment. Hurry—and good luck to you!"

Her Highness Princess Sylvia of Merania, grasped Noel by the hand. It was half an hour later, and there were tears in her eyes.

"I do not know how to thank you," she breathed. "They try to smuggle me out of England—to hold me as hostage against my father. My friends, they will be here soon—and they will tell you their gratitude—"

"Don't thank me, your Highness," put in Noel, with a grin. "These are the young ladies who worked the trick!" He indicated the two blushing girl hikers, then shook them warmly by the hand.

Joan and Audrey had never been so thrilled in their lives.

"It was fun; we loved it, every moment," said Joan, with enthusiasm. "Didn't we, Audrey?"

Audrey wasn't so sure, but she nodded all the same.

"Well"—she hesitated—"I couldn't have gone through with it if it hadn't been for Mr. Raymond. He was a brick!"

Noel gave a little mock-bow and grinned boyishly.

"Thank you for those kind words," he said. "It was lucky I happened to be along there when I was!"

"And lucky we happened to be eating our sandwiches just then," Joan chuckled.

"If ever you think of taking a job as a detective's assistant," Noel remarked, his eyes twinkling, "you know where to apply. But I rather fancy you've had enough—eh?"

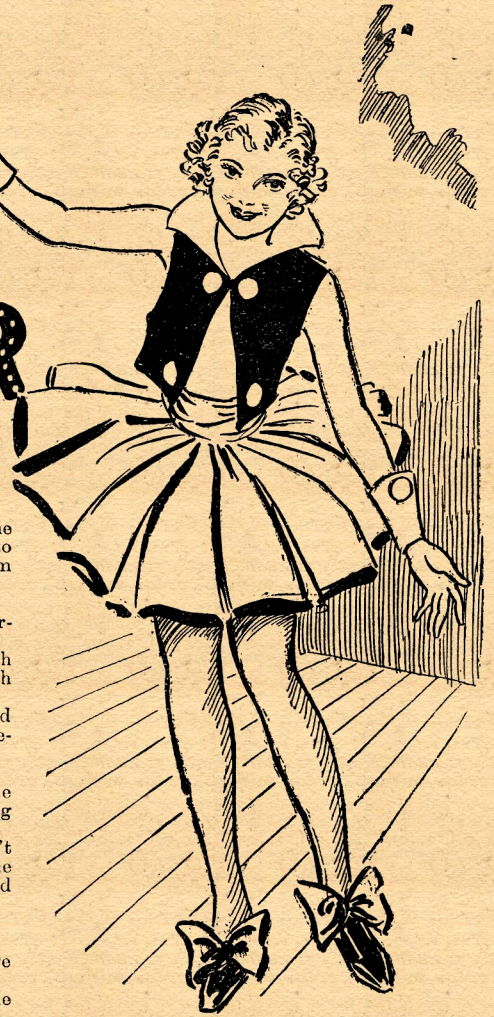
"Well—almost," admitted Joan, with a laugh.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

"DANGER AT THE FUN FAIR!"—That is the title of next Thursday's exciting detective story. On no account miss it.



I WILL BE A LONDON STAGE STAR



THE GIRL WHO ROBBED HER

By JUNE TURNER

KAY FORRESTER struggled furiously. The cafe manager had seized her and was ordering her to continue her dance act—while at this moment the girl who had robbed her was fleeing away down the street!

There was no time to argue. He was Kay's employer—he gave her her living in this French town where she was stranded—but Kay raised her foot and stamped hard on the manager's toe!

He yelled and let go of her. Kay burst open the door and dashed out into the street. She was just in time to see the thieving Argentine girl disappear round the next turning.

Kay sprinted hotfoot after her. She was wearing her thin dance-shoes, her stage costume. At any other time her appearance would have caused attention and hindered her. But luckily it was midnight, and few people were about.

Kay sped round the turning. She saw Rosa look back at her over her shoulder, then redouble her pace. That Argentine girl could run, too! So could Kay!

The chase led through narrow, cobbled streets, in and out of queer archways that were relics of medieval France—but try as she did, Rosa couldn't throw Kay off her trail.

It was enough for Kay to remember that this girl had robbed her of three hundred francs—her passage home to England! It lent wings to her steps.

She was gaining fast upon Rosa when suddenly that girl whisked through a side-turning, burst open a gate, and disappeared down the basement steps of a house.

Panting, Kay reached the house three seconds after.

It was a forbidding, gaunt-fronted building, with all its windows heavily shuttered. The street was dark and ugly and looked sinister in the night. But Kay didn't hesitate.

She rushed down the basement steps and thumped at the door. Nothing happened. Kay went on banging the heavy iron knocker without pause.

A light glimmered through the pane at last, and the door opened.

Kay forced her way bodily inside.

"Where's the girl?" she cried. "Rosa?" Confronting her stood a dark, foxy-eyed woman with the same sallow skin, the same thin features as the girl Rosa.

"There's no such person here, miss! I don't know what you mean!" the woman blustered.

She was too pat with her answer—too quick in betraying that she spoke English. Her accent was exactly Rosa's.

"Fetch Rosa to me or I'll call the gendarmes!" Kay flung at her.

The woman changed colour. She seemed to fear the police as much as Rosa had cause to fear them.

"Wh-what is it, miss?" she stuttered. "Is anything wrong?"

"That girl stole my purse!" Kay cried. "She told me that she had nowhere to go, and I gave her a bed in my room. She repaid it by robbing me. She stole every cent I had—nearly three hundred francs!"

"Oh, miss, there must be some m-mistake, some—"

"That money was my passage-money home to England! Rosa will either return it to me—or to the police! Tell her that. I'm waiting here!"

"B-but—"
"And I won't wait long! Do you understand, madame?"

Kay gave the woman one look—and with drawn lips the latter hurried away through the gloomy hall.

For several minutes there was no sound save the distant mutter of voices from somewhere in the house.

Kay waited. Then footsteps sounded, and again it was the woman and not Rosa who came hurrying back to Kay.

"It's your word against Rosa's, but we don't want any bother with the police, miss," she said hastily. "You say you lost three hundred francs?"

"I said it was stolen!" retorted Kay. The woman gave her a shifty look.

"Will you take the money and say no more about it?"

Kay concealed the joy that leapt up inside her.

"I want the money," she said—"and I want my purse, too! My cards, my papers and things were in it. Where is it?"

"Burnt!" the woman snapped, forgetting herself. "Here's the money, and that settles the trouble!"

She thrust three crinkly new notes into Kay's hand, and with the same movement she pushed her out of the door and slammed it.

Kay stood under the light of the street lamp and looked down at the notes, her eyes glowing.

Her money was restored to her! Three hundred francs—her passage home to England.

She could hardly believe her good fortune—could hardly contain her joy. Before this time to-morrow night she would be back in London again!

Back in London—pursuing her career once more, winning her way back to the footlights, to fight anew for success—and a fortune!

Kay's heart thrilled as she hurried back through the dark, winding streets to the Cafe Cosmopole.

She remembered how Philip Slade had brought about her exile here in France, in order to cheat her of that fortune. Now she would beat him yet! The money was hers

**There was nothing to stop her
from returning to London
now—or so Kay thought.
But she got the shock of
her life when she got to
the railway station.**

under the terms of her grandfather's will—five thousand pounds should she achieve success on the London stage. Her exile was over now. She was going to win!

The cafe manager burst across to Kay as soon as she entered the Cosmopole.

"Go!" he fumed at her. "You haf desairt your job to-night! I owe you nothing! Get out, ma'mselle, and nevaire come back no more!"

"I don't intend to!" Kay answered happily. "I want my coat, that's all, and au revoir, m'sieur!"

He had been always ungenerous, and it would have been months before Kay would have saved her passage-money out of his miserable pay. But she was independent of him now. She took her coat and returned joyfully back to her digs.

There was little sleep for Kay that night. Early next morning, in radiant sunshine, she made her way to the railway station.

The bustle and motion, the sense of travel as the engines puffed and strained to be on the move, set Kay's heart beating with excitement. She hurried to the special booking-office for foreign travel. On the walls, the posters of England and the models of steamships were a joy to see.

Kay handed her three hundred-franc notes through the grille and gave her booking:

"A single passage to London, please—combined rail and steamboat!"

"Via Calais?" the clerk asked.

"If you please!"

Thrilling, Kay watched him take a little green-backed book of vouchers from a pigeon-hole. One voucher was for the rail-journey to Calais, another for the steamboat crossing to Dover, another for the rail-journey to London!

The clerk picked up the money and flicked the notes in his hand. He was irritatingly



BEAUTY AND THE BATH

soap, will make you glow and tingle, feeling ready to push houses over.

The warmth of the bath-room will thoroughly open the pores in your face, so you'll find that a rinse over in clear, fresh water is all you need to give it a thorough cleansing. Soap will not be necessary.

Don't forget to give it a final splashing under the cold tap to close the pores again, will you? Because open pores simply ask for dust to settle in them, and that's the beginning of the story of the blackhead.

Choose the scrubbiest towel on the rail for your drying process. And if you're athletic, you'll be able to get as much exercise out of this as an hour spent in the gym at school. (When, after all, you do spend quite a bit of the time sitting down, awaiting your turn, don't you?)

Oh, a word about those feet! Feet love a hot bath if they're going to pop straight into bed afterwards. But if the bath's in the morning, and the feet are expected to hike for five miles, or walk around the Zoo, or even go shopping—well, they'll make such a fuss! (And you'll be wondering why it is you feel so tired.)

You see, the warm water softens them and makes them achey. So you really must, for your own comfort, give them a rub with the cheap eau-de-Cologne I'm always talking about, or methylated spirit.

You'll feel like a ballet dancer then.

If your hair is naturally wavy, you should simply revel in your bath. For the steamy atmosphere will make the waves deeper and easier to arrange.

But if your hair has just been washed, and is already unruly, or if the ends have been curled with rags, then steam is their enemy.

A bath-cap is the solution to this problem. You've probably got one of last summer's that you can wear, and there are special ones sold for sixpence, if you haven't.

Remember that the bath is a natural aid to loveliness, so make the most of it, whether you bath every day, every other, or once a week!

because they realised the gravity of her position.

She caught the gist of their words, and gathered that they were going to send for a lady interpreter.

The gendarme tugged gently at Kay's sleeve.

In a daze she was led to a tiny room at the other side of a courtyard. It was furnished only with a table and chair, and an official document framed on the wall. Its window was heavily barred.

The door closed upon Kay and she heard the rattle of iron bolts.

Stunned, she realised that she was a prisoner! She could hear in the distance the shrieks of the train-whistles from the station across the road. She heard the Calais express thundering out across the metals as the clock boomed nine.

The sound mocked in Kay's ears. She had been robbed of her longed-for journey! She was in dire trouble—a suspected person, locked up in a foreign gaol!

KAY MEETS HER IMPERSONATOR

FOR two hours Kay paced the floor of the cell; and at intervals a grating slid open in the door, and a gendarme peeped in on his round of inspection.

His pitying eye only humiliated Kay the more.

Had she landed in this plight by some freak of misfortune, she could have borne it better. But it had been the cruel and deliberate wickedness of a woman who had seen her robbed, and had then struck her again while she was down!

The bolt rattled back in the door at last, and the lady interpreter came in.

She was a kindly Frenchwoman, quite young, and at sight of Kay she was instantly compassionate. She squeezed her hand and made her sit down with her calmly by the window; and she sternly forbade the gendarme to bolt the door.

"It is unnecessary, I am sure," she said. "You are English girl, and you will give your word of honour not to run away; that is quite enough. Now tell me, chérie. Tell me all!"

Kay poured out the whole of her story to Madame Louise, and it was sweet comfort to find such a sympathetic listener. It helped a great deal to calm her distraught feelings.

"There, there!" madame said at the end. "If your story is true, chérie, you do not have to worry. Our police will be very kind. They only wish to see justice done, and they will not punish the innocent. I am going to call them now while they take down the statement. It shall be translated exactly as you have told it to me, I promise!"

Kay was calm and controlled when the police officers came into the cell. It impressed them immediately in her favour.

Madame Louise repeated Kay's statement to them in French, and every word was carefully written down. Many questions were put to Kay, through the interpreter, but the officers were most courteous and kind to her all the time.

Kay sighed when they all rose to leave her, for she guessed that she would be left alone for another spell while inquiries were set afoot.

"It will not be for long. Meess Forrester," madame assured her. "Please try to be patient, and I will see that you have books and refreshments sent to you."

Kay settled herself as resignedly as she could, alone in the locked cell once more. Books were sent to her, and at midday she was given a plain but good lunch of meat stew. She had little enough appetite for it.

The hours passed. The sun moved round and the iron bars of the window lengthened their shadows across the stone floor. Five o'clock struck. Six o'clock. The gendarme brought coffee and bread to Kay, but no one came with orders to release her.

Seven o'clock passed.

Dusk cast its gloom inside the cell, and still no one came. Kay could read no more. She paced restlessly up and down, worn out with thinking, longing to hear the steps of the friendly police chief.

BATH night is no longer the event of the week that it used to be, is it? But even though bath-rooms are now the order of the day, and the tin tubs in front of the kitchen fire are rapidly disappearing, that's no reason why it shouldn't be as much of a treat as ever!

A hasty splash and a swift rubbing is all very well for people who take a bath only from habit. But if you are to get the most from your regular bath, it should also be a beauty tonic as well.

Rule number one is that the bath water must not—and it's a rule, remember—be very hot.

Not only is this not good for your precious good looks, but it's also bad for your precious insides. Your heart in particular.

Have it warm enough to relax in, yet cool enough to make it refreshing.

Bath salts are heavenly for very, very special occasions. If you're very tired and wanting to look your best before going out in the evening, a little added to the water seems to soak every ache right out.

But you wouldn't dare wash your face in bath-salty water, would you?

A good scrubbing all over, with plenty of

slow, although a crowd was queuing up. He looked at Kay and begged her wait a moment.

From a distant platform Kay could hear the porters shouting in French and then in English:

"Calais express waiting! Boat train for England!"

Then a step sounded behind her, and Kay turned with a start as a heavy, officious hand fell upon her shoulder.

"I must detain you, ma'mselle!" a stern voice rapped out. "These notes are counterfeit!"

Kay reeled on her feet. She saw a grim-looking official gazing down at her from under his gold-braided cap.

In one hand he was flourishing the three hundred-franc notes she had given the clerk!

"I—I don't understand!" Kay heard herself stammering.

"That is unfortunate, ma'mselle!" he said harshly. "You must come with me!"

A gaping hush held the queue. The official's hand tightened on Kay's shoulder, and in full view of the people—her face deathly pale—she was led out of the booking-hall into the street.

A gendarme stepped across at a word from the official, and placed himself on the other side of Kay.

They escorted her across the square to the police station!

Too stunned to think, Kay found herself walking through a doorway inscribed "Bureau

de Police," and into a bleak, wooden-panelled room at the end of a long corridor.

Three police officers sat at a high desk. The senior listened gravely while the railway official rattled off a statement in voluble French.

Then the latter handed the three notes across to him. The police officers examined them and talked excitedly, looking every moment at Kay.

"The matter is out of my hands!" the railwayman said harshly, when Kay tried to question him. "Ma'mselle must answer to the police!"

He bowed stiffly to the officers, and departed. Kay was left standing before the desk, while the gendarme held the sleeve of her coat.

"What is it all about?" she cried. "Is it true that the notes are—are counterfeit? I—I am a stranger, I didn't understand—"

But the truth was only too plain to her now.

That woman had cheated her! She had given her bogus notes! Kay's blood boiled—she was distracted. She couldn't even blame herself for being so easily cheated. She had seen, alas, too few of these high-currency foreign notes.

"Ne parlez-pas francais, ma'mselle?" the senior constable asked her.

"No! I only speak English!" Kay said in distraction.

The three officers conferred together. They all talked in rapid French, and they were gravely serious. Kay could see by the looks they gave her that they pitied her helplessness,

Eight o'clock was striking when voices sounded in the corridor.

The door opened, the light switched on. Kay saw the three police officers step inside, accompanied by Madame Louise again.

But not a single face was friendly now. All looked harsh and stern!

Kay saw the change with a dreading heart. "Mademoiselle, you have not told us the truth!" madame rapped out. "Your name is not Kay Forrester!"

Kay was too flabbergasted to speak. She stared dumbly.

"The police have made inquiries," madame went on sternly. "They have traced the real Kay Forrester. She is quite a different person from you. She is an English dancer, performing in a theatre in this town, and at this very moment. You, mademoiselle, are an impostor!"

Kay's senses were reeling. What was this she was hearing? The police had traced another girl by the name of Kay Forrester—a dancer, performing in a theatre in this town? It was fantastic! She looked at the stern police officers, and for the moment she wondered if it was a "frame-up," and they were trying to "trip" her. And then that seemed fantastic, too!

"It's ridiculous!" she panted out to the interpreter. "I'm Kay Forrester! I'm the English dancer! You can't imagine that there would be two of us of the same name, madame!"

"There is no mistake!" madame said coldly. "Have you any cards, any papers of identification to bear out your story?"

"No. They were inside my purse when it was stolen, and—"

"And so we have only your word?" madame interrupted. "I advise you, in your own interest, to tell the truth, miss. The police have that other girl's word, too. And she happened to have her cards and papers to prove that she was Kay Forrester!"

"And I tell you—"

Kay's voice broke off with a gasp. A wild suspicion flooded her mind. Could that other girl be Rosa? Was this what it meant? Rosa had stolen her purse, and her cards were in it! Rosa spoke English fluently, and in the eyes of these foreigners she would pass for English! Was it Rosa who was impersonating her?

"What is this girl like?" Kay panted. "Not blonde, like me? She is dark?"

The interpreter asked a question of the police, then nodded curtly.

"Not a bit like you, miss. She is brunette, and very slim."

"It's Rosa! It is Rosa!" Kay cried. "She's the impostor! Don't you understand, madame? It's the girl who stole my purse!"

Madame shrugged.

"The girl has satisfied the police, miss. There is the end of it!"

"It is not the end!" Kay said wildly. "Tell the police to bring her here—make her face me. I can get other witnesses in the town, if you'll only let me. Oh, madame, you must believe me"—she pleaded desperately with the woman—"you must! I'm telling you the truth—on my honour. No one can help me if you won't!"

The Frenchwoman met Kay's eyes and was obviously impressed. She looked troubled, and began talking rapidly to the police chief, telling him what Kay had said, and evidently begging him to investigate her story.

The chief did not seem impressed.

"He says that he cannot bring that other girl here, miss," madame said helplessly to Kay. "She has proved her identity, and the chief has no power to take her to the police station!"

"Then I must go to her! The police can take me to her!" Kay cried. "Where is she?"

"She is performing at the Petit Theatre," madame answered. "I am afraid the chief will not let you go, miss, but I will ask him."

Kay watched tensely, while the others talked. She saw the police chief waving his hands and vigorously shaking his head. She heard madame arguing and reasoning with him in quick-fire French.

The officers exchanged significant looks. And presently the chief gave Kay a narrow glance and murmured something in the interpreter's ear.

Madame looked gravely at Kay. "For your own sake, miss, I hope you are telling the truth. The chief is going to let you out on parole!"

Kay's heart jumped. "You know what that means?" madame went on seriously. "You will be put on your honour, and released in order to go and meet that other girl. It is a chance given to you to prove your story, not to run away. Do you wish for parole?"

"It's all I wish for! You can trust me!" Kay cried.

Madame and the officers departed, talking thoughtfully, and after another endless wait the gendarme unlocked the door again. With fast-beating heart Kay was led back through the courtyard into the police office.

"The chief will give you a few francs to find your way across the town, miss," Madame Louise said quietly. "Get on a No. 6 autobus and ask for Le Petit Theatre!"

Without a word the chief handed ten francs to Kay, but he looked hard into her face.

Kay breathed her thanks and hurried out into the free, open street once more. Now she could be active at last! She was going to meet Rosa face to face, and she had no qualms about the result!

A big green autobus, bearing the number "6," stood waiting in the station square. Kay clambered aboard. A mild-looking gentleman, wearing gold-rimmed spectacles, courteously moved his seat and made room for her.

Kay sat gazing tensely through the window as the bus rolled away through the lighted streets.

She made no mistake when she reached the Petit Theatre. Its name blazed above the small, illuminated portico, and the bus stopped right outside. Several other passengers alighted, including the meek-looking gentleman in the gold spectacles.

Kay's pulses burned as she saw her own name, "Kay Forrester, Danseuse Anglaise," staring at her from one of the posters.

She hurried round to the artistes' entrance and burst straight inside before the doorkeeper could stop her.

A tiled corridor led to the wings.

Groups of artistes were standing about in costume and make-up. A juggling act was in progress, and the lights-men were crouching with their arc-lamps in the wings.

Kay took one glance at the waiting artistes. Then, with a cry, she rushed forward.

"I was right! It's you!" She pounced upon a girl. "You stole my money! You've stolen my name!"

Facing her in the glare of the lights stood Rosa, the Argentine girl. That girl was dressed up in stage ballet frock and tap-shoes; and girdled across her shoulder was a red sash with the name boldly embroidered in white: "KAY FORRESTER!"

ROSA GIVES HERSELF AWAY

FOR one second Rosa's sallow face blenched under her make-up, and she cowered backward.

"Where are my papers and cards?" Kay cried. "Give them to me at once!"

The next second Rosa recovered herself, and proved what a consummate actress she was.

"Prove it!" she said, with a coolness that took Kay's breath away. "I think you must be raving mad, but even mad people mustn't burst in here and say things like that! Will you prove what you say before I have you thrown out?"

"The proofs are my own cards, my papers and letters that you stole from me!" Kay blazed.

The other artistes were staring, perceiving that Kay was angry, though they didn't understand her language. That meek-looking little gentleman from the bus had also entered the theatre, and was gazing on at this scene through his spectacles.

Kay was oblivious to them all save this brazen girl who had robbed and impersonated her.

"How can you behave so abominably?" Kay demanded. "I did you a kindness once, and you repaid my by mean treachery. Now I must do the only thing I can. I say you shall not go on the stage to-night! You're going with me to the police."

A shirt-sleeved manager understood that last word, and came raging across to the pair, demanding in French to know what the trouble was all about.

Rosa spoke to him swiftly in his own language.

Laughing defiantly in Kay's face, she snapped her fingers and taunted her:

"You'll see what happens if you bring the police here! The manager will give you in charge, and quick about it! I'll prove to them that you are a fraud all right! Better get out while you're safe!"



"Where are my papers and cards you stole from me?" Kay panted. Her impersonator drew back, prepared to deny even this accusation.

"I'll go, but you're coming with me!" Kay cried.

"Sorry! My act's on now!" And Rosa laughed again, and her laugh was maddening. "The people are waiting for Kay Forrester—that's me! I'm the only one who speaks English here, and your name does the rest—see?"

The juggling act finished at that instant, and the manager signalled Rosa to get ready. Kay held the girl back.

"Don't be a fool!" scorned Rosa. "Don't I tell you I'm starring the bill!" And her pride and scorn made her add: "I, Rosa Petronyezza, am for to-night and many more nights, Kay Forrester!"

She said something in French to the manager, and in violent wrath he wrenched Kay aside. He pinned her against the scenery, though she struggled with all her might.

Rosa flashed a look of baleful triumph at Kay, then ran simpering on to the stage. A burst of applause greeted her.

Kay stood panting, helpless, and watched.

There was a certain amount of skill in Rosa's dancing. She had obviously done stage work before, in the course of her adventurous career. But she was winning the audience by her pretence of being English.

Kay could see the cunning of it in every line Rosa sang, in every step she danced. The

imitation was crude, but it passed muster before the provincial audience. They were applauding what they thought was an English turn, and they would never have raised a clap had they known that it was a fraud and not English.

The mild gentleman moved to the wings, and Kay saw him take off his gold-rimmed spectacles. He stretched out his hand and made a sign to someone in the auditorium.

Kay heard a gasp go through the theatre.

The manager released his grip of her and started forward.

Next moment Kay saw two uniformed gendarmes leap up on to the stage. Rosa's song broke off with a scream. The band stopped—the audience gasped.

The gendarmes seized Rosa by the arms and led her, writhing and weeping hysterically, into the wings.

The meek-looking gentleman bowed to Kay. "Thank you, ma'mselle!" he said courteously, in a perfect English accent. "I am a detective, and I followed you from the police station. I heard all that was said. Your story is verified, and this is the girl we want!"

Kay stared, stupefied. She looked at Rosa, and never had Kay seen a more wretched-looking spectacle.

"We have been wanting her for a long time!" the detective added. "There are

charges of fraud, and passing bogus money. She gave herself away, thinking no one present understood English except you—her victim. It clears up all suspicion against you, of course; but you will never get a cent of your money back now, mademoiselle!"

A police van had driven up to the stage door. Before Kay had time to realise it, Rosa was bundled away in the van, and it was the last time a theatre would see her for many a day to come.

Desperately Kay fought her way to the front of the little throng that had already collected.

"Oh, please!" she asked one of the gendarmes. But it was quite obvious that the policeman did not understand.

Helplessly Kay looked around. She was searching for the detective with the gold-rimmed spectacles. He understood English. When she had explained her plight to him, surely he would realise in what difficulties she was.

She would tell him how necessary it was for her to get back to England. Wasn't there something he could do about the return of her money? Surely some of it at least could be found.

Then at last Kay spotted him, giving concise orders to the driver of the police-van.

"Oh, monsieur!" Kay cried, and clutched his arm as she made her way up to him. "Could you—please—spare me a moment?"

"Why, certainly!" he answered courteously. "But only a moment; and if it is about that money of yours, I'm afraid I can do nothing. That matter does not rest with me."

"But"—Kay looked at him pleadingly—"but it was all the money I had in the world," she said earnestly. "How else can I obtain money to get me home to England?"

The kindly detective shook his head.

"Mademoiselle, believe me, I am truly sorry," he said. "But I can do nothing—nothing—nothing at all." And then his face lit up, and Kay's heart beat more quickly with hope, as he said: "But there is one suggestion. Why do you not obtain work here—taking over this wicked one's turn? It is yours. Consult the manager, I advise you."

Breathlessly Kay thanked him, as the detective made to jump up beside the driver.

Forcing her way back through the crowd again, she dashed into the wings of the theatre.

The manager was not there, and Kay could hear his voice upraised as he addressed the audience.

But it was obvious that his entreaties and explanations were not being received with favour.

A frenzy of excitement was going on in the auditorium, from the audience who had witnessed that dramatic arrest in the middle of Rosa's act.

The manager came striding furiously from the stage. He had tried in vain to quieten the audience. With him came the musical director—an excitable man with a shock of black hair.

Kay saw that director bearing down upon her in a passion of rage.

"So it is you who is Kay Forrester? You who bring the police here to raid my theatre and turn the place into a bear-garden?" he stormed. "You shall never do it again, ma'mselle! You are finished, finished, like the other girl! I do not want your name! I hate it! I tear it off my posters! I get you refused to enter every cafe and theatre in this town! I can do it! And do it I will! I am president of all entertainments here! You make trouble for me—I make trouble for you! Get out of this town! No one here will ever book you again. It is the last we want of Kay Forrester!"

"Thank you, m'sieur! It's a pity you didn't learn fair play before they made you president!" Kay said scornfully.

With her head held high she walked out of the theatre into the street.

Her name had been dragged into a wretched scene, and she had Rosa to thank for it. Now she was destitute. Kay didn't know which way to turn, but she knew she would never get another booking in this town!

Kay's difficulties are by no means over yet! What will she do now? You'll revel in next week's instalment of this splendid story. Remember your GIRLS' CRYSTAL will be on sale on THURSDAY.

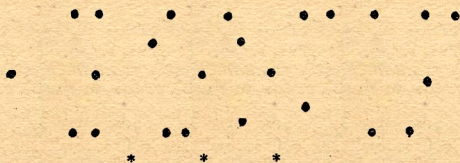
TRIXIE'S TRICKS



THIS week is my special "catch" number, so look out for yourselves. If any solutions elude you, you'll find them all on page 18. We'll start off with a problem that's really

"DOTTY"

Gaze into me and you'll find I'm full of interesting features. To find out what I mean you must join the dots below with a pencil in the right way: (1)



If a railway train started off from London at sixty miles an hour, and at the same time another started off from Liverpool at forty miles an hour, which would be nearer London when they met? (2)

THE PUZZLE OF THE POND

A lily, growing in a pond, doubles its size each day. In thirty days the pond is entirely covered by the lily. How many days did it take to cover half the pond? (3)

And here's a trick to play on your chum. Get a tumbler and three pennies. Put the tumbler upside down on the table with one of the pennies beside it. Then give your chum the other two pennies and ask her to pick up the first penny with them and put it on top of the tumbler.

Won't you laugh as she struggles to pick it up! Finally, with a triumphant smile, she'll manage it and put the penny on to the tumbler. Whereupon you remark: "Ah, but that's the bottom of the tumbler—and I said the top!" Then run before you get a cushion at your head!

WHAT CAN IT BE?

What is it that has teeth, but cannot eat? (4)

Which is correct: the yolk of an egg is white, or the yolk of an egg are white? (5)

COULD THEY TELL YOU?

What popular CRYSTAL contributors do the curious-looking words beneath represent?

- NRETSEW LIAG
- EPOLENEP
- LANGER PETLEY
- MARDIA TINNA
- NONJEANVER
- RIXIET

Take the letters forming the phrase, "Lo, nation's hero!" and rearrange them to spell the name of a famous English historical character. (7)

NO FOOLIN'!

My first, I hope you are;
My second, I see you are;
My whole I know you are!
What form of greeting is this? (8)

TONY THE SPEED GIRL



THIS WEEK: HER SPEED-BOAT RIVAL

By
GAIL WESTERN

TONY'S DARING OFFER

WHAT a lovely day for a dip! And to think it's only April!" Appreciatively Tony Farrell surveyed the glistening water of the Mediterranean, and once again she told herself how lucky she was to be touring in the South of France.

Bringing the Silver Phantom to a halt on the soft sand, she whipped off her driving helmet. She wore her usual white racing overalls, but underneath she had on a bathing-suit.

With impatient fingers she undid the buttons. The sea certainly was inviting—a luxuriant blue, except where the warm sunshine dappled it gold.

Kicking off her shoes, she leapt out of the racing car and plunged into the water. Though early spring, it was delightfully warm, and so salty that it seemed impossible to sink.

"Even an elephant could swim here," she smiled, as briskly she struck out for the red bluff of rock that guarded one side of the palm-girt bay.

Tony was as much at home in the water as in her car. In her pale green swim-suit she looked like a slender fish as she shot cleanly through the mirror-like sea.

She gained the headland in record time, and then, as she heard the chug-chug-chug of a motor-boat, she swung round and trod water.

Looming into sight was a magnificent speedboat, its hull painted a vivid scarlet. At the wheel was a young man with curly hair and a fair beard. Seeing the girl splashing around, he waved a cheery hand and shut off the engine.

"I say, it's a bit early for mermaids, isn't it?" he grinned.

He had an infectious smile, and Tony waved back.

"It's too nice to say in bed mornings like these," she returned. "But you're English, aren't you?"

He nodded.

"Guilty, m'lud!" he said. "Down here for the speedboat race next Wednesday. Suppose you don't do anything in that line?"

Tony shook her head.

"No; I do my racing on dry land—it's safer. There's no danger of getting an unwanted

bath. But what a spiffing boat!" she added, surveying the scarlet craft with frank admiration in her eyes. "And what a nice name you've given her—the Racing Queen! If appearance means anything you ought to win."

"I hope I do. If I don't—" He did not finish the sentence, but his boyish smile vanished, and a grim, almost desperate glint crept into his eyes.

"I must win!" he declared. "This race means everything to me. If I should lose— But you don't want to hear my troubles." He smiled cheerfully, and, stooping, lifted something from the bottom of the cockpit. "Like to try your luck on this?" he asked.

It was a surfboard, and Tony gave an eager whoop.

"Oh, rather!" she cried.

A few seconds and the surfboard was in place. Smilingly the young man introduced himself and helped Tony on to it.

"You'll have to watch your step," he warned. "Hope you're not nervous. But you needn't worry. I won't go really fast."

"I'm not worrying," Tony assured him. "You go as fast as you like. I'm used to speeding."

She got a good grip on the tow-rope, then nodded.

"Right-oh! Let her rip!" she called.

Br-uuuuu-m!

The engine roared into life, and away shot the speedboat, skimming over the smooth water like some scarlet dragonfly.

The surfboard lurched up, and—smack! went Tony into the water. Laughing, she came to the surface, to grab the board and haul herself on to it again.

"O.K.!" she sang out. "No bones broken!"

The speedboat trophy was only worth a few pounds—yet it was vital that Tony's mystery partner should win it!

But it took her several spills before she got the knack of keeping her balance on the tilting surfboard; then she began really to enjoy herself.

"Full steam ahead!" she shouted into the blinding spray.

Terry laughed and flung the throttle wide open. The flat-bottomed boat seemed to leap right out of the water. At amazing speed it hurtled for the far headland, and then suddenly Tony gave a surprised cry.

"Hallo, here's a rival!" she said, and nodded to where a big, heavy motor-boat was plunging across the bay towards them.

Terry took one look, then his lips tightened. "Great Scott! It's Reinberg!" he gasped. "And the villain means business!" Frantically he shut off the engine and beckoned to the Speed Girl. "Jump aboard—quick!" he shouted. "The blighters in that boat are out for trouble."

Tony stared in bewilderment, and then, realising by his agitated face that he was on tenterhooks of anxiety, she made to scramble off the lurching surfboard.

But even as he reached over to help her down into the speedboat, it happened.

Swerving round, the big motor-boat charged straight for them. Desperately Terry switched on the engine and tried to race clear, but in vain.

Cr-aaaa-sh!

The blunt bows of the other craft struck the speedboat amidships. Terry gave a yell of anger. Tony gasped in startled surprise, and then the Racing Queen lurched up on end.

For one agonising moment of suspense it seemed to remain poised there; then over on its face it toppled, flinging its owner out. Tony, hitting the water with a resounding splash, glimpsed a red shape looming over her, struck out frantically; then, as the down-falling boat hit her over the head, she gave a groan and lost consciousness.

When she came round it was to find herself lying on the beach, with Terry O'Neil bending anxiously over her.

Blinking open her eyes, she gazed dazedly about her.

"What—what happened?" she gasped; then memory came flooding back. "Oh, I remember! That other boat capsized us. But how—" She broke off, and looked up admiringly at him. "You must have saved me!" she cried. "You must have dragged me ashore."

He nodded, but his face was still pale and apprehensive.

"Are you sure you're all right?" he asked. "I shall never forgive myself if you're hurt. I ought never to have invited you to go surfboard riding with me. I might have known it wasn't safe. But, scoundrels though they are, I never guessed they'd be so ruthless."

"Scoundrels! What scoundrels?" asked Tony, staring blankly.

"Reinberg and the other fellow in that boat. They deliberately rammed us. They tried to smash up the Racing Queen!"

"What!" Tony gave a startled gasp; then, her own aching head forgotten, she stretched out a sympathetic hand. "Oh, what beasts!"

she cried. "I—I suppose they're out to stop you winning next week?"

He nodded.

"Yes, and they may have done it!" he muttered moodily. "I've got a couple of fisher chaps out trying to salvage the boat, but—Hullo, here they come!"

He turned an anxious face seawards as he saw a rowing-boat, manned by two burly French fishermen, come wallowing through the shallows, towing behind it the overturned Racing Queen.

Tony jumped to her feet. She was as anxious as the speedboat's owner to see the extent of the damage. Apart from the fact that he had saved her life, she was interested in this young man.

The air of mystery that surrounded him intrigued her, and as she thought of those ruthless rivals who had been responsible for the disaster, her cheeks flamed red with indignation.

She rushed forward to help drag the speedboat ashore.

"Is it badly damaged?" Tony asked, as anxiously he examined it.

He shrugged, his face pale and worried. "Fraid I don't know. I don't know much about the innards of a motor. Francois, my mechanic, looks after that. Half a tick! I'll go and fetch him. That's my boathouse over there!"

He nodded to where a ramshackle shed could be seen rising behind the rocks at the far end of the beach.

When he had gone, Tony bent over the boat. She had a good knowledge of the mechanical side of motors, and quickly she realised that the driving-shaft was cracked.

The engine did not seem to have suffered any hurt, but a new shaft was essential.

"It will have to be specially made," she murmured, and then frowned; for there was little time to get a new shaft manufactured. Then her brow cleared. A week or two ago she had met the director of the La Rue Motor Works at Nice. He was a motor racing enthusiast, and Tony had become very friendly with him.

"He'd rush through the order if I ask him," the Speed Girl told herself. "I'll speak to Terry about it when he comes back."

At that moment the young speedboatist reappeared. He was alone, and there was a look of utter despair on his bearded face. Tony eyed him in alarm.

"What's the matter now?" she asked.

He flung out his hands in a boyish gesture of helplessness.

"Francois has gone—packed up and left me in the lurch," he declared. "This is more of Reinberg's work. He's bribed my mechanic to clear out, and it's hopeless to try to engage another one. All the decent mechanics were booked up weeks ago!"

Savagely he stared down at the damaged Racing Queen.

"This means the end!" he declared. "I shall have to scratch from the race!"

Tony's heart went out to him, and not for a second did she hesitate. Smiling, she shook her head.

"Oh, no, it doesn't!" she said. "You've got another mechanic all ready to start work."

"I have?" He stared blankly. "And who might it be?"

Tony pointed to herself.

"Me—that is, if you'll have me," she said. "You!" He gasped. "You mean you'd really help me to get the boat O.K. for the race?"

"Of course I would. I'd love to help you."

And when the Speed Girl spoke like that, there was no doubt that her mind was made up.

HELD UP BY RUFFIANS!

"TONY, you're wonderful!" It was three days later, and the Speed Girl was just about to drive over to Nice to collect the new driving-shaft that, in response to her appeal, the La Rue Motor Company had rushed through.

Three pleasant days they had been for

Tony. In spite of Terry's fear, there had been no sign of any further plotting against the Racing Queen at all.

Tony and Terry had worked hard to restore the speedboat to tip-top condition, and once the new shaft was fitted they were both confident that the Racing Queen would be as fast as ever she had been.

"Are you sure you'll be all right?" Terry asked anxiously. "Not a bit worried?"

A mischievous glint crept into Tony's eyes as she switched on the engine of the Silver Phantom and prepared to let in the clutch.

"Well, there is one thing that worries me," she said, with a laugh.

"There is? What?"

"Your beard!"

"My—my beard?"

He stared blankly, and Tony laughed impishly.

"Yes, if you must wear a false beard," she said. "I wish you'd stick it on with glue or something. I'm terrified for fear it'll fall off one of these days!"

And with a cheery wave she was off.

"What a sport she is!" Terry gasped, as he stared after the Silver Phantom. "She knew all the time that I was disguised, and yet she never pestered me to know the reason. She's a sport, if ever there was one. I owe everything to her and—"

Then his expression changed as he thought of his enemies. It was not like them to lie doggo. Had he been wise to let Tony drive to Nice alone? But surely even Reinberg would never dare attack a girl on the open road?

Entering the boat-shed, he started to varnish the Racing Queen, but he could not rid himself of his fears, and suddenly he flung down the brush and, locking the door, went racing down the lane to the cottage where he lodged.

Meanwhile, Tony had reached Nice and taken aboard the new driving-shaft. When it had been carefully packed away in the long locker in the Phantom's tail, she turned round the car and set off for home.

It was a beautiful day, and she enjoyed every moment of that exhilarating run along the coastal road, but she had not got very far before she saw a red flag sticking out from the rocky bank on the right. Under it rested a board, bearing the warning in French:

"CAUTION! ROAD UP."

"That's funny!" ejaculated the Speed Girl. "There was no sign of any repairs being done when I came along just now!"

She slowed down, then, as she rounded a bend; she stood on her foot-brake, far ahead the way was barred by a heavy pole surmounted by another warning flag.

Puzzled, Tony stared blankly around, then her face paled with horror.

From the rocks at the side of the road four men had leapt. The road-up sign was a trap!

This was another of Reinberg's cunning plots. He meant to make certain that the Racing Queen did not race on Wednesday!

Before the Speed Girl could get over the first shock, her car was surrounded. She recoiled in dismay from the ruffianly faces that grinned at her.

One of them jumped on to the running-board and brutally grabbed Tony by the arm.

"Come on—get out!" he growled in French.

"If you don't want to be hurt you'll do as you're told."

Tony, though her heart was palpitating, glared at the rascal.

"What does this mean?" she gasped. "How dare you hold me up like this! Let me go—at once!"

She struggled angrily, then a moan of pain escaped her lips. Cruelly he had twisted her arm. Fiery stabs of pain ran up it, making her feel sick and dizzy.

"Get out!" he snarled, and he twisted her arm again.

Helpless, racked with pain, the Speed Girl obeyed. When she had left the car, her captor dragged her to the side of the road and nodded to his three companions.

"Get busy!" he ordered. "Grab that shaft. You'll find it stowed away in the locker."

Tony's heart sank.

Her worst suspicions were confirmed. These men were out to steal the new driving-shaft! If they succeeded, then Terry would be unable to race on Wednesday, for there would be no time to get another shaft made.

"Oh, how can you be so mean!" she panted.

"Listen, if it's money you want, I'll pay you anything in reason, only you mustn't take the shaft—you mustn't!"

Tears in her eyes, she gazed appealingly at the man who clutched her, but he only laughed harshly and bellowed out to the others to hurry.

Realising the futility of trying to appeal to their better natures, Tony struggled madly to tear herself free, but her captor only twisted her arm behind her back more fiercely.

Tony felt as though she would faint. She was powerless in his grip, and through her tears she saw the other men grab the precious driving-shaft and lift it out of the locker.

The rascals had a car hidden behind the rocks, and despair engulfed the Speed Girl as they began to carry the shaft over to it.

"Of, if only Terry were here!" she sobbed. "If only—"

Her voice trailed away, and new hope flooded her heart. From the distance came the roar of a motor-cycle engine. Excitedly she turned and peered down the road. The four ruffians glared, too.

Racing up to the scene at top speed was a dilapidated motor-bike, a lithe, bearded figure crouched over the handlebars.

Tony took one look, then a triumphant gasp escaped her lips.

"Terry!" she cried. "It's Terry!"

And Terry it was!

Unable to get rid of his fears, he had come out to meet the Silver Phantom. Now, as he saw the Speed Girl struggling in the grip of one of the four ruffians, he flung the throttle wide open.

Br-uuuuu-m!

The motor-bike thundered forward. Straight for the pole that barred the way it rocketed. At the very last moment Terry shut off the engine. Without waiting for the skidding machine to stop, he leapt off and vaulted over the pole.

"You dastardly brutes!" he shouted, and oblivious of the fact that the odds were four to one against him, he hurled himself forward.

Tony's captor felt himself grabbed. Helplessly he was dragged forward, then Terry's free fist came lunging out.

There was a crack-like thud, and the man slumped to the ground, knocked clean out. Like a wildcat, the young speedboatist whirled on the other three rascals.

"Attack a girl, would you!" he cried. "Thunder, but I'll teach you a little decency!"

His fists drove out like piston-rods. One rascal yelped as bunched knuckles took him in the eyes. A second groaned as something that felt like a sledgehammer took him in the jaw.

Tony, frightened through she was, could not restrain her admiration. Terry was absolutely fearless. With his own two fists he was beating the three hulking brutes that still remained on their feet.

But suddenly the fourth man recovered. Whipping a bludgeon from his pocket, he hurled himself at Terry from behind.

Tony gave a scream of warning.

"Oh, look out!" she gasped, and desperately clutched at the man's arm, trying to drag him back.

He shook himself free, ducked under Terry's lunging fist, then lashed out with his club.

Right over the elbow it cracked, and the blood drained from the young speedboatist's face. Livid with pain, he stumbled and almost fell.

Tony stared in horror.

"Leave them to me—you run for it—please! Don't butt in—you'll get hurt!" Terry managed to gasp out.

One arm hanging down limp and useless, he lurched forward. He managed to knock his assailant down, frantically waved to the Speed Girl again, then turned just as the other three ruffians flung themselves on top of him.

Down they all went, and Tony, terrified,

trembling, was in despair when suddenly she heard the sound of an approaching car.

Rushing across to the Phantom, she hammered on the Klaxon horn, sending out a wild screech for help.

To her relief the four rascals realised their danger. Leaving Terry lying gasping on the road, they jumped up, clambered into their own car, and went speeding away—just as a taxi came whirling up to the scene.

One look Tony gave the groaning figure lying in the dust, then with a sob she fell on her knees beside him and pillowed his head in her arms.

"The brutes!" she gasped. "Are you—are you badly hurt?"

Ruefully he smiled up at her.

"It's—it's my arm!" he whispered. "I think it's broken."

Just then the taxi came to a halt, and the driver and his passenger came running forward.

The passenger was a doctor on his way to Roche to attend a patient. Anxiously the Speed Girl watched while he examined the young speedboatist.

When, finally, Terry had been bandaged up and helped aboard the Silver Phantom, Tony clutched the doctor with an agitated hand.

"Is—is he badly hurt?" she asked.

He looked grim.

"Fraid his right arm got a nasty knock," he replied. "There are no bones broken, but he won't be able to use it for a week or two."

Tony's eyes filled with horror.

She was thinking of the speedboat race. It was to be run on Wednesday, and to-day was Monday; and Terry could not hope to drive the Racing Queen with one hand.

TONY IN DISGUISE

"WELL, how do you feel?"

It was the following afternoon, and Tony smiled anxiously as she entered the sick-room. Terry, his head bandaged, and one arm in a sling, gazed ruefully up from the pillow.

"Not so dusty," he said. "If only this wretched arm was O.K.—" He broke off with a sigh. "Fraid the doctor's right. I'll never be able to race to-morrow."

Then, as he saw that the Speed Girl was wearing her working overalls, and noticed her oily hands, he gave a start of surprise.

"But what have you been up to?" he demanded.

Tony gave a hurried look in the mirror over the mantelpiece, then rubbed agitatedly at a black smear on her cheek.

"Goodness, I do look a scarecrow!" she declared. "But I've come straight from work."

"From work?"

"Yes; I've been fitting the new shaft in place. It was rather a ticklish job, but I managed it in the end, and—I hope you don't mind—but I took the Racing Queen out on a test run. But, tell me," she went on, "why are you so desperately anxious to race? The trophy is only worth a few pounds. Surely, if it's a question of money, there are tons of other races you can enter for?"

He shook his head.

"No; to-morrow's race is the only one that means anything to me—or Reinberg," he declared. "Sit down, my dear! I will tell you the whole bag of tricks. You ought to know the truth."

He winced as a stab of fiery pain shot up his injured arm, then, his voice harsh with indignation, he told the whole story.

Incredulity and surprise chased each other across Tony's face as she listened, and there were tears in her eyes when he had finished.

Impulsively she reached across and squeezed his free hand.

"You poor thing!" she whispered. "No wonder you were so desperate to win! I wish I could help you!"

Indignation flushed her cheeks as she realised the full extent of Reinberg's villainy.

Reinberg was the secretary of a wealthy manufacturing firm that was owned by Terry's uncle. Until a year ago Terry and his uncle had been on good terms, and then a series of mysterious events had occurred at the works.

The firm's secrets had leaked out to their rivals, and as a result, they had lost several valuable contracts.

To Terry's horror, he had learnt that his uncle suspected him of being the culprit. Faked evidence pointed to him, and in trying to clear himself the young man only made matters worse.

Believing that Reinberg might be the real traitor, he had kept the secretary under watch, and one day had caught him red-handed in the act of stealing the formula of a new invention from his uncle's desk.

The pair had struggled for possession of the formula, but Terry had been knocked out. When he had recovered consciousness the formula had gone, and Reinberg accused him of having taken it.

Thanks to the faked evidence he had already found, Mr. Young had refused to listen to his nephew, and had dismissed him on the spot, saying he never wanted to see him again.

Furious but helpless, Terry had bided his time, and one night he had overheard Reinberg and another man talking in a Nice cafe. That conversation told Terry the truth.

Hearing footsteps, and frightened lest the

Tony stared thoughtfully for a few moments, then she gave a gasp. A daring idea had occurred to her. Excitedly she leaned over the bed.

"Why did you go about in disguise?" she asked.

"In case anyone should recognise me. You see, I knew everyone round about Nice. I had tons of friends until—until this business happened. Then everyone turned against me. I couldn't bear facing any of them until I'd proved my innocence, so I donned this wretched beard—went about in disguise."

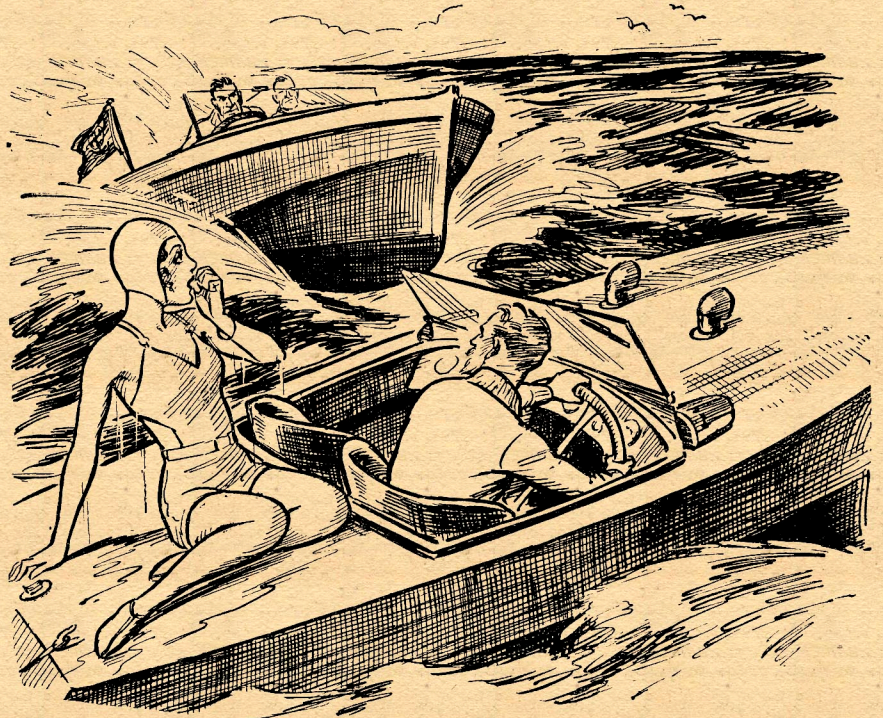
He plucked dismally at the false beard that still adorned his face.

"I suppose I may as well take it off now," he muttered. "The race is a wash-out. It's no use worrying. I can't pilot the Queen with one hand, so I'll have to scratch."

But Tony shook her head.

"You'll do nothing of the sort!" she declared. "We'll trick that Reinberg yet. Listen!" And Tony's eyes sparkled as she told Terry her daring plan.

"For one day only I'm going to shed all my feminine charm, and become a tough he-



Straight for the Racing Queen the other boat hurtled. It looked as if its mysterious occupants deliberately intended to capsize the speed-craft which Tony had scrambled aboard.

stolen formula should be found on him, Reinberg had stuffed it inside the silver trophy that Mr. Young presented annually to the winner of the Mediterranean Speedboat Race.

That was why Reinberg wanted to win the race. The trophy was locked up until the day of the race, and only by coming in first could he lay hands on it and obtain possession of the precious formula.

Terry, on the other hand, wanted to restore the formula to his uncle. If he could only get it he could prove his innocence, for stowed away with it was a copy that Reinberg had started to make.

"But why don't you write to your uncle?" asked Tony. "Why don't you tell him the truth?"

Terry smiled ruefully.

"I've tried it, but it's no use. He sent my letter back unopened, and when I called at his office he threatened to hand me over to the police. So, unless I win the race to-morrow, unless I get possession of the trophy before Reinberg, I shall never prove my innocence!"

His haggard face took on a look of despair. For he knew how impossible it was for him to enter for, let alone win, the race.

man!" Tony chuckled delightedly. "Come on! Hand over the beard!" she ordered.

"But I can't allow it!" he protested. "You're bound to be found out. Besides, Reinberg may try some other dirty trick when he sees the Racing Queen hasn't scratched."

"Pooh! He wouldn't dare—not with hundreds of spectators watching. Anyway, I'm going to have a shot at it. The whiskers, please!"

She pulled off his false beard, and, darting across to the fireplace, she donned the curly whiskers, and surveyed herself in the mirror.

Her novel scheme made her smile with impish amusement; but deep down in her heart she knew a terrible anxiety. Would she be able to carry through her daring role? Above all, would she be able to beat all the experienced speedboatists who would be her rivals?

Catching a glimpse of Terry's white, haggard face in the mirror, the Speed Girl forced away her doubts.

"I must win!" she told herself. "I'm going to win—for Terry's sake!"

"HOW do I look?" It was the following morning, and Tony was just about to leave for the starting-point of the race.

Despite his anxiety on her behalf, Terry had to grin. The Speed Girl certainly was unrecognisable. A set of curly brown whiskers almost completely hid her pretty face. A pair of false eyebrows gave her a ferocious look, and the peak of her yachting hat, pulled well down, threw a deceptive shadow across her face.

"Swell!" Terry said, with enthusiasm. "Well, I must fly!" Tony broke in. And, with a cheery wave, she was off.

Nervously she left the cottage and walked down through the town. Behind her beard her cheeks were hot and flushed. She was certain that everyone was eyeing her strangely. She was positive that her disguise must be penetrated.

Trying to stride out like a man, she thrust her hands in her pockets, and even clamped Terry's pipe between her teeth. It was not alight—even she could not screw up sufficient courage to light it up—but it added to her mannish appearance.

But the beach was soon reached, and there she found that all the rival speedboats had been lined up alongside the wooden jetty.

The sands were thick with people. A grand stand had been built on the promenade, and hundreds of other excited spectators had congregated on the jetty itself.

Her heart in her mouth, Tony strode briskly for the gangway that led down to the boats. An official there eyed her keenly.

"Name?" he barked. "Terence O'Neil, owner of the Racing Queen," answered Tony gruffly.

She felt all shivery. The suspense was agonising. The official was looking from his book to her and back again. Did he suspect?

On tenterhooks Tony waited; then, to her relief, he nodded.

"Your number's three," he said. "Here's a chart of the course. You'd better study it. Any disregard of the regulations will lead to disqualification."

Tony took the sheet of paper and hurried past the barrier; but as she climbed down to the Racing Queen she saw the pilot of the next boat—No. 6—gaping at her in pop-eyed surprise.

Her heart did another wild somersault. Reinberg!

Would he see through her disguise?

As he continued to look at her Tony's anxiety increased. It would be disastrous if his suspicions were roused. It would mean that she would not be allowed to race, and then Terry would be unable to prove his innocence.

Her lips quivered, and to hide her agitation she popped the pipe back in her mouth.

Suddenly his voice reached her.

"What—what the dickens are you doing here?" he gasped. "I thought you were laid up in bed."

"It's no thanks to you that I'm not," replied Tony.

She tried to make her voice as gruff as possible, but to her apprehensive mind it seemed inevitable that he must guess her imposture.

He did look at her rather hard, but then, to Tony's relief, his mechanic hailed him from the jetty, and he turned away.

Anxious that no one else should engage her in conversation the Speed Girl bent her head over the regulations that governed the race.

The competitors had to speed across the bay, then round a small rocky island, and race back towards the jetty. The course had to be covered four times, and gaily flagged buoys marked out the turning points.

"I hope I don't let Terry down," Tony thought. "Handling a speedboat is quite different to driving a car, and though I've put in a bit of practice—"

She broke off as she noticed signs of activity in the other boats. The signal to cast off from the moorings had just been given, and a minute or two later—

B-000-M!

The starting maroon crashed out, and instantly eight of the nine speedboats went racing forward. Only one remained behind—the Racing Queen.

Inexperience and nervousness had caused Tony to be left at the post; but quickly she got the engine started, and went hurtling after the others.

To her dismay she saw that Reinberg had taken the lead. Already his big blue craft was skidding round the first buoy. Hard on his heels skimmed the other boats, Tony striving desperately to draw level.

Suddenly the Racing Queen lurched up. Gallons of water swamped aboard. Tony had tried to take the bend too fast. Only a miracle prevented the boat from capsizing, and, white-faced and apprehensive, she sped on towards the island.

If only this had been a road race, she thought! If only she had been at the helm of her beloved Phantom, instead of in charge of this unaccustomed, easily wrecked boat!

But she quickly mastered the technique of rounding buoys. On the straight sections she had little to do. As long as she kept the sharp nose head on to the waves, the engine did the rest. And what an engine it was!

Hand over fist Terry's trim craft roared down on its rivals. One after another were left wallowing behind, and when the island was rounded Tony was lying fourth.

The excitement ashore increased. Telescopes, binoculars, and even ancient opera-glasses were trained on the bouncing, skimming boats.

Again they vanished behind the island; again there was a tense wait; then a shout awoke the echoes.

"Here comes No. 6! Reinberg still leads!" But what was that looming through a curtain of spray? A red dot that seemed to

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Owing To The Easter Holidays
The Next **GIRLS' CRYSTAL**
Weekly Will Be On Sale On
Thursday, April 9th, Instead
Of On Friday.

flash through the air, only its flat stern touching the water.

The Racing Queen!

Tony had gained second place. Now she was battling to overhaul the rascal in the blue speedboat. Lips set fiercely, hands grimly gripping the juddering helm, she flung the throttle wide open.

At all costs she must beat Reinberg! All Terry's hopes depended on the result of her efforts. Her pulses raced as she thought of what was at stake.

Lashed by the rising spray, she turned the boat round in its own length, went rocketing past another buoy, then plunged behind the island for the third time.

Reinberg, flinging a glance behind him, saw the Racing Queen roaring up, and, his face as black as thunder, strove furiously to keep his lead.

But when the two rivals again re-appeared to view there was not twenty feet between them.

An excited roar came from the shore:

"Come on, No. 3!"

"Come on, the Englishman!"

But there was no need to encourage the Speed Girl. She knew that hers was the better boat. Barring accidents, she would pass No. 6.

Almost side by side they flashed past the last buoy and plunged behind the rocks for the last time.

Tony was calmly confident. Reinberg was snarling with dismay. He knew himself beaten. The Racing Queen was rocketing up—nearer and nearer.

Suddenly its red nose crept ahead. One bouncing hop and it was definitely in the lead.

Barring accidents, the Racing Queen had won. But Reinberg had one last desperate card to play. Flogging his straining engine ruthlessly, he managed to draw alongside the

Speed Girl, then, bending, he whipped something up from the floor of the cockpit.

It was a heavy spanner, and straight for Tony's head it whirled.

The Speed Girl ducked, dragged madly at the wheel, then a shudder of pain engulfed her.

The missile had crashed home on her shoulder. Dizzy with pain, she let go of the wheel. Instantly the Racing Queen fell into a skid. Straight for the rocky cliff of the island it thundered.

Frantically Tony fought the lurching, slithering boat. Her brain seemed to be on fire. Her bruised shoulder smarted horribly, but pluckily she got the Racing Queen back on its course.

To her dismay she saw No. 6 racing beyond the island, skidding round for the homeward run to the jetty. The rascally Reinberg had made the most of his chance.

With trembling fingers Tony flung the throttle wide. Her face white, her eyes gleaming with anger, she tore after the blue boat.

A wild yell greeted their re-appearance. The shouts grew until the whole beach seemed to rock with sound. No. 6 was still in the lead, but the Racing Queen was overhauling it.

A hundred yards from the jetty head, and Reinberg was a bare two lengths in front. Half a minute later, and Tony was abreast. Throwing back creaming waves, the rivals rocketed on.

Savagely Reinberg strove to coax another ounce of speed out of his engine, but in vain. There was no holding back the Racing Queen. Up—it crept. Now it was thundering along neck and neck, and then, suddenly, it spurted into the lead. One last final dizzy duel of speed and then the Speed Girl whirled past the finishing flag—winner by a bare half-length.

Despite treachery, she had won. Shakily she clambered out of the cockpit. Her bruised shoulder stiff and aching, she stumbled up the steps.

The president of the racing committee—Terry's uncle—stood waiting, a silver trophy in hand.

With glowing eyes, Tony surveyed it. That trophy could prove Terry's innocence. Excitedly she accepted it from his hands; oblivious of his congratulatory words, she groped for the little drawer in the plinth about which Terry had told her.

She did not realise that her false beard had slipped. She did not realise that everyone was staring at her queerly. Then, even as she made to open the drawer, Reinberg gave a savage shout of understanding.

"That scoundrel is an impostor! It isn't Terry O'Neill at all!" he bellowed, and made to snatch the precious trophy from Tony's grasp.

But before he could reach her a white-faced young man with one arm in a sling burst through the crowd. Hurling himself forward, Terry lashed out with his uninjured fist.

Reinberg gave one startled grunt of pain, then collapsed, while Mr. Young stared blankly from the Speed Girl to his grim-faced nephew.

"What does this outrage mean?" he demanded.

Explanations were soon given, and when Tony produced the missing formula from the trophy, Mr. Young's face was a study. As for the crowd, they gaped in amazement. Never had they known such a sensational climax to a sensational race.

The Racing Queen, of course, was disqualified; so was No. 6, for Reinberg's attempt to injure his rival had been seen, and eventually the race was awarded to the third boat in.

But Terry did not worry about that. He had proved his innocence, exposed the secretary's treachery, and earned his uncle's grateful thanks. As for Tony—the look in the young speedboatist's eyes was all the reward she needed.

There was gratitude and admiration there—emotion that Terry tried in vain to express in words.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

You mustn't miss next week's full-of-thrills story of Tony the Speed Girl. Order your **GIRLS' CRYSTAL** in advance. It will be on sale on **THURSDAY**.

The GIRL WHO GAVE UP LUXURY



By
**DIANA
MARTIN**

JOHN ARNOLD'S OFFER

"JENNY! Jenny!" gasped Pamela Drake wildly. "Come back!"

In a moment she had jumped for the door, brushing past Greta Winch and oblivious of the scandalised look on the face of John Arnold, her editor friend. Her one thought was to bring back Jenny Bright, the girl she had rescued from the slums.

Her heart went out to Jenny who, not used to all this magnificence, had been unable to stand the strain any longer and had fled from the dining-room.

Too late Pam saw what an ordeal that meal must have been to Jenny. She did not realise, however, how Greta Winch had added to Jenny's discomfort; did not realise that Jenny's final burst of passion was inspired not by her lack of ability to fit in with Pam's new friends and their surroundings, but by the deliberately spiteful provocation of the girl who had been so charming to herself.

Pam was through the door in a flash, across the hall and out of the front door. She caught up with Jenny just as that girl, frenziedly fumbling with the gate, was brought to an unexpected halt. She grasped her shoulder. "Jenny!"

Jenny, her face all wet with tears, her lips quivering in distress, tore herself free.

"Let me go!" she choked. "Jenny, no," Pam said sternly. "Jenny—Oh, my goodness, what came over you?" she asked. "Jenny, please! Look at me. Look at me," she commanded almost fiercely, as Jenny buried her face in her hands. "Jenny darling, please come back."

"No, Pam. N-not after what I've done. Oh, listen!" Jenny turned a tearful face. "Pam, I don't want to leave you! You know that, don't you? But Pam, this ain't—isn't no place for me. I'm not the lady you are, and I aren't used to lady's ways yet. No, Pam, please let me get it off my chest now. Pam, I'm only disgracing you in that fine house."

"Oh, rubbish!" Pam cried. "But I am," Jenny said almost fiercely. "I'm just like a fish out of water. And that Greta girl—oh, I know you think she's all she

should be, Pam, but she hates me! She doesn't want you to be friends with me!" "Oh, Jenny!" Pam cried. "You're upset. You're letting your imagination run away with you. Why, Greta—"

"I tell you," Jenny quavered, and then shook her head. "No, I ain't going to tell no tales," she said defiantly. "You always told me not to tell tales, didn't you? But Pam, I couldn't stick it—not there, knowing that I'd be in your way all the time. I haven't been educated like you have. I never had a posh meal in a posh house before, except that time when I was with Mr. Thorpe, but he was different and didn't have all the frills and trimmings they have here."

Pam smiled. Poor, scared Jenny! How helpless she was in a situation like this—the girl whom she had sworn to look after, to protect, to educate up to her own standards. But it had been too sudden. She saw that now. She should never have plunged Jenny into such a terrifying ordeal as a full-course dinner in a strange rich man's house all at once.

"Jenny," she said, "walk back, dear. I want to talk to you. You know, Jenny, that Mr. Arnold is the editor of the paper I'm going to work on."

"Yes," Jenny quavered. "I like him." "Well, Jenny, Mr. Arnold knows our circumstances. He knows that we're alone in the world. He's as interested in you as he is in me, Jenny, and—I didn't want to tell you this before—but he asked me if we would both care to live at this lovely house until we've made other plans.

"Jenny, I wanted you to live here because you do want to be a lady, don't you, and this is a chance of learning. It's also my chance, Jenny, of making a name for myself with my

writing. I'll go away with you if you wish it—"

Jenny hung her head. "No, Pam! Let me go! I want to be a lady, yes! But I don't want to be one all at once, you know. Let me go—"

"Then," Pam quietly assured her, "I go, too, Jenny."

They had reached the front door now. Almost unconsciously Jenny had fallen into step by Pam's side. That door opened again, and there framed between the pillars of the porch stood John Arnold himself, a smile on his face, his hand extended just as if nothing had happened.

Jenny, staring past him for a moment, looked very much inclined to bolt again. Her eyes went past his shoulder in search of Greta.

"Greta," John Arnold said as if he understood, "has gone upstairs. But come in, both of you," he added, and dropped a gentle hand upon Jenny's shoulder. "Now—let's go into the drawing-room, shall we, and have a little chat. You don't mind, Jenny?"

"Nun-no!" Jenny gulped uncertainly. So into the drawing-room they went, Pam rather worried, Jenny shamefaced and doubtful. There John Arnold bade them both sit down, and taking a seat opposite them began to talk. He talked chiefly of Pam—her talent, her ability, her prospects.

"You, Jenny, want to help Pam. I know you're attached to her as she is to you. I understand, of course, that all this is rather new and strange to you, and—well, Jenny, let me put my cards on the table. On the way from the station we had a little talk—remember? You told me then that you were going to find some sort of situation, Jenny."

Jenny blushed. "The situation," Mr. Arnold continued gravely, "is found for you—if you care to accept it."

Jenny's eyes opened. "But I don't understand—" "How would you like to be a parlourmaid?" "Parlourmaid?" Jenny stared. "You mean a sort of servant?"

"Yes!" "Here?" "Yes!" "So's I could be near Pam?" Jenny cried delightedly.

"Naturally! You could see Pam whenever you wished, Jenny."

"But I won't have anything to do with her—Miss Greta, I mean," Jenny asked anxiously. "And I won't be having my meals, and so on, with you?"

"No, Jenny. You will have those in the servants' quarters."

"Then I'm on!" Jenny cried. "I mumm-mean, thank you very much," she stammered, catching Pam's eye.

And so very skilfully that was settled. Pam wasn't quite sure, at first, whether she was in favour of the notion or not. But Jenny was happy—frightfully, tremendously happy. It was the relief of Jenny's life to feel that she need no longer be on her dignity.

She wasn't up to acting the lady yet, she told Pam, though she was going to try harder and harder, now she had the chance of studying rich people's habits first-hand, to improve herself. Pam shook her head.

It seemed somehow unfair to her—that she who had enjoyed all those social benefits of which Jenny had been deprived, who had been reared on Jenny's money, should enjoy all the amenities of luxury.

But Jenny didn't mind. As long as Jenny could be near Pam, nothing mattered. The lofty heights to which Pam aspired Jenny could never share yet. She was glad just to be in the same house with Pam, to be near Pam, to be able to talk with Pam and enjoy her friendship. Jenny could have asked nothing better than that.

She was happy—happy! The only little cloud upon her horizon was Greta Winch. Greta had

SHE MEANT TO SEPARATE PAM AND JENNY

No Trick Was Too Low For Greta To Stoop To

THAT SCAMP SCOTTIE



plainly shown that she didn't like her. Had shown very conclusively that she thought she was not good enough for Pam. Still, blow that stuck-up cat, Jenny thought. Pam would never, never put her first in her thoughts.

"Well," Pam said, "that's settled, Jenny. And that means you'll have to have clothes—parlourmaid's apron, and so on. I vote," she added, "that we spend the evening going to get them."

Jenny grinned. Pam could not have delighted her more. In a moment she had on her hat and coat, and she and Pam were in the act of tripping to the door, when Greta came rustling down the stairs. She looked not at Jenny, but at Pam.

"Oh, Pam, going out?"

"Yes," Pam said.

"Oh, where? Can I come?"

But when Pam told her the nature of the mission, she flashed just one jealous look at Jenny and shook her head.

"Oh, in that case, I'll stay at home," she said. "But don't be any longer than you can help, will you, Pam? I shall miss you, you know."

"Cat!" was jealous Jenny's private answer to that smiling confession, and inwardly determined to keep Pam out just as long as she could. What right had that upstart to appropriate her friend in that fashion?

Out they went, tripping happily along the street, and turning finally into the High Street. Jenny was a little more thoughtful than usual. There was a shadow on her face which Pam did not quite understand. She pinched her arm.

"Penny for 'em, Jenny!"

"Eh?" Jenny flushed. "Oh, they're nothing, Pam."

"Now," Pam said chidingly, "no secrets, Jenny. I know there's something on your mind. What is it?"

"Well, it's her," Jenny said. "That Greta. Pam, she likes you."

Pam laughed.

"Well, there's no harm in that."

"No," Jenny admitted—not with enthusiasm, however. "But, Pam, she—she's your class, isn't she? She's been educated like you. She's a lady—of a sort. Pam, you—you

wouldn't get to like her better than me, would you?"

So that was the secret fear in Jenny's mind. Pam laughed, pressing her arm affectionately. "Oh, Jenny, aren't you silly?" she said. "Of course I couldn't like her better than you. Now are you satisfied?"

Jenny was. From that moment she shed every care. What fun it was to be with Pam, buying things, looking at the shops, talking over their plans. Her only regret was that the shops closed at eight and, laden with parcels, they had to return. Some of her enthusiasm evaporated, however, when Greta met them at the front door.

"Oh, Pam, it seems ages since you went!" she cried. "Jenny, did you get all you wanted?"

"Yes, thank you," Jenny said uncomfortably.

"That's good. Then will you go down to the kitchen and report to Mrs. Adaire, the housekeeper?"

"What, now?" Jenny asked in dismay.

"Why, of course! You're a maid now, you know, Jenny."

Jenny bit her lip. Pam, feeling she ought to say or do something, but not knowing what to say or do, looked uncomfortable. Rather hurt, Jenny trudged away, but not before Greta, with a hateful stare, had taken Pam's arm.

"I—I suppose she must report to the housekeeper?" Pam asked.

"Naturally," Greta said offhandedly. "But come with me, Pam. I want to show you the new fur coat that uncle bought me for my birthday last week."

To the new fur coat, therefore, Pam was introduced, but exquisite garment as it proved to be, she found her mind not on it. She was thinking of Jenny—Jenny a maid, while she—Greta broke in on her thoughts.

"And," Greta was saying, holding up a second fur coat, "this is my old one, Pam. At least—with a disarming smile—"I call it my old one, though I haven't worn it for more than a year. It would fit you, you know. Do try it on."

Pam, to humour her, tried it on. She smiled as she looked at herself in the mirror. Really it was nice—much nicer, she privately thought—than the new one. Pam had always been fond of ocelot, and here was an ocelot of the very finest quality. She turned with a smile to Greta.

"It's stunning," she said.

"Is it?" Greta laughed. "Then, Pam, it's yours—yes, yours!" she cried. "No, please don't shake your head. I asked uncle if I could give it to you, and uncle was just delighted with the idea. He seems to have taken a great fancy to you, Pam—just as I have."

So Pam had a new coat in her possession, and what a lovely coat. How she admired Greta for her kindly thought, and how pleased was Mr. Arnold when he saw her in the coat. Pirouetting in the drawing-room, Pam laughed with all the happiness of a girl who finds pleasure in new finery.

She did not notice Greta ring the bell, did not notice until she turned to find her staring eyes upon Jenny—Jenny dressed in a white cap and new white apron, Jenny blinking as if she could hardly believe her eyes.

The contrast again caused Pam a twinge. She in furs, Jenny in the garb of a servant! It wasn't fair!

"Oh, Pam, don't you look lovely!" Jenny cried. And what a nice coat that is!"

"Get some coffee, please," Greta cut in.

"Yes; but, as I was saying to Pam—"

"Please!" Greta said, with a flash of her eyes.

"Yes, miss," Jenny mumbled, and, fiercely flushing, withdrew, while Pam, a little chilled, stared at her new friend.

"Greta, that wasn't very kind. Jenny, after all, is my friend."

"Jenny," Greta said, trying to keep the jealousy out of her tone, "is a servant."

"But, Greta—" Pam suddenly flung off the coat. "Greta, please let us understand each other," she said quietly. "I know Jenny is not like other girls. But Jenny is my friend—my very best friend. I don't care a button if she is only a servant. If it comes to that,

what am I? Just another of your uncle's employees."

Greta bit her lip, but in a moment her false, ready smile had flashed out. A good actress was Greta.

"Oh, Pam, I'm sorry," she said. "I didn't realise, of course, you felt like that about her. Please forgive me—do. Of course, if you really are so keen on Jenny—well, Pam, your friends are my friends, too. I'll be kind to her—I promise you that. Look, let's have her in and have coffee with her, shall we?"

"Oh, could we?" Pam asked.

"Of course!"

And when Jenny came in, she had coffee with them. And Greta, most amazingly, was just as nice as it was possible for a girl to be. But Greta was raging inwardly. If Pam missed those glances of hate which were continually shot across the room at her friend, Jenny did not. Greta hated Jenny. But Greta hated Jenny not one whit more than Jenny hated Greta.

A VICTIM OF GRETA'S SPITE

NEXT morning Pam departed with her new employer, John Arnold, for his first day in the offices of the "Modern Magazine."

Thrilled to the marrow was Pam, who was placed in a room of her very own that adjoined the editor's sanctum, with her own desk, her own typewriter.

"These," said John Arnold, putting before her several long, narrow sheets of printed paper, "are galley proofs. They are, in fact, the first proofs from the printers, and I'd like you to read them through and see how many errors you can spot in the type. Here is a specimen sheet, which will show you how to correct them."

Eager to learn was Pam. By midday she had mastered the art of correcting proofs. The editor, comparing her corrections with duplicates upon his desk, had warm words of praise for her work. In the afternoon she was initiated into the art and mystery of "make-up," shown how to cut the galley proofs to make them fit into the pages, how to write up when the galley proofs were found to contain an insufficient length of typescript.

The work was so fascinating, so interesting, that the time simply whizzed by. Pam was quite surprised when at half-past five John Arnold came into her room, looking a little tired, she thought, and said, with a smile:

"Well, Pam, work's over for the day. Better see about going."

Only then did Pam remember Jenny. How had Jenny been getting on? But Jenny had not been getting on. Jenny, though she would never have admitted it to Pam, had had a terribly miserable day. Jenny did not mind work. Like Pam, the more she had to do the better she liked it. But she did resent fiercely the interference of Greta Winch.

It was no accident, she knew, that Greta had kicked the bucket of water all over her when she had been engaged in scrubbing the stairs that morning. No accident, either, when she had taken Greta her coffee in the morning-room, that Greta apparently had bumped into her in the act of coming out. Crash! Over had gone the coffee, and down had dropped the tray, making a dark stain on the nice fawn carpet, which had taken Jenny half an hour's energetic washing to remove.

Eagerly Jenny waited for Pam's return, but when she did come, Greta thrust her out of the way and rushed at Pam.

"Oh, Pam—Pam!" she cried. "I've been waiting ages for you, Pam. How did you get on?"

"Oh, lovely!" laughed Pam.

"I knew you would—I knew it!" Greta gurgled. "And, Pam, I've got a lovely surprise for you. Guess! I've got two stalls for the theatre—Press tickets, you know. They arrived for uncle this morning, and as I act as sort of uncle's secretary when he's at the office, I opened the letter. And uncle, you did say, didn't you, that I could have the very next Press tickets that came along?"

"Why, of course!" Mr. Arnold said laughingly.

"And we can have the car?"

"Certainly!"

"Well, there you are, Pam!" And Jenny, standing in the background, felt a sick pang of dismay.

"There you are!" Greta laughed. "Whoopee for a real old evening on the spree! Now don't look so anxious, Pam. I've just got the loveliest evening dress you can wear, and besides, it's so good for your training to take advantage of these things, isn't it, uncle? I mean, Pam is one of the Press now."

Poor Pam! She didn't want to go—not really. She wanted to spend the evening with Jenny. But what could she do? It would have seemed ungracious to refuse, especially as John Arnold seemed so keen on the notion, too.

But Jenny! Jenny, when they were alone for a few brief moments, looked the most miserable creature on earth.

"Oh, Jenny, I'm sorry I've got to leave you on your own!" Pam said.

"Oh, that's all right!" Jenny replied, in a stifled voice.

"You're sure you don't mind, old thing?"

"N-no," Jenny said heroically.

"What will you do?"

"Oh, I—I've got plenty to do, thanks, Pam!" Jenny said. "You go off and enjoy yourself."

Bravo Jenny! But how dreary, how miserable she felt when finally Greta, dressed in a frock of dazzling emerald green, with a white fur thrown over her bare shoulders, came tripping into the hall, shouting with hateful familiarity:

"Pam—Pam! Buck up, Pam, there's a dear!"

Jenny was there, feeling impressed despite her dislike of the girl at the dazzlingly pretty picture she made. Then there was a footstep on the stairs. She swung round eagerly.

"Oh, Pam—Pam!" she gasped.

Pam it was. Pam, attired radiantly, looking like a queen. Jenny gasped. Never before had she seen Pam looking lovelier, more exquisite, more well groomed. The pink satin dress she wore shimmered in the light. The glorious golden shoes she wore seemed made for a princess.

"What a lady she looks!" Jenny thought. "Oh, what a lady!"

John Arnold came out, dressed in a dinner suit. He wasn't going to the theatre, but Jenny thought he looked just as if he was. A horrible feeling of hopelessness came over her suddenly. Oh, what was the use of it? She'd never mix with these people; she'd never be what Pam was!

She'd never be able to look like that and carry off those clothes with the unconscious

grace that Pam carried them off. Pam wondered at the rather hopeless look in her eyes.

"Shan't be long, Jenny," she said.

"No, Pam; enjoy yourself," Jenny said haltingly.

She watched them from the hall as they went out, then listlessly, wearily she turned away.

She was in the way. Pam was among her own people at last. Foolish—foolish to imagine she could ever be like Pam!

Up to the room she shared with Pam she trailed, her eyes blinded by the tears which seemed to be welling right from her heart. On the bed she dropped lifelessly, and sat there for a very long time thinking about it all. How far had she got to go before she was the lady Pam was? She'd never make it—she couldn't!

And then abruptly her mood changed. She saw that if she was going to keep Pam's friendship that she must be like Pam. And to be like Pam, she had to study and work hard. Well, why not?

If she could prove to Pam that she was as good as that starchy upstart, Greta—

Determination came to Jenny. Well, here was her chance. She was in a rich man's house, studying a rich man's ways. She had here a chance of educating herself. She'd teach herself to say things properly, to eat things with the right knives and forks, to look as dazzling as Greta in fancy clothes.

Inspired, Jenny rummaged for her books. Here she was—this book on etiquette. She opened it, sat down, and again began to pore over it. Not if she knew it was Jenny going to be beaten!

JENNY'S BIG DECISION

A WEEK passed. It was a week of intense happiness for Pam.

Not so happy for Jenny.

But Jenny, despite the snubs and the sneers hurled at her behind Pam's back, was also making progress.

She was studying hard and studying fiercely. Every minute of the day she could spare she crammed into her books, studying with such terrific concentration that even Pam began to become aware of the difference by the end of the first week in John Arnold's house.

No longer was Jenny shy, shrinking, timid. No longer did she hang back when Pam was about. A new confidence, a new poise was rapidly taking the place of the nervous, self-effacing girl who had first entered John Arnold's house.



Both Jenny and Pam stared in dismay at the ruined drawing, but Greta was jubilant. She knew Jenny would be blamed for upsetting the vase.

She learned to say when on duty: "yes, miss," and "no, miss," and "very good, miss," treating both Pam and Greta with deference. Off duty she was Pam's friend.

"But, Jenny, what on earth," Pam said one night. "I can't understand it all. I've been talking to Mrs. Adaire, the housekeeper. She says you actually laid the table for dinner to-night."

Jenny laughed. "I asked her if I could, Pam. I wanted to see if I could get the knives and the forks in their proper order, you know. And I did, too. I never made a single mistake."

"But Jenny, that's lovely." "Oh, I can do more than that," Jenny said. "You ought to see me, Pam, I'm getting on. I never thought once that I could be a lady, but I feel myself getting nearer to it now, you know. And I do my own finger nails now, Pam—look," and she extended them shyly for Pam's inspection. "And I'm starting to learn all about history and geography, and things like that. Pam, you want me to be a lady, don't you—so that I shan't disgrace you?"

"Dear Jenny!" Pam laughed. Greta also noticed the change, and Greta, still privately despising Jenny as a gutter urchin, was just a little shaken. Her most skilful wiles to part Jenny and Pam had met with such a lack of success that she was feeling discouraged. The friendship of the two friends, so far from dying, seemed to be growing stronger every day.

The next night Pam arrived home full of enthusiastic news.

"Oh, Jenny," she cried, "guess! Mr Arnold is so kind—so marvellous. I didn't tell you, did I, that he's given me a responsible job. I'm a sub-editress on the paper now, Jenny, and it's my job to check all the stuff that comes from authors and artists. And Jenny—"

"Yes?" Jenny gasped. "I've got permission, old thing, for you to come and see me at the office to-morrow afternoon. It is your afternoon off, isn't it? Greta's coming along, and when I heard that I asked if you might come with her—"

"Oh, Pam!" Jenny sighed, with eyes a-kindle.

Next morning Jenny worked busily and happily, a song on her lips, a smile on her face, one eager eye on the clock. She was eager to see Pam at her new job; eager to see her idol at work in her new environment.

Pam, meanwhile, was busy. With amazing ease she had fallen into her job. A pile of manuscripts awaited her attention; there were several proofs to pass, but she had finished them all off by lunch-time; and was looking forward to her friends' visit when John Arnold came in from the room adjoining, with a huge water colour painting in his hand. He smiled as he laid it before Pam.

"Well, Pam, what do you think of that?"

Pam looked at it. Then she flushed. A keen admirer of art in any shape or form was Pam, and she saw at once that this had been executed by a master hand.

It seemed to glow, the lovely laughing face of the girl which gazed out from the painting seemed to be imbued with life, with vitality.

"Pretty good, eh?" John Arnold said, showing his white teeth in a smile. "That's our next cover, Pam. Marvellous bit of work, isn't it—and it's going to cost the firm fifty guineas. Whatever you do, be careful with it. I want you to send it over to the printers with the usual note."

"Yes, Mr. Arnold," Pam said, and wondered, not for the first time, at the queer look he gave her as he turned to depart.

But not at once did she write the note to the printers. She stood looking at that beautiful drawing. Fifty guineas! It was a lot of money. There would be the dickens to pay if anything went wrong with this. But it was lovely oh, lovely!

Pam wondered if when it came back from the printers she might beg it, and have it framed and hang it in her bed-room. She was still rapturously regarding it when a tap came at the door and a smartly uniformed girl announced:

"Miss Winch and Miss Bright to see you, Miss Drake!"

Then—

"Pam!" shrilled Jenny.

And there was Jenny, all flushed and radiant, leaping past Greta Winch, who stood in the doorway. Jenny, arms outflung, her face a fiery red, her eyes sparkling—just as if, indeed, she hadn't seen Pam for a year.

Oh crumbs, isn't it lovely to see you! Jenny enthused. "And I say, what a lovely little office, Pam. A desk, too, and a typewriter. Do you write your own stories on that? And—ooo, I say—" and Jenny's lips went up into a curve of admiring awe as her eyes fell upon the picture. "I say, Pam, that's scrumptious, isn't it."

Pam laughed. "Be careful with that, Jenny. It cost fifty guineas."

"Fifty what? Oh my hat!" And then she stepped aside as Greta thrust her way forward. "Oh, sorry," she stammered, flushing.

"I suppose," Greta asked, "that I may have the pleasure of shaking hands with you, Pam?"

"Oh goodness, Greta!" Pam laughed. "How lovely to see you both. But wait a minute, will you, I've just got to parcel this up and send it to the works, and then I'll be free to talk to you. Now where's the brown paper?"

She turned. Jenny turned with her, anxious as usual to be helpful. A sudden gleam came into the eyes of Greta Winch. In a flash she had taken in the situation. Pam's back was turned, so was Jenny's. And Jenny, leaning over, was in dangerous proximity to the vase of flowers which stood upon the edge of Pam's desk. One swift step she took. Swish! Over went the vase. At the same moment she shrilled:

"Jenny! Jenny, you clumsy thing, look what you've done!"

Too late, apparently, she started forward. But the damage was done. The vase, spilling its contents all over the beautiful water-colour, soaked it at once, with the result that the colours began to run.

Jenny wheeled, her eyes round with horror, her face deathly white. From Pam went up an exclamation of consternation that was almost a shriek:

"Jenny!"

Jenny stood still, her face like marble, a bewildered look in her eyes. She did not remember having touched the vase, but she really did suppose now that she had accidentally knocked it over.

"P-Pam!" she stuttered.

But Pam was desperately diving for a duster—all horror and frenzy. But hopeless—hopeless to do anything. The fifty-guinea drawing was already ruined.

And then, while she gazed, and Greta hovered anxiously, the door of the adjoining room opened. John Arnold, a smile on his face, walked into the room. But the smile froze and his eyes grew round with horror as he saw the ruined drawing upon Pam's desk.

"Pamela!" he gasped.

Pam, crimson, looked up.

"Oh, Mr. Arnold, I—I'm sorry—"

"Sorry? Sorry?" A light flamed in his eyes. "Sorry, Pam! What on earth have you been doing? That sketch should have been sent off long ago. Oh, Great Scott! Fifty guineas worth of work—"

Jenny stood white, shaken, and trembling. "Please, Mr. Arnold, it—it wasn't Pam. It was me."

"What?"

"I—I knocked it over!" Jenny quavered. "though I'm sure I don't know how."

"You?" He glared at her, was quivering with anger now. Pam, who had never seen him lose his temper before, felt afraid. "Then—then get out of this office!" he cried thickly.

"You, too, Greta! Pam—"

"But—" Jenny said.

"Go!"

"Yes, come on, you fool!" Greta hissed, grabbing at her arm.

Jenny found herself tugged through the doorway. As it closed she heard John Arnold storming. She quivered.

"Oh crumbs, what have I done now? Greta"—she turned in her helplessness to her enemy—"she—she won't get into a row?"

Greta smiled sourly.

"She'll get into more than a row. She'll probably get the sack," she said spitefully. "A nice thing you've done, haven't you, with your great clodhopper, clumsy ways? Can't you ever meet Pam without letting her down; without disgracing her?"

Jenny shook her head. She felt too utterly numbed even to resent the insult. Oh, what had she done? What had she done? Just when, she thought bitterly, she felt she had been getting on so nicely, too. Pam would get the sack—the sack from this job which was making her so happy.

In her anxiety Jenny even forgot that Greta was her enemy. Her thoughts were all of Pam.

"Do you think Pam will ever like me again?" Jenny asked Greta.

Greta did not answer. She was looking at a snappy pair of red-and-white shoes in the shop they were just passing. But she had heard, and answered at her leisure.

"Well—of course, Pam's not the sort to say anything," she began. "But you know how these things are. She'll pretend she's forgotten—but it's something that no one ever could. Poor old Pam!"

Jenny was too upset even to detect the hypocritical note in Greta's voice. Too worried even to notice the satisfied glitter in her eyes as she studied Jenny's face.

For Jenny's face was a picture at that moment. Greta had said the very thing most calculated to wound.

Woefully Jenny walked along.

Yes, Pam might do that. Of course she would forgive. But wouldn't there be a shadow for ever between them?

"I—I've always been a burden to her," Jenny mumbled to herself. "And Pam's been too sweet to let me know."

Something like a lump came into Jenny's throat. She did not notice that Greta had turned and had left her. Her lips quivered, and listlessly she walked on.

What a handicap she was to Pam! And Pam, sweet as she was, always so ready to forgive her, to stick up for her. Pam, so far, had given her everything, she nothing. She couldn't even bring Pam good luck.

Some queer, fierce little battle went on in her heart for a few moments. Then sudden purpose shone in her face. She turned at once into the Strand Post Office. On the counter she wrote a letter:

"Dear Pam,—It was my fault the picture was spoiled, and I'm sorry. I don't seem to have ever brought you anything but bad luck, and so, Pam, I've gone away. Don't try to find me, please, and please do ask Mr. Arnold to forgive me and not take your job away. I shall always be thinking of you.

Your loving friend,

"JENNY."

She sealed it, posted it. Then she went to Euston. With the last money she had in her purse, she took a train to Wrenborough.

Though Jenny's heart broke at the parting, she believed she had done her duty. Never, never more would she be a hindrance or let Pam down. Without her, Pam would get on, would do all those things she wanted to do; would be a success. Yes, it was better for her to leave!

What will Pam do when she gets Jenny's letter? There are exceptionally exciting developments next week. Order your **GIRLS' CRYSTAL** now. It will be on sale on **THURSDAY**.

SOLUTIONS TO TRIXIE'S TRICKS

- (1) CRYSTAL.
- (2) Exactly the same distance, of course!
- (3) 29 days. (It doubles its size on the 30th day to fill the pond.)
- (4) A saw.
- (5) Neither—the yolk of an egg is yellow!
- (6) Gail Western, Penelope, Peter Langley, Diana Martin, Jean Vernon, Trixie.
- (7) Horatio Nelson.
- (8) Welcome. (Well; come.)

The MADCAP FORM MISTRESS



THIS WEEK
MISS MURDSTONE
TRIES TO
BECOME
POPULAR

By
JEAN VERNON

A SURPRISING CHANGE OF TACTICS

"TWO o'clock!" exclaimed Miss Vera Desmond, B.A., with a hasty glance at her wrist-watch. "Goodness, I must hurry, or I'll be late for classes. Mustn't keep the girls waiting!"

She sprang to her feet, reaching for her mortar-board and gown, though not without a momentary, wistful glance at the invitation that lay open on her study table.

With a determined gesture, she put the letter away, slipped her arms into her gown, and adjusted her mortar-board at a slightly rakish angle on her unruly hair.

Enthusiasm for her job was the secret of Vera Desmond's popularity with the Fourth Formers at St. Kilda's.

The success of her breezy methods could not be disputed. While the rest of St. Kilda's was groaning under the tyrannical rule imposed on it by Miss Murdstone, the new headmistress, the Fourth Form alone remained cheerfully unaffected.

Thanks to Miss Desmond!

But the Madcap Form-mistress was only human; there were times—and this afternoon was one of them—when she felt in the mood to "kick over the traces!"

A pressing invitation from Doris Kirby, an old school chum, recently married, to visit her in her new home and spend the night, had been immediately quashed by Miss Murdstone.

Vera would cheerfully have taken French leave, had she not been aware that the headmistress would promptly vent her spite on the luckless juniors. Such were Miss Murdstone's pleasant methods!

"Bother!" breathed Miss Desmond, firmly thrusting all thought of the invitation from her mind. "Who cares, anyway?"

She did care; but she was not going to allow her private disappointment to interfere with her duties. Her class came first with Miss Desmond—always.

With a cheery smile, she gathered up some books and swept out of her study, walking briskly towards the junior class-room. On the way she met a glum group of juniors.

"Hallo, what's the matter?" she asked.

"Ada Fengrove's given us a lot of lines to do after school," declared Pat Derwent, the young Fourth Form leader.

Miss Desmond's eyes glinted; Ada Fengrove, the head prefect, had been one of the first to take advantage of the new tyranny.

"Really?" murmured Miss Desmond. "Poor Ada is evidently suffering from spring fever. The lines are cancelled."

There came a delighted gasp.

"Oh, Miss Desmond—really?"

"Really, truly!" replied Miss Desmond, smilingly linking arms with the two girls nearest her. "So cheer up! We can't have long faces at St. Kilda's. All ready for work, now? Splendid! Follow me, girls. What's the old chorus say:

"Let's all be happy together, 'cause you can't be happy by yourself!"

Down the corridor trooped the delighted girls, arm-in-arm, with Miss Desmond in their midst. If her behaviour was a trifle more madcap than usual, it was not for them to ask questions. They just joined lustily in the chorus!

And as they swung gaily round a bend in the corridor, a door opened unexpectedly—and there emerged a tall, hawk-featured woman—Miss Murdstone!

Miss Desmond hastily called a halt—but too late to avert the catastrophe. There was a violent collision, and Miss Desmond promptly grabbed the headmistress in the nick of time to prevent the latter from sprawling backwards.

There followed a moment's panicky silence as the juniors, white to the lips, awaited the seemingly inevitable outburst.

The Madcap Form-mistress maintained her composure. Though her face was a trifle pale, she managed to smile.

If there was to be trouble she was ready to take the brunt of it!

"I say, I hope we didn't hurt you," she remarked disarmingly. "That's the worst of these narrow corridors. You can never tell who's going to pop out!"

Miss Murdstone's face was working; she seemed to be struggling to regain her

composure; then abruptly and unexpectedly she smiled.

"That—that's quite all right, Miss Desmond," she said magnanimously. "It was my fault—for not looking where I was going."

"I—I beg your pardon?" gasped Miss Desmond wondering if she had heard aright.

The juniors' mouths dropped open; they exchanged bewildered glances.

"My fault," repeated the tyrant headmistress, with a forced smile. "Very clumsy of me. Naturally, you and the juniors had the right of way—and I ought to have been more careful."

The juniors nudged one another, and Miss Desmond gulped, her mind filled with a not unnatural doubt.

"I say, do you feel all right, Miss Murdstone?" she asked. "I mean, you didn't—you didn't bump your head or anything?"

"I'm quite all right," returned the headmistress, a trifle brusquely. Then her manner changed; her tone became honey sweet!

"I have been thinking things over, Miss Desmond," she went on. "I may have been a little intolerant in the past—a trifle unreasonable. My ideas are, perhaps, somewhat old-fashioned. I have, I say, been thinking things over—and have come to the conclusion that your methods with the girls are indisputably correct."

Miss Desmond gasped.

"I'm glad to hear that, Miss Murdstone," she said when she had recovered from the shock. "You will be making some changes in the school?"

The headmistress coughed.

"Quite, quite. As a matter of fact, I am a little uncertain where to begin and would like your advice—"

"Splendid!" exclaimed Miss Desmond, with a promptness that took the headmistress off her guard. "Let me see—shall we start with lines? I think that prefects should be prohibited from giving impositions without the consent of the Form-mistress."

There came a delighted murmur from the juniors.

"Well——" began Miss Murdstone, a trifle confused.

"That's settled, then!" said Miss Desmond gaily. "And now, with regard to sports—"

"Ahem—one thing at a time!" interrupted Miss Murdstone, her face rather red. "One thing at a time, Miss Desmond. As a matter of fact, I feel that you have been very much overdoing things recently. I propose, this afternoon, to take charge of your class—"

The juniors' faces fell; a quick protest rose to Miss Desmond's lips, but the headmistress silenced her.

"With you present, Miss Desmond," she went on benignly, "to correct me if I make any errors in—er—the diplomatic handling of the girls. I wish, in fact," she added, "to study your methods."

To say that Miss Desmond's breath was taken away, would be to put it mildly. She was thunderstruck; so were the gaping juniors.

Usually the Headmistress of St. Kilda's is an unreasonable tyrant, but this week butter won't melt in her mouth. She actually tries to curry favour with the Fourth!

Her first suspicions had given place to utter bewilderment.

Was the headmistress in earnest? Had she actually turned over a new leaf?

As honest as the day herself, the Madcap Form-mistress was loth to suspect others of treachery. Miss Murdstone's past record was far from pleasant—but perhaps something had happened to convince the headmistress of the error of her ways.

Miss Desmond was the first to give an opinion the benefit of the doubt.

"Well," she gasped, finding her voice, "if you really mean that, Miss Murdstone—"
"Most certainly I mean it!" returned the headmistress, and she led the way to the classroom. Once there, she produced a box of chocolates, which she insisted on handing round. Then, with a benign smile she seated herself at the high desk.

"Now to work," she said. "We will start with a few little problems in mathematics. Now, please pay close attention. Three persons—A, B, and C—enter a store and purchase between them goods worth £54 18s. 6d. A buys ten cheeses at 2s. 11½d. each, B purchases two gross of eggs at—"

"I say, one minute!" put in Miss Desmond, a sudden twinkle in her eyes.

The headmistress turned, with a sharp frown; but, as though recollecting herself, she changed it to a smile.

"You wished to make some remark, Miss Desmond?"

"Pardon my interrupting," said the young Form-mistress boldly, "but I understood that you wished to follow my methods. That is not quite how I would deal with the problem."

Miss Murdstone coughed, biting her lip; but she continued to smile.

"Ah, indeed? Perhaps you'd be so kind as to explain—"

"Certainly!" replied Miss Desmond promptly, as she sprang to her feet.

This was a chance to put the headmistress' intentions to the test! At the same time, the Madcap Form-mistress could not resist the opportunity of a little harmless fun.

"May I show you?" she asked. "Thank you! Girls—attention! Pat, Lucy, and Joyce—you will be the three customers who go to the grocer's—you did say it was a grocer's, didn't you, Miss Murdstone?"

"I didn't say so, but it will do," replied the headmistress a trifle stiffly.

"Good!" said Miss Desmond. "Then you will be the grocer, Miss Murdstone—"

"Really!" gasped the headmistress angrily.

"But perhaps," murmured Miss Desmond, "you'd rather not use my methods?"

Miss Murdstone coughed, realised that she had made a slip.

"Please proceed, Miss Desmond," she murmured. "I—I was merely joking."

"Splendid!" laughed Miss Desmond. "You will be the grocer, then, and I'll be the grocer's assistant. Those exercise-books will do for the cheeses, and the chalks in that box will be the eggs. Do we sell anything else, Miss Murdstone? In the problem, I mean."

The headmistress was obviously fighting to retain her composure.

"C," she said, a trifle coldly, "purchases a barrel of butter—"

"The wastepaper-basket!" said Miss Desmond, smiling, as she handed up the basket to the amazed Miss Murdstone.

"Now, girls—the shop is open!" she added, springing on to the platform, and rapping the desk with a ruler. "Pat, Lucy, and Joyce—step up here and make your purchases!"

Delightedly the three girls complied, while the class looked on with eager expectancy, not unmixed with apprehension.

They were used to Miss Desmond's novel methods—but the presence of the headmistress in her new, benign role was an unlooked-for factor.

"You start, Pat," directed Miss Desmond, her eyes twinkling. "You're A in the problem. You must ask for ten cheeses, and Miss Murdstone will hand you ten exercise-books. You see," she explained, turning to the headmistress, "I believe in making the lesson as practical and interesting as possible."

"Ah—quite," returned Miss Murdstone, in a repressed sort of tone.

She handed across the ten exercise-books in

response to Pat's rather nervous request—while the class scribbled down the amount of the "purchase."

She continued to smile rather stiffly as she picked up the box of chalks in reply to Lucy's grave request for "two gross of eggs, please."

The Madcap Form-mistress could not resist a roguish interjection:

"No bad eggs, I hope, Miss Murdstone?"

The headmistress' hand shook, and the box of chalks fell with a clatter, scattering its contents right and left.

There was a rush to pick up the chalks. Miss Murdstone took a hurried step backwards, and, stepping on a chalk, sprawled heavily on to the platform, making a wild grab at the wastepaper basket to save herself.

The basket, dislodged from the desk, descended over her head.

"Oh!" gasped Miss Murdstone, in stifled accents.

A quickly suppressed titter went up from the class.

Miss Desmond hastily bit back a smile, her heart sinking as she darted to the rescue.

"This," she thought, "is where the sparks begin to fly!"

MISS DESMOND LEARNS THE TRUTH

AT that instant, to make matters worse, the class-room door was opened—to admit Miss Squeers, the senior mistress, a buff-coloured envelope in her hand.

Miss Squeers' eyes almost started from her head.

"Bless—bless my soul!" she gasped, staring like a woman in a dream at the dishevelled figure seated on the platform. "Miss—Miss Murdstone!"

"Help me out!" exclaimed the headmistress harshly.

With a dull premonition at her heart, Miss Desmond tugged at the wastepaper-basket. Dishevelled and crimson in the face, Miss Murdstone struggled to her feet.

For a moment she looked at Miss Desmond, a basilisk glitter in her eyes; then, as though by an effort, she turned to the astounded Miss Squeers.

"Well?" she demanded tartly.

Miss Squeers gulped, holding out the buff-coloured envelope.

"Telegram," she announced weakly, "for Miss Desmond."

Vera caught in her breath sharply as she glanced at the telegram. Instinctively she looked at the headmistress—and surprised a strange expression in the latter's eyes—something like a glint of relief.

"You had better read your wire, Miss Desmond," remarked the headmistress, with surprising composure.

Perplexed, a shade uneasy, Vera slit open the envelope and hastily scanned the contents. She drew in her breath sharply, her face paling.

"Please come to-day if can possibly manage. Ted met with accident, and am at my wits' end.

"DORIS."

"Well?" inquired Miss Murdstone, eyeing her sharply.

Vera clenched her hands; her chum needed her, and she must go at all costs. But the telegram could not have arrived at a more unfortunate moment.

Her face pale, she handed it to the headmistress.

"It's from Doris Kirby, the old school friend I was speaking to you about yesterday," she explained. "I should like to go as soon as it is convenient, Miss Murdstone."

She waited, fully expecting an angry refusal. Miss Murdstone's reply took her breath away.

"Why, of course, my dear! You must go at once, if your friend needs you. I'm sure that the girls and I will get on splendidly now."

And she beamed at the astonished class.

Miss Desmond was both bewildered and relieved. She was conscious, too, of a twinge of remorse. She felt that she had misjudged Miss Murdstone. The headmistress was honestly attempting to make amends for her past behaviour.

Impulsively, the Madcap Form-mistress held out her hand.

"Thanks awfully, Miss Murdstone," she said. "Then I'll go right away."

The headmistress' hand was cold and flabby; her shifty eyes avoided Miss Desmond's glance. But she smiled benevolently.

"You need not hurry back," she added. "Stay the night, if you wish. The girls and I will be one big happy family."

Her voice was almost purring as she followed Miss Desmond to the door. If the Madcap Form-mistress was conscious of any vague premonition, she thrust it aside, thinking of her old school chum and the urgent telegram.

She waved a smiling good-bye to the girls—who watched her go with mixed feelings.

"There's one thing," murmured Pat Derwent. "Miss Murdstone's not such a bad sort as we supposed. I vote we give her a square deal while Miss Desmond's away."

"Hear, hear!" came the unanimous reply.

Miss Desmond, meanwhile, hurried to her room, and swiftly packed a small week-end suitcase. Her mind was in a whirl of conflicting thoughts. Anxiety for her friend was mingled with amazement at the headmistress' strange new tolerance.

It seemed too good to be true—but she had no real reason to doubt that it was genuine.

In fact, no real doubts assailed her mind till, dressed and ready to go, she happened to glance out of the window.

Then her eyes narrowed.

Dismounting from a bicycle in the quadrangle was a sallow-faced, over-dressed girl, wearing a prefect's badge.

It was Ada Fengrove, the head prefect, and Miss Murdstone's niece.

"Hallo!" thought Miss Desmond. "Where has Ada been?"

It was not unusual for Ada Fengrove to have leave of absence during school hours; in fact, she did much as she pleased. But just now she was flushed as though from hurrying, and there was a particularly cunning smirk on her face.

When Ada was pleased, it generally meant that something was in the wind—some fresh plot against the juniors!

A rather worried frown appeared between Miss Desmond's eyes as she watched the prefect enter the school. With sudden decision, she picked up her bag and left the room, making her way quickly towards the staff corridor.

She guessed that Ada would go to Miss Murdstone's study—and she was not mistaken. A few minutes later the prefect appeared, walking quickly. Without knocking, she pushed open the door of her aunt's study and stepped inside.

A moment afterwards, Miss Murdstone herself came hurrying from the direction of the junior class-room. With a hasty glance round, she entered her study, closing the door behind her.

Miss Desmond heard a key turn in the lock.

A soft whistle escaped the young Form-mistress' lips. With a sudden decision she pushed open the door of the adjoining study and entered, crossing noiselessly to the open window and peering out.

Just below the window-sill a narrow ledge ran the length of the school wall.

The Madcap Form-mistress did not hesitate. Pausing only to close and lock the door against interruption, she climbed nimbly over the window-sill on to the ledge.

Her vague suspicions had taken a fresh shape. There was something strange going on here—something that demanded investigation.

Miss Murdstone's amazing "reformation" appeared in a new and more sinister light.

There was a plot afoot, directed against the girls—and Miss Desmond was determined to get to the bottom of it, come what might.

"WELL?" demanded Miss Murdstone cautiously. "Did anyone see you send off the wire?"

Ada Fengrove shook her head, with a smirk.

"Trust me, aunt," she returned. "I took precautions. I phoned the message to my friend, Nadine, who lives at Barnstead, and she sent off the telegram from there. Cute, eh?"

The headmistress nodded approvingly, her eyes glittering.

"She swallowed it," she muttered. "Hook, line, and sinker. She's packing now. She'll be well out of the way by the time Mrs. Potterford arrives. The money's as good as mine!"

"Ours!" corrected Ada. "You said you'd give me a third share. Do you think the old girl will smell a rat?"

Miss Murdstone smiled unpleasantly.

"You can leave that to me," she replied smoothly. "So long as you do not blunder and give the game away, the whole thing will go as planned. Miss Desmond was the only danger, and we've disposed of her. I propose to phone Mrs. Potterford now and find out what time she is arriving."

She crossed to the telephone and dialed a number.

"Hallo!" she said, a few moments later. "Yes, this is the Fourth Form-mistress speaking. The headmistress gave me your letter, Mrs. Potterford. I'm sure it is extremely kind of you. The girls will appreciate your generosity."

She frowned warningly at Ada, as the prefect stifled a snigger.

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Potterford—at what time did you say? At five o'clock. I shall certainly see that the girls are here to meet you. Thank you so much. Good-bye, my dear Mrs. Potterford."

She put down the receiver, and she and Ada exchanged triumphant glances. Little did they suspect that Miss Desmond had heard every word of the conversation.

A few minutes later the headmistress, looking out of the window, saw Miss Desmond emerge from the school building, suitcase in hand. Humming lightheartedly, she made her way towards the drive, to be lost to sight among the trees.

The headmistress gave a sigh of relief, and her eyes glittered.

"She's gone!" she muttered. "Now for it, Ada! We've got to hoodwink the girls till the visitor has called. After the money's safely in our hands, we can give them a taste of discipline to make up for it!"

And her eyes glittering spitefully, the headmistress led the way to the door.

THE SURPRISE-PACKET VISITOR

"S'SH, girls, here comes Miss Murdstone!" Pat Derwent held up her hand warningly, and the buzz of talk in the junior Common-room ceased abruptly. The door opened to admit Miss Murdstone.

The headmistress beamed round her.

"Well, my dears?" she remarked. "I have a little surprise for you!"

There was a murmur of interest, though several of the girls exchanged rather uncertain glances. Miss Murdstone's "surprises" were apt to be of the unpleasant kind.

"You don't look very pleased," smiled Miss Murdstone, "but, of course, you don't know what's in store for you. I want you all to put on your best frocks and come along to Big Hall. Hurry, now!"

She tried to assume Miss Desmond's cheery manner, and the attempt was rather a failure, but the juniors were too astonished to be critical.

Amid a buzz of excited comment and speculation the girls darted along to their dormitories to change.

"What on earth can it all mean?" demanded Lucy Granger.

"Goodness knows," returned Pat Derwent, laughing. "But she's certainly doing her best to be nice to us, girls. I didn't know she had it in her. Not that she could be a patch on Miss Desmond, ever!"

"Poor Miss Desmond!" sighed Lucy. "She looked awfully worried when she went. I expect she's miles away by now. The school doesn't seem the same without her."

"Never mind!" returned Pat. "She wouldn't want us to mope. Let's go and see what the big surprise is."

Headed by Pat, they all trooped into Big Hall.

Ada Fengrove herself opened the door, sur-

prisingly all smiles; and the juniors halted dead on the threshold, their eyes widening.

For the long trestle table in the middle of the hall was spread with an appetising array of good things to eat—sausage-rolls, cakes, cream pastries, and a big trifle, topped with whipped cream!

"M-my giddy aunt!" gasped Pat, finding her voice.

"I hope you'll like my little treat, girls," remarked Miss Murdstone, sailing forward graciously. "It was the best I could do at such short notice. As you have worked so very hard this term I decided that you should have this tea as a small reward."

The girls stared at one another incredulously. This—from the tyrant Miss Murdstone! Why, it was an idea worthy of Miss Desmond herself!

"By the way, girls," Miss Murdstone went on, "I am expecting a visitor—a rather—ahem!—eccentric lady, I understand. She takes the greatest interest in schoolgirls, and she is anxious to see for herself whether you girls are really as jolly and happy as Miss Desmond has given her to understand."

She paused, to let her words sink in; the girls waited expectantly, rather puzzled.

eat the food! I'll see to that. I shall promise them their tea after Mrs. Potterford has gone; and once the money is in our hands we can find some fault with their behaviour and send them to bed without their meal, as a punishment."

Ada grinned spitefully as she visualised the juniors' disappointment.

"S'sh!" muttered Miss Murdstone suddenly. "Here comes the visitor. For goodness' sake, remember your part!"

Just then the school porter appeared, accompanied by a tall, eccentric-looking lady. Grey-haired, and slightly stooping, she wore thick-lensed spectacles and elastic-sided boots, and carried a large-sized umbrella.

Miss Murdstone hurried forward, her hands outstretched. With an imperious gesture she dismissed the staring porter.

"Ah, Mrs. Potterford!" she exclaimed gushingly. "I am delighted to see you! The headmistress told me you were calling, and I have assembled the girls in your honour. You must be simply dying for a cup of tea."

The visitor ignored the outstretched hand. Adjusting her spectacles, she eyed Miss Murdstone up and down, in obvious surprise.



Wildly Miss Murdstone waved the envelope. She believed it contained a cheque; not yet did she suspect how the visitor to the school had japed her.

They gathered from Miss Murdstone's remarks that the visitor was a friend of their young Form-mistress—as Miss Murdstone had intended that they should!

"I'm sure," went on the headmistress, "that none of you would like to let down Miss Desmond. Just be your own jolly selves, as though Miss Desmond herself were here. You may be doing her more good than you imagine—but that is a secret!"

The juniors were thrilled. It seemed that they were to be given a chance to repay their Madcap Form-mistress for all that she had done for them—and simply by enjoying themselves!

Their eyes might have been opened had they overheard the snatch of conversation that passed between Miss Murdstone and her niece as they left the hall.

Ada was looking disgruntled; the forced smile had faded from her sallow face.

"It seems a shame," she muttered, "to waste all that food on those wretched kids!"

"Don't be a fool!" snapped Miss Murdstone. "We've got to make the thing look bona fide, if we're to get the cheque intended for Miss Desmond and the Fourth Form sports club. Not that the girls will get a chance to

"Bless my soul!" she remarked. "Is it possible?"

Miss Murdstone blinked, flushing slightly.

"I—er—I beg your pardon?" she inquired.

"Granted!" replied the other magnanimously. "First appearances are doubtless deceptive. I understand, from friends of mine, that you were known as the Madcap Form-mistress?"

Miss Murdstone smiled, in a manner which she hoped was coyly modest.

"I have been called so," she admitted. "A nickname by the dear girls. We are such a happy family, you know!"

The newcomer raised her eyebrows, her lips twitching.

"Ah, well," she replied, "seeing is believing. Where are the girls?"

"In here," replied Miss Murdstone, with a warning glance at Ada as she flung open the door. "Just see how the dear children are enjoying themselves!"

Certainly, a happy scene encountered the visitor's gaze. The girls were clustered round the long table, laughing and chattering, and eyeing the treat that had been promised to them.

Miss Murdstone stepped forward, all smiles. "Girls," she announced, "this is Mrs. Potterford! Mrs. Potterford—the girls of the Fourth! Just one big, happy family—eh, girls?"

"Rather!" came the enthusiastic chorus. "Thanks to the best Form-mistress in the world!" added Pat Derwent loyally.

Miss Murdstone coughed. "The dear girl is referring to me," she murmured.

"H'mph!" remarked the visitor dryly. "So I gather. There's no accounting for tastes—"

"I—I beg your pardon!" gulped Miss Murdstone, crimsoning.

"Pray don't mention it!" The visitor was inspecting the girls through her spectacles. "Quite nice intelligent-looking girls, too!" she murmured, shaking her head. "Pity!"

Miss Murdstone coughed, changing the subject.

"Er—girls," she remarked smoothly, "I'm sure Mrs. Potterford is tired after her journey. And we have business to discuss. Run away now, till she has finished tea, and then you can come back and have your feast."

The girls looked just a trifle disappointed as they backed towards the door, with lingering glances at the table.

Mrs. Potterford laughed. "Ah," she remarked, wagging her finger playfully at Miss Murdstone, "you will have your little joke! You were going to send the girls out of the room, and then call them back again. Now, own up!"

Miss Murdstone bit her lip, secretly furious, but anxious to create a good impression.

"I—I—just so!" she muttered, forcing a smile.

The visitor clapped her hands. "Come along, girls!" she exclaimed gaily. "Gather round! By your Form-mistress' request you're going to help me eat up all the good things on the table. I want to see how quickly you can clear the plates!"

With a laughing cheer, the girls darted to the table and took their places.

Miss Murdstone, pale with annoyance, plucked the visitor by the sleeve.

"By the way, Mrs. Potterford," she said hurriedly, forcing a smile, "with regard to the little matter of—er—business about which you called. Don't you think we had better get it settled first—"

"Business?" echoed the visitor. "Bless my soul—business can wait! We're all hungry. Pile in, girls! That's the style! You're eating nothing," she added, turning to the frowning Miss Murdstone. "May I press you to a rascally plan—"

"What?" gasped the headmistress, starting violently.

"How stupid of me—I mean a raspberry flan!" murmured the visitor, holding out a plate.

Miss Murdstone forced a sickly smile. "I am not hungry," she said. "Er—Ada, if you would fetch my fountain-pen, I'm sure that Mrs. Potterford would like to sign that cheque and get it over."

"Not at all!" put in the visitor, staying Ada with a playful gesture. "I never sign cheques before meals; it's a rule of mine. Who is this young lady, by the way?"

"My—er—my assistant," explained Miss Murdstone.

"I don't like it," murmured the visitor. "Hard and distinctly sour—"

"What?" gulped Ada, crimsoning.

"This fruit flan," explained the visitor, her lips twitching. "Ah—I see the girls are progressing excellently! They will soon have cleared the table. After that, I think we'll have a few games. What do you say?"

Miss Murdstone made a further desperate attempt to change the subject.

"Ahem! You were generous enough. Mrs. Potterford, to suggest making a subscription—"

"To the Fourth Form sports fund—yes," nodded the visitor, helping herself to a chocolate éclair. "You are tremendously keen on sport, I understand?"

"Ah!" murmured Miss Murdstone, trying to look enthusiastic.

"And you see to it that the girls are given ample time to indulge in such healthy pastimes?" inquired the visitor.

Miss Murdstone coughed.

"Quite, quite," she replied hastily.

"Splendid!" smiled the visitor, pouring herself out another cup of tea. "Excellent!"

Behind her spectacles her eyes twinkled roguishly. Picking up a spoon, she rapped it on the table.

There was immediate, attentive silence.

"Girls," announced the visitor, "by your Form-mistress' special request, you are to be given a whole day's holiday on Saturday, in which to practise hockey."

A deafening cheer greeted this statement.

Miss Murdstone was white with suppressed fury.

"But—but—" she stuttered.

The visitor held up her hand imperiously.

"Did you mention a cheque just now?" she inquired.

Miss Murdstone gulped, forcing a rather ghastly smile.

"Yes—yes," she said eagerly. "That fountain-pen, Ada—"

"Don't bother," cut in the visitor. "I have the cheque already signed."

She fumbled in her handbag, taking out an envelope. Miss Murdstone leaned forward, her eyes gleaming covetously.

"I'll send you the receipt—" she began, reaching out for the envelope.

But the visitor merely smiled, holding it at arm's length.

"No—no," she said playfully. "Not yet. I want to see something of that madcap spirit for which you are so well known. I suggest we have a little game—something after your own heart!"

She sprang to her feet with surprising agility, holding the envelope above her head.

"Now then, girls," she said cheerfully, "if you have all finished, I've a little game to suggest. It's called 'Hunt the Treasure'—and your Form-mistress is going to play it with you."

Miss Murdstone's eyes nearly started from her head.

"Really—" she gasped.

"Really!" declared the visitor. "Now, this envelope represents the treasure—and I am its guardian. You girls are the treasure-seekers—and your popular mistress, here, and her assistant are the wicked robbers."

"W-what!" stuttered Miss Murdstone.

"Just in fun, of course," explained the visitor, smiling. "Now, I'm going to run round the room, jump over things, and climb under things—and you've got to follow. A sort of obstacle race, in fact. If you can get the treasure before the wicked robbers—then it's yours; if the robbers get it, it's theirs. Got the idea?"

There was an excited burst of laughter and applause from the juniors.

"I say," breathed Pat Derwent, "she's a sport! Almost like Miss Desmond—"

Miss Murdstone's face was a picture.

"Mrs. Potterford!" she protested. "Really, I—"

But her protest was wasted.

"Ready?" inquired the surprising visitor. "Then—go!"

She darted across the room at an amazing turn of speed, with the delighted juniors in full cry at her heels.

Miss Murdstone clenched her hands, her face pallid.

"Ada," she grated, "if the girls get that envelope—then it's all up! After it, you idiot!"

"You jolly well get it yourself, if you want it!" snapped Ada.

Miss Murdstone gritted her teeth, and, flinging appearances to the wind, went racing madly after the visitor, pushing girls right and left in her frenzy.

The girls had not forgotten that Miss Murdstone was their headmistress, but to see her apparently enter into the spirit of the game with such zest, made them all the jollier.

"Oh, Miss Murdstone," Lucy Granger laughed, "you do look funny!"

The headmistress gave a glance to kill—and then she remembered the new role she was playing.

"Er—quite, Lucy. If one can disport oneself with glee without appearing undignified, it is correct. That is what I always say!" she simpered, with what she hoped was a madcap gleam in her eyes.

There was a gleam, but it was certainly not a madcap one—it was one of greed.

And with surprising vigour, Miss Murdstone bent to the attack again, thrusting her bony arms right and left to get to the front.

"Play fair!" called the visitor breathlessly. "No pushing!"

She leaped nimbly over a chair as she spoke, and dived under the table, emerging breathlessly on the other side, adjusting her grey hair.

"After her!" gasped Pat delightedly.

But Miss Murdstone was quicker. She had seen the precious envelope slip from the visitor's fingers and fall under the table.

Furiously thrusting the girls out of her way, she made a dive under the table—and became entangled in the cloth. There was a terrific crash, as the trestle-table collapsed, burying the headmistress under a medley of broken crockery and scattered foodstuff.

But the coveted envelope was in her grasp, and there was a triumphant glitter in her eyes as she rose from the wrecked table, crimson and dishevelled and breathing hard.

Her hand shaking in her eagerness, she ripped open the envelope and extracted its contents.

A blank sheet of paper!

Miss Murdstone's mouth dropped open, her face turned white and then crimson.

"What—what—" she stuttered.

The visitor clicked her tongue, her eyes twinkling behind the thick lenses of her spectacles.

"Bless my soul!" she remarked. "I forgot to put the cheque inside. Never mind—I will fetch it at once!"

She strode briskly out of the room; the door banged behind her.

Two minutes later it opened, to admit—a trim figure in mortar-board and gown.

A shout went up from the juniors.

"Miss Desmond!"

Miss Murdstone gulped, her eyes almost starting from her head.

"Miss Desmond!" she gasped. "You—you've come back—"

Miss Desmond nodded cheerfully, her eyes dancing.

"False alarm, Miss Murdstone," she said. "Wasn't it a good thing? I got in touch with my friend by wire and found that there hadn't been an accident after all. It must have been a stupid mistake by the post office. Oh, and that reminds me—"

She fumbled mysteriously in her pocket.

"I met a lady just now—a Mrs. Potterford. She was coming to the school to see me, but I saved her the journey. She asked me to hand this cheque to the juniors—a small donation of twenty pounds to the Fourth Form sports fund—did you speak, Miss Murdstone?"

Miss Murdstone was incapable of speech, and in any case her words would have been drowned by the deafening cheer that arose from the delighted girls.

"Oh, and she told me," added Miss Desmond, her eyes twinkling, "that you have given the girls a whole day's holiday on Saturday for hockey practice. I'm sure the girls are awfully grateful to you, Miss Murdstone—"

She spoke to Miss Murdstone's back. The headmistress, white with baffled fury, was striding out of the hall, with Ada at her heels. She would have been even more furious if she had known the truth—known that Mrs. Potterford had never visited the school at all. Actually Miss Desmond had called on her, received her cheque, and then returned to the school in disguise.

Miss Murdstone clenched her teeth in fury. She realised that she had been tricked. And by Miss Desmond.

But what could she do? She had given too much of her own schemes away to denounce the Madcap Form-mistress now.

No, she could do nothing, and viciously she strode along the corridor.

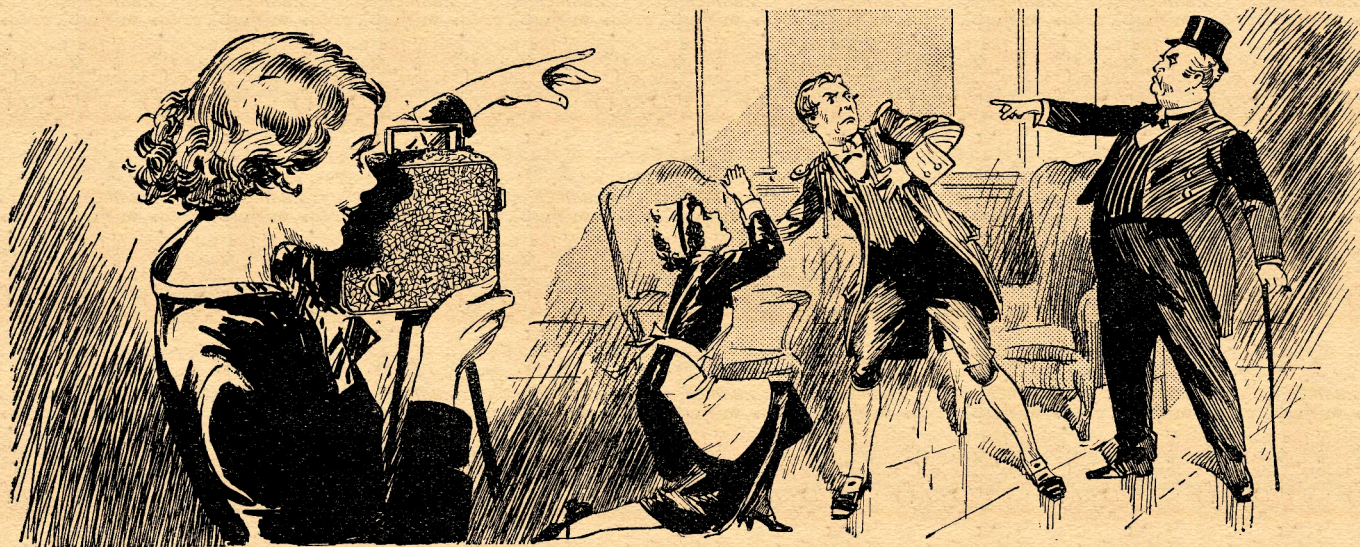
As the door slammed after the headmistress, Miss Desmond gravely took a pair of spectacles from her pocket and, adjusting them on her nose, wagged her finger at the amazed girls.

"Mrs. Potterford!" yelled Pat in sudden enlightenment.

"And very pleased to make your acquaintance," remarked Miss Desmond.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

"THE FOURTH FORM CASTAWAYS!"—that is the title of next Thursday's entertaining school story. On no account miss it!



POPPY BINKS COUNTESS

AN INSULT TO THE CASTLE

POPPY, this, I suppose, is your doing!" Poppy Binks, Countess of Sarfield, heard those words in her sleep, and then woke up suddenly.

It was a shock when she found herself in a luxurious, beautifully furnished bed-room, even though she had been sleeping in it for some while now—on and off.

For Poppy Binks had been dreaming that she was back again in the factory where she had been employed before the seekers for the heiress to the Sarfield title and fortune had found her.

"Golly me," said Poppy, rubbing her eyes. "I thought it was overseer grousing—"

But she was wrong. It was her great aunt, the dowager countess.

Poppy looked over the foot of her bed at the vision in pink—pink dressing gown, pink night cap, pink cheeks, but not, of course, pink eyes or hair.

"The Fairy Queen," said Poppy, her eyes twinkling.

It was the first time that the Dowager Countess of Sarfield, Poppy Binks' aunt, had ever been addressed as a fairy queen. And she did not like it.

"Your humour, Poppy," said the dowager tartly, "is, as usual, ill-placed." She wagged a newspaper in the air. "This, I suppose, is some of your handiwork!"

Poppy stared at the newspaper blankly, and then, supposing that there was something in it that did not meet with the dowager's approval, she took it.

Poppy had not inserted an advertisement in the paper, or written a letter, and she could not remember having done anything that the newspaper would think worth printing. So what was biting the dowager she could not think.

However, there was one simple way of finding out—by looking at the paper; and although the hour of the day was early, Poppy was bright enough to realise that simple fact.

Taking the paper, she stared at the page the dowager had indicated.

There was no need for her to peer about from column to column. The article that had brought forth the dowager's wrath could be seen at one glance.

"ANCIENT CASTLE TO BE FILMED.

"England's most ancient, most famous, and romantic castle is to be the scene of a new superb, gigantic, spectacular, tremendous, breath-taking film of the past."

"Golly!" said Poppy, her eyes shining. "Us, Sarfield Castle. A film here? Hurrah!"

Poppy hurled back the clothes and skipped out of bed.

Life at the old castle was quiet sometimes, and Poppy was a girl who liked a spot of fun.

If a film company arrived, complete with cameras, actors, and actresses, there ought to be fun in plenty.

Poppy looked up from the paper with shining eyes; but she met no reflection in the face of the dowager countess.

"So it was then you who gave the permission?" the dowager demanded grimly. "This castle, this lovely place, this dignified edifice to be turned into Bedlam for a film company?"

Poppy shook her head, surprised. She had not heard from that or any other film company. This was the very first intimation she had had that there was to be a film made at the castle.

"Me? No, aunt," she said. "I wouldn't say they could without asking you. Golly, I'd shiver all over at the mere idea of what you'd say, even though it is my castle!"

The dowager's eyes glistened. "Your castle, perhaps, but I can still intervene—still prevent that wretched company from coming here—"

Poppy looked at the paper again, and, as she did so, she gave a sudden start.

"Hey, wait a bit, aunt!" she said. "You've got it all wrong. You've been jumping to conclusions. The film isn't going to be here."

Poppy had read a little farther on, and she saw that the name of the castle was Manhem.

"It says England's most famous and romantic castle," said the dowager.

"But it doesn't mean this one," said Poppy gently. "The film is going to be at Manhem. Not here at all."

Poppy saw the dowager give a convulsive start, and over her somewhat ancient and romantic features there came a look of rage, of fierce and intense indignation.

"What!" the dowager cried in fury. "Manhem! That jerry-built structure. Good gracious! Who has had the impertinence to refer to that as England's oldest castle. Why, it was not built until at least twelve hundred and fifty—"

Poppy had to chuckle. She was proud of Sarfield Castle, its antiquity, and history, but

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THIS WEEK THE FACTORY GIRL COUNTESS TURNS

FILM PRODUCER

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By **MAY STEVENS**

she could well believe that Manhem was equally ancient.

"Bet it was built by one of these spec builders hoping some old earl would put his fifty quid down, and promise the rest," she said. "Jerry-built modern place! The film company ought to be told about Sarfield."

The dowager took the paper and read the report through. Every now and then she muttered "pshah!" or "pah!" Then crumpling the paper, she tossed it on to the bed.

"Preposterous," she said. "I have never heard of anything so utterly and completely ridiculous in my life. Manhem, the oldest in England, indeed!"

Poppy nodded.

"Manhem is a fraud, a fake!" the dowager went on, and nearly stamped her foot in indignation. "It was rushed up in a couple of years merely to prove the then Earl Manhem's right to be treated as a castle owner. Children could paddle in the moat, and the drawbridge never did work."

She was trembling with indignation. "I will write to my solicitors at once," she said. "I will not allow such things to be said. If there is one castle to be called England's most ancient and romantic castle, that is ours—Sarfield!"

Poppy Binks could have cheered with glee!

"Hear, hear, aunt!" she said. "Let's boom the old castle. Let England hear of it. If they wanted to film England's oldest castle, well, here it is!"

The dowager folded the paper and went to the door, but arriving there, Poppy's words suddenly soaked in.

"What is that? Filming? It is not a question of filming," she said, "but merely of the term. They can say they are filming one of England's supposedly ancient castles."

Poppy Binks chuckled softly; for she knew enough about film advertisements not to expect them to advertise anything as second best, or "not at all bad."

They had to have the best. The trouble in this case was simply that they did not know the best.

"Just shows," said Poppy, "that it pays to advertise. Golly," she went on earnestly, "if only that film company knew we existed!"

The dowager went to the door. "It is not the film company I am concerned about. We do not want the film here, naturally. But I do want justice!"

"Hear, hear!" said Poppy absently.

She didn't care so much about justice herself; what she wanted was the film company on the spot, and all the fun and spirit of rivalry burned within her, too. Competition! Why

should the Manhem crowd be allowed to score with their mouldy castle? The film must be here!

"Advertise. We've got to get into the news," said Poppy to herself. "Sarfield has got to be made famous, and the film company will just jump at us."

Deep in thought, Poppy Binks remained seated on her bed, while the dowager in burning indignation rang for the butler to bring her the History of Sarfield Castle in five volumes so that she could write a letter to the newspapers about it.

It was when she was starting her fifth page that she heard a distant wild yell, and for a moment thought that it was Jenkins falling from the battlements. But it was not. Poppy Binks had just had an idea, a sizzling brain-wave!

Castle Sarfield was going to be on the front page of every newspaper in Britain.

POPPY GETS HER SCHEME WORKING

"HALLO, that you, Freddie?" Poppy Binks, in great excitement, was talking on the telephone to her cousin, Freddie Clitheroe, and a cheerier lad than Freddie had never existed. He was just the fellow to help in this crisis, Poppy felt.

"Yes, Freddie. Hallo, Poppy! What's wrong?" chirped Freddie, on the principle that when Poppy rang up, the dowager was most likely snarling on the warpath.

"Freddie, the dowager's mad because some film company wants to film the best and oldest castle in England, and they've chosen Manhem," she said.

"What, that rubbish dump!" said Freddie, in scorn.

Poppy chuckled. She liked to hear this loyalty to the old castle.

"Hear, hear! Well, I've got a plan for proving that this is the one to be filmed, and I'm going to fix things so that the film company just jumps at the chance."

It sounded to Freddie the most scorching idea he had ever heard, and he said so.

"But how?" he wanted to know. So Poppy explained her simple but great idea.

"You've got a good home talkie outfit, haven't you?" she said.

"First rate," said Freddie. "I've got some beauties of aunt playing croquet, and Jenkins tripping over a Pekingese."

"Never mind that. It's the castle we want filmed," said Poppy. "I've got the story half written now. I'm going to film a real thriller here with Jenkins, Herbert, and the rest, and bring in the dungeons and everything."

Poppy knew that she had taken Freddie's breath away, and she was right.

"Hey! But what's auntie going to say to that?" asked Freddie, in alarm. He was thinking of the allowance she gave him and occasionally stopped.

"Nothing until it's too late," said Poppy. "Because she's buzzing off to town right away to see her solicitors and the film company."

That settled it, and Freddie hooked up and made a rush for his film outfit while Poppy bustled about arranging for her wonderful film.

It was only half an hour after the dowager's departure to London that Poppy summoned the entire staff into the hall, and to everyone's surprise handed out typewritten sheets of paper with mysterious words on them.

Freddie was there with his home talkie outfit, and Poppy, standing on the piano in the hall, made a short speech.

"Now, everyone, I want you to understand you are all of you the cast. We want the whole thing complete so that when her ladyship returns to-morrow, the film will be ready for showing. A famous film magnate will be coming, and one or two reporters."

The Dowager Countess of Sarfield had hurried up to town to see her solicitors when she had read in some other paper that Sarfield was also a castle, although comparatively insignificant.

But all that would be altered. No one would call Sarfield unknown or unimportant after Poppy had put it over big in the papers.

Poppy herself, with the aid of Frederick

Clitheroe, had written the small film play which was to be acted, and she was rather proud of it. It was a thriller.

There were two mysterious Chinamen, and three killings, several shadows on the blinds, and one ghost in armour, with his head tucked underneath his arm.

The script had been delivered to the players, and there was the greatest possible enthusiasm.

A cheer went up as Poppy had finished, and already the whole staff was heart and soul in the spirit of things.

"Sarfield for ever!" called Poppy.

Then jumping from the piano, she set things going.

Some of the housemaids were wearing outfits that would have shocked the dowager; but she was to know nothing about it all until she saw the film.

That was to be the great surprise. A film of the castle showing the dungeons by flashlight, the battlements, with Freddie struggling with Herbert for possession of a knife. Then later the struggle being conducted by the ancient cannon. The drawing up of the drawbridge just as the mysterious Chinaman galloped up on a white hunter. The head groom made a very good Chinaman.

Freddie, delighted at the chance of using a film camera, had it all set on the gallery round the hall while Poppy supervised the opening shot.

Dainty housemaids wearing musical comedy waitress kits, danced in to the strains of music played by the housekeeper, and Freddie worked his handle.

"Fade out!" yelled Poppy. "Now, Herbert as Sir Jasper Vavasour."

"Yes, m'lady," said Herbert.

Herbert, the first footman, wearing a top-hat and frock-coat that had been the property of the fourteenth earl, stepped forward, pulling on gloves.

"Egad, I will kill the 'ound," said Herbert nervously.

"Say it as though you meant it," urged Poppy.

Herbert spoke his lines again meekly, and Poppy, eager to make her film a success, whispered to Billy the page-boy.

Billy, placing his thumb to his nose, extended his fingers in the direction of Herbert.

This was nothing to do with Poppy's instructions, but it did the trick.

Herbert glared; a look of fury came on to his face, and, clenching his fists, he repeated his line with real feeling.

Jenkins, the butler in Poppy's film, as in life, advanced with the salver on which was a revolver.

"Your revolver, Sir Jasper," he said.

Sir Jasper whipped it up and put it into the back pocket of his frock-coat.

The castle electrician then took over the filming from Freddie, who stepped into the picture as the young hero, who was in love with Poppy the heroine.

Everything went forward without a hitch worth mentioning. And the whole thing was rehearsed and taken three times!

"Golly, this is going to be a great film!" said Poppy, in glee.

She was on her way down to the dungeon as she spoke, dressed in a long picturesque frock that had belonged to an earlier countess in the year 1657.

Behind her hurried Billy the page-boy with a telegram.

But Poppy was making such a clatter that she did not hear him. Pushing open the door of the lowest dungeon, she let it go bang behind her.

It was at that moment that Billy arrived.

"M'lady—telegram," he said.

Poppy tried to open the door, but failed.

"O.K. Push it through the bars," she said.

Billy reached it up and pushed it through, and then as the electrician yelled to him, darted off. A footman would have waited for the reply, if any, but Billy was too keen on the camera work for that. He actually had to hold something for the electrician.

"No reply telephone; returning immediately.—AUNT LAURA," Poppy read. She goggled at the words, and gave a yell.

"Hey, page—Billy! Golly me! The dowager's coming back! She'll be here by now! Here! Hey!"

Poppy hauled at the door, which did not move. The doors of the dungeon had not been constructed so that they could be opened from the inside! That was the idea of a dungeon that it formed a prison.

And now it formed one for Poppy Binks.

In the hall, Jenkins, the butler, was practising shooting Freddie. In the lane, the groom, dressed as a mysterious Chinaman, was riding a white horse—and down that same lane at alarming speed, because no reply from the telephone at the castle had been obtainable, came the dowager in great alarm.

There was a car just in front of hers, and in it was a newspaper reporter sent down by his editor after the dowager's indignant telephone call.

"Castle Rivalry. Battle of the battlements. The Wars of the Roses again!"

Such were the headlines that the reporter visualised as he drove to Castle Sarfield from the aerodrome where his machine from London had landed him.

But he did not expect to see anything like war, of course. He expected a quiet, stately, old-world castle.

THE Dowager Lady Sarfield was fretting and fuming. Something was obviously wrong. Why had there been no reply? Why was the telephone mute?

"Something always happens when I am away," muttered the dowager. "And—"

Her thoughts were interrupted by the sight of a Chinaman on horseback. It was the first Chinaman that the dowager had seen anywhere near the castle, and at her first glance she recognised the horse.

"A Chinaman, riding my horse!" she exclaimed. "It cannot be!"

She rubbed her eyes and blinked. Then she gave a start of horror as the Chinaman and horse leaped the hedge and went galloping into the distance.

The Chinaman was her own head groom, and he had recognised the car. But the dowager was not to know that.

"Stop!" she cried to the chauffeur. And as soon as the car was at a standstill, she pointed across the field. "Chase that rogue! He has stolen my horse!"

The horse was a speck in the distance, and the chauffeur, after a not very spirited ten yards' sprint, returned, shaking his head.

"Got away from me, m'lady," he said.

"Quick! Drive on to the castle! We must telephone the police!" she shrielled.

But at the castle another shock awaited her ladyship.

With a gasp of horror, the chauffeur recoiled, pointing to the battlements of the castle wall.

"Look! Look, m'lady! More of 'em!"

The dowager stared at the yellow face that peered over, a knife in its mouth. But it disappeared with surprising rapidity.

Amazed and bewildered, the dowager marched over the bridge into the castle. She stared about her. Not a Chinaman was to be seen—no one at all.

But there was something extremely odd, nevertheless.

Right in the middle of the castle grounds, on the concrete patch where a memorial to the fourteenth earl was to be raised when the argument about it was ended, stood a cannon.

The dowager rubbed her eyes. She knew that famous cannon, won at the Battle of Crecy, or elsewhere; but it had previously stood elsewhere. What could it be doing there?

"Poppy! No sooner is my back turned than she rearranges the place!"

She turned to the chauffeur and pointed to the cannon.

"Remove that cannon!"

"Yes, m'lady," said the chauffeur, scratching his head.

The dowager stood in front of the cannon, not noticing a slight sizzling sound that came from the other end.

She stood in front and looked down the barrel.

"Hi!" came a yell.

And bounding forward into view came a Chinaman. He rushed at the dowager, took her round the waist, and hurled her aside.

With all the power of her lungs, the dowager screamed.

But no one heard that scream. It was drowned by a mighty roar.

The cannon had fired—harmlessly, with more noise than effect, not being loaded. But it made enough noise to sound like three air raids, and the Dowager Lady Sarfield, closing her eyes, made a low, moaning sound.

When she sat up she saw black smoke, and nothing else. The Chinaman had gone.

But there was someone else present—the newspaper reporter—and he helped the dowager to her feet.

"Wh-where did you come from?" she asked. "Not—not shot from the gun?"

"I represent the 'Daily Wire,'" said the reporter, lifting his hat and bowing. "I have come to inspect one of England's stately homes. This, I understand—"

The dowager gritted her teeth.

"Stately homes! You dare publish one line of this! This is my niece's doing. How dare she load that cannon! It is a plot to bar me from my own castle—"

The reporter's pencil travelled across the paper.

He was still writing as the dowager, despite her advanced years, nearly broke the quarter-mile record running to the castle. But the massive door was locked.

Finding a foothold on the masonry, the reporter assisted the dowager, and, supporting her, arranged matters so that they could both look through the window.

They did not see the film camera on the balcony, but they saw Jenkins, the butler, and Freddie Clitherhoo.

"Bah! You, a butler, would not have the courage to kill me!" cried Freddie, in defiance.

The dowager rapped at the window, but no one heard. Her goggling eyes took in the scene. There was a housemaid present dressed in a spectacularly pretty frock such as the dowager had seen only on the stage as fitting wear for a maidservant.

But it was at Freddie she looked hardest. He was in a dashing suit, hands in pocket, loftily regarding Jenkins, who shook an angry fist at him.

"Quarrelling! My butler—my nephew!" said the dowager.

And then the terrible thing happened.

Without waiting, Jenkins whipped out a revolver, levelled it at Freddie, and fired.

If anything, Freddie crumpled up a second before the shot was fired, but the dowager did not notice that.

She simply saw her butler point a revolver and fire. And the reporter saw it, too, and then both heard the housemaid's first-rate screams.

"The police! Quick! Telephone the police!" cried the dowager. "Telephone the lodge—"

The reporter dropped to the ground and ran. This looked like being his lucky day.

THE CASTLE GETS IN THE NEWS

"HELP—help!" yelled Poppy, at the top of her lungs.

She was hoarse with shouting, but no one had heard her. They had had to shoot the hall scene twice, so the visit to the dungeon had been delayed.

But at last there came the sound of clattering steps.

"Poppy!" panted a voice.

It was Freddie!

"Freddie! Quick! Aunt's coming back!" yelled Poppy. "Let me out!"

"Coming!" said Freddie, with a hollow groan. "She's back! She's here!"

"Here?" said Poppy, in dismay. "Oh golly! Then where is she?"

"Chasing Jenkins with a rolling-pin," said Freddie.

"Well, stop her! Open this door!"

Freddie wrestled with the lock, and at last turned the rusty key and hurled his weight at the door. The door opened with a bang, and Poppy rushed out.

Freddie, jumping up, made a dive at the door, tripped, and, falling against it, succeeded in slamming it and locking himself in.

But Poppy did not know that, and she did not wait.

She rushed into her own room, hurled off the ancient frock, tugged on one of her own, and, still fastening it, hurried out again.

It was easy enough to find the dowager, for her voice could be heard six rooms away.

"Do not move, or I will stun you, base wretch!" she was shouting.

"Mum-mumercy, m'm-lady, it—it was only—it was nothing!" came Jenkins' quavering voice.

Poppy reached the room, too breathless to speak.

On the floor lay Jenkins, his hands clasped in appeal, while the dowager, the light of battle in her eyes, stood with the rolling-pin held high.

Poppy regained her breath and thought quickly. Tiptoeing away, she found the deserted film camera and carried it forward to the doorway, where she set it up.

"Hold it, aunt—hold it!" she said.

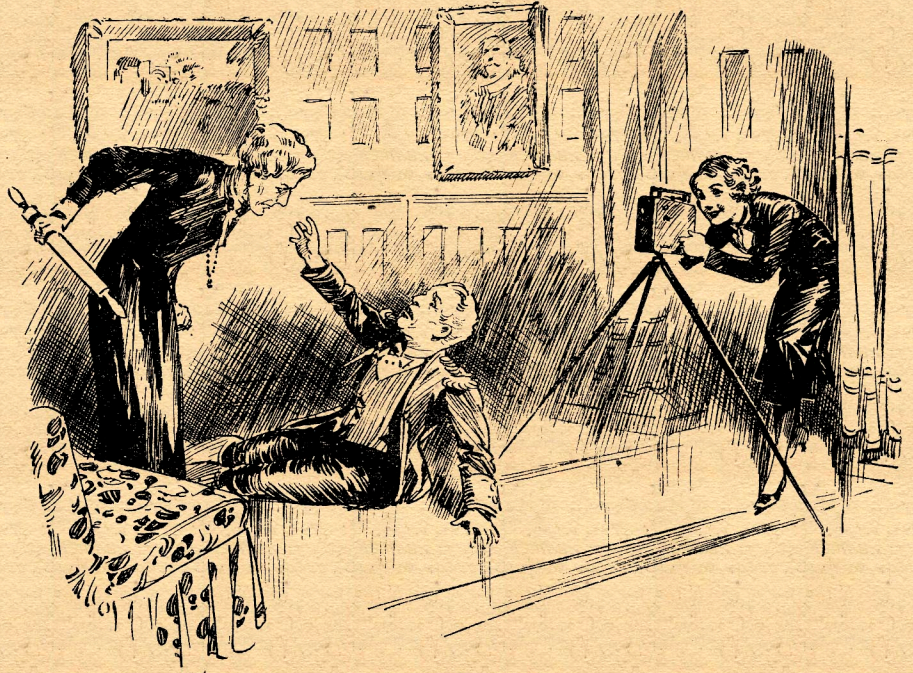
The dowager gave a start and turned. She saw the film camera and goggled her eyes.

"Thank you, aunt!" said Poppy. "That's a first-rate shot. We must work that in somehow."

The dowager lowered the rolling-pin and stared.

"Work it in? Have you gone crazy, Poppy? I saw this wretch shoot Freddie dead! The police are coming."

Poppy gave a jump.



"Hold it, aunt! Hold it!" bade a cheery voice and, turning, the dowager was horrified to see Poppy standing in the doorway, busily turning the handle of a cine-camera.

"The pup-police, aunt! Oh, you haven't sent for them?"

"Yes. The newspaper reporter—oh!" ended the dowager. "Oh, it will all be in the papers! Publicity! Oh, this is terrible publicity! A murder in the castle!"

Poppy's dismay changed to delight.

"In the papers! Publicity! Golly, that's just what we wanted! Hurrah!"

"But Freddie?" said the dowager blankly.

"Freddie's alive and well," said Poppy. "We were just acting a film. It was to be a surprise."

The dowager gave a little jump, and into her mind flashed the memory of the mysterious Chinaman, the cannon, and the "shooting." Then she looked at the film camera, and her mouth opened and shut.

"Indeed!" she said at last. "Let me congratulate you. It was a surprise!"

There was a chilliness in her tone, and Jenkins, gulping, looked in mute appeal at Poppy, who did her best to exonerate him.

"Where is Freddie?" demanded the dowager.

It took twenty minutes to find Freddie, who

was by this time hoarse with yelling. After setting the dowager's mind at rest, Poppy decided it was time for her to put her next idea into practice.

POPPY and Freddie arrived on the scene again just as the dowager was trying to convince a battalion of reporters and photographers that Freddie was alive.

"Hallo, aunt!" smiled Poppy. "Here we are! And here—" She held out a sheaf of papers that she had been persuading her aunt's secretary to prepare. "For the newspapers. History of the castle. Photographs of the beautiful Dowager Lady Sarfield as a debutante—as a young bride."

The dowager snatched the sheaf. She saw a photograph of herself as a young beauty, and then read an extremely flattering account of herself, her importance as a hostess, and, in fact, "puff" of the puffiest.

The dowager read as one entranced, absorbed, a girlish flush mantling her cheeks. She neither heard nor saw anything else; she was living in the gay past.

"Ahem! Have you your ladyship's permission to publish this?" asked one of the reporters.

A "no" trembled on the dowager's lips, and then she thought of all the hundreds and even thousands of the rising generation who had never heard of her when she had been at the

height of her fame, who did not know how beautiful women had been forty years or more ago. Would it be fair to suppress this?

"Yes," she said suddenly. "You may publish this."

Happily Poppy beckoned her other surprise forward—the big noise of the film company, who had wanted to shoot scenes at England's most famous castle.

"No, no," said the dowager. "I could never let this castle be filmed—"

"Well, we only want the oldest and best, which ever that is. We've got to be able to advertise that it is England's most famous, most ancient, most romantic castle in the film," said the man, with a look at Poppy.

"What?" cried the dowager, and spoke for ten biting minutes about the relative merits of Manhem and Sarfield. And when she had finished there was nothing for her to add but that Sarfield must be the castle filmed.

And it was!

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

Another delightful story of this breezy character will appear in next THURSDAY'S GIRLS' CRYSTAL. Order yours right away. Remember it will be on sale a day early.



AN IMPOSTOR AGAINST HER WILL



By SYLVIA MACRAE

THE CRUELLEST BLOW

TEARS of disappointment in her eyes, Sally Blythe stared blankly at the closed door of the Reatox Sanatorium. She had come to Switzerland specially to see her brother, who was a patient here, but she had had her long journey from England in vain.

What a shock it had been when she had discovered the sanatorium to be, not a modern hospital, but a ramshackle old house containing one or two patients only.

But it was nothing to the devastating shock she had experienced when she had inquired for Charlie.

According to the gaunt, surly matron, he was no longer a patient there. He had left the previous day, and his present address was unknown.

Anxious as she was for her brother's well-being, it was only natural that Sally should think what this unexpected development was to mean to her.

Sally was a girl without a memory. All she knew about herself was what had been told her by her rascally guardian, George Hunter.

No wonder, then, that the prospect of meeting her brother had filled her with excitement. He would tell her the truth; he would clear up the mystery of her past life.

And now Charlie had vanished! Someone had whisked him away to an unknown destination.

"It's a plot," Sally told herself, "to keep us apart. My guardian's frightened lest Charlie should tell me the truth, so he's had him smuggled away."

Her eyes flashed with anger. A fierce determination not to be tricked flooded her heart. She would not leave Switzerland until she had tracked down Charlie.

"The matron must know where he is," she said to herself. "No one would let a patient go without knowing where he was being taken to."

Grimly she hammered on the knocker again. She would force the matron to tell her the truth.

Sally had to knock three times before the door creaked open, to reveal the matron frowning down in surprise.

"You still here?" the woman cried, in French. "What do you want now? I have something better to do than to keep answering the door!"

Her manner was forbidding, but Sally faced her boldly.

"I want to know where my brother is," she snapped.

"But I do not know! Parbleu, but haven't I already told you that those who took him away left no address?"

"They must have done. You are lying to me!"

"Mademoiselle!"

"Yes; deliberately lying! I'm not so simple as you seem to think. Come on, now, where was his luggage sent to?"

"It wasn't sent anywhere, and I am tired of answering your questions."

The matron glared and made to slam the door in Sally's face, but the girl was too quick for her. She gave the door a push, and before the woman could recover, Sally had darted into the hall. Determinedly she look around.

"You say Charlie's luggage was not sent away," she snapped. "That means that it is still here. Where is it? Show it to me!"

"I won't! Get out of here—get out, I say! Sacre Bleu, but I will do you a mischief if you goad me any more!"

Snatching up a heavy walking-stick from the hall-stand, the infuriated matron brandished it menacingly.

"Get outside!" she snarled.

Though her heart was beating fast, Sally stood firm. Scornfully she surveyed the scowling, glaring woman.

"If I go, the police will take my place," she declared.

"The—the police?"

The matron let the stick fall to her side. There was no mistaking her agitation, and Sally was swift to follow up her advantage.

"Yes, the police! They will make you confess the truth. Now, for the last time, where is— Ah, that's it!"

She finished with an excited cry as through an open doorway she glimpsed a strapped-down trunk. Some instinct told her that it belonged to her missing brother, and with an eager cry she made to dart through the doorway.

A MAID IN THE HOSPITAL WHERE HER BROTHER LAY ILL

And Yet She Was Forbidden To See Him!

The matron, her face pale with fury, lunged out with a desperate hand.

"Come back!" she shrieked. "Don't you dare—"

But Sally, convinced she was on the right track at last, tore herself free and plunged into the other room.

Crash!

The door was slammed in front of the agitated matron, and breathlessly Sally clicked home the bolt. No one should disturb her until she had examined this pathetic little trunk, with its mended straps and broken lid. Angry fists banged on the panels, and from the hall came shrill threats, but Sally ignored the din. She was staring at the label which had recently been pasted across the trunk. On it appeared the address:

"Swiss-American Hospital, Bernine."

"Then Charlie is in hospital at Bernine," she told herself, and her heart sang with joy. At last she had learnt the truth.

Sally gazed desperately around. It would be wise to make her escape as quickly as possible. The room boasted french windows. Even as the door rattled threateningly again, the girl opened the windows and darted out into the weed-overgrown garden.

Her business here was finished. She had obtained Charlie's address, and now her one anxiety was to get back to Lucerne.

It was too late to think of going to Bernine to-night, for the big Swiss manufacturing town lay fifty miles to the south.

"I'll catch the first train there to-morrow," Sally told herself, as, seeing a garage on the opposite side of the road, she dived across and ordered a taxi.

On the way to Lucerne she suddenly remembered the jewels in her handbag. Those gems had been stolen by her rascally guardian from Mrs. van Dell, the kindly American woman who had escorted her out to Switzerland. Sally had managed to recover them, and her first duty must be to hand them back to their owner.

So, on reaching the lakeside resort, she called at the Grand Hotel, where Mrs. van Dell was staying. To her surprise, when she asked to see the American woman, the reception clerk shrugged in regret.

"Madam has left," he declared.

"Left?"

Sally stared at him incredulously.

"Oui. She received an urgent telegram this afternoon, and—but is it that you are the Mademoiselle Sally Blythe?"

Sally nodded, and the clerk smiled.

"Bon! Then I have a letter for you. Madam thought you would be calling. Just a moment, ma'mselle."

He turned to the letter-rack behind him, groped about in one of the slots, and then, with another smile, handed Sally Mrs. van Dell's note.

Eagerly Sally read:

"Dear Sally,—I was glad to get your phone message, telling me that you are all right, and I only wish I could stay to see you, but I have had bad news. My cousin, who lives in Rome, is seriously ill, and I must go to him.

For the next few weeks my address will be: Villa Carlotta, Bono Sino, Rome.

"Please write and tell me all the news, especially about your brother."

"Best love.—E. VAN DELL."

Sally frowned doubtfully when she had read the letter, and then smiled. Of course, she could send the jewels on by post. They would be perfectly safe if she registered them, and by posting them she would be able to avoid awkward explanations, for though she knew her uncle had been the thief, she could not prove it.

She booked a room for the night and then lost no time in parcelling up the jewellery and sending it off.

The thought of seeing her brother next day made her forget all the nerve-racking experiences she had suffered since she had left England, and almost happily she undressed and went to bed.

She was up early next morning, and before ten o'clock was on her way to Bernine. She had no difficulty in locating the Swiss-American Hospital. It was a huge white building, very modern, and standing in its own well-kept grounds.

What a contrast to that dingy house at Reatox, Sally thought, and a great weight lifted from her heart. At all events her brother would be properly looked after here.

Eagerly she pushed open the swing entrance doors and made her way to the inquiry office. A rather disagreeable, middle-aged clerk looked up from a pile of letters as she entered.

"Yes?" he asked.

"I would like to see my brother, please," said Sally.

"Your name?"

"Blythe—Sally Blythe."

"And your brother's?"

"Charles."

"H'm!" The clerk grunted and pulled a thick ledger across the desk. Opening it, he ran one stubby finger down the list of patients. Finally he shook his head. "There must be some mistake. Your brother is not a patient here," he said, and, with a brusque nod, he returned to his work.

SHE MUST FIND A WAY

SALLY stood there nonplussed, her face pale, despair in her heart. This unexpected setback had staggered her. Now she did not know what to do.

Was it possible, she wondered, that at the last minute her brother had been whisked off somewhere else?

Miserably she left the office, and then, as she gained the huge entrance hall, she gave a sudden cry of triumph, for standing against one wall was a pile of luggage, and amongst it a battered old trunk.

The trunk she had seen at Reatox! Then her brother had come here!

Excitedly she darted across to the trunk, to give a gasp of understanding when she saw the name that had been written on the label.

Charles Staines, it said, not Charles Blythe. That explained everything. Her brother had been entered here under a false name. Or was it a false name? What if Staines was his correct surname?

Sally felt her pulses racing. Had she accidentally stumbled upon the truth? Was her name really Blythe? She had only her rascally guardian's word for it. Suppose she was an impostor; suppose she wasn't Sally Blythe at all, but some other girl whose real name was Staines!

"Oh, if only I could remember!" she gulped. "If only I could get my memory back!"

And then abruptly she smiled. Well, she would not have long to wait for the truth now. Charlie would tell her all she wanted to know!

Back she went to the inquiry office, to smile apologetically at the grumpy clerk.

"I am awfully sorry to bother you again," she said, "but I have discovered what's wrong. My brother's name entered under a false name."

"A false name? Impossible, mademoiselle!"

"But it isn't—really, it isn't! His trunk is out in the hall. I've just seen it, and the

label's got the name Charles Staines on it. That's the boy I want to see."

"Charles Staines? Ah, yes, I remember him. He is very ill. He cannot see ordinary visitors. The doctor will not permit it."

"But I am not an ordinary visitor! I'm his sister!" protested Sally.

"And yet your name is Blythe and his is Staines! That strikes me as being very queer, ma'mselle."

"Yes, yes, I know, but I've lost my memory, and—and our guardian is trying to keep us apart. Oh, I know it sounds queer, but I am his sister, and I must see him—I must see him!"

Appealingly Sally gazed at him. The thought that after all she might not be allowed to see Charlie distracted her. But the clerk remained unimpressed.

"I am sorry, ma'mselle," he said, "but unless you can provide us with proof of your relationship with this patient—"

He broke off, and they both turned as the door opened and a tall man with grizzled hair and piercing eyes entered. He wore the white coat of a doctor, and he looked in surprise from the clerk to the agitated girl.

"Hallo, what's wrong?" he asked, in a strong American accent.

"It is this girl. She wants to see someone whom she declares is her brother. Yet his name is Staines, while hers is Blythe," the clerk explained.

"Blythe!" The American doctor gave a start. Like gimlets his keen eyes surveyed Sally. "Where do you come from—America?" he asked.

"Y-y-yes," faltered Sally, taken aback by his almost accusing manner.

"And what is your other name?" he demanded.

"S-S-Sally."

"I thought so! Sally Blythe! I recognised you at once!" he declared. "You are the girl whom the American police are still looking for!"

His eyes filled with contempt and his voice took on a harsher note.

"I don't know what your game is," he declared, "but we don't want you here." He swung round on the clerk. "Under no circumstances is this girl to be admitted to the hospital. You understand?"

The clerk nodded.

"Very good, monsieur."

"But—but—"

Sally, shivering, recovered from this paralyzing attack. Wildly she clutched at the doctor's arm.

"This is all a horrible mistake. I'm not the girl you think I am!" she cried. "I'm not the American girl the police are looking for. Charlie Staines is my brother. Oh, please let me see him. You can't be so cruel as to try to keep us apart. Please, please listen to me for a moment—"

But he shook off her trembling fingers and strode to the door.

"You can't fool me," he declared harshly. "I happened to be at home in America during the time you were on everybody's lips—on every front page. You had better leave—at once!"

And without another look he departed. Tears streaming down her cheeks, Sally gazed after him; then a dry cough from the clerk made her realise her position.

"You had better go, ma'mselle. You heard what the doctor said. I do not wish to call the porter, but if you refuse to be sensible—"

Sally hardly heard him. The room seemed to be going round and round. There was despair in her heart; rioting chaos in her brain.

Blindly she stumbled out of the room; blindly she tottered out into the gardens, there to sink down on to a seat, her whole body convulsed with sobs.

This was the biggest setback of all. She had tracked down her brother at last, but all in vain. They wouldn't admit her. They thought she was not fit to associate with decent people. They thought she was a fugitive from justice.

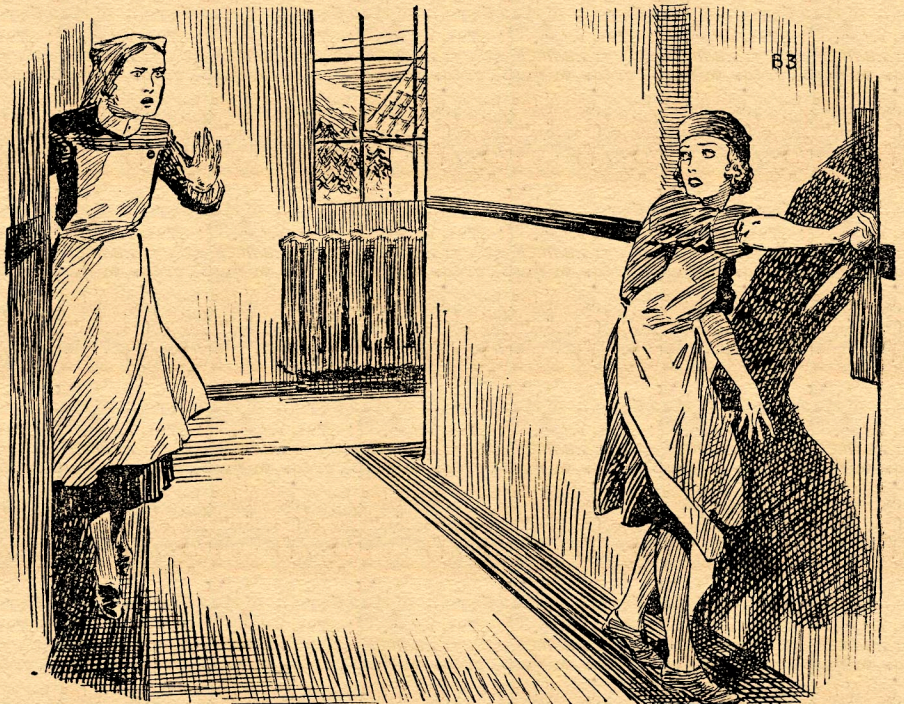
Sally had heard all about the girl the doctor had mentioned, but, despite her loss of memory, she was certain that she had never behaved so wickedly. She was certain she had never injured anyone in her life.

"It must have been some other girl," she told herself. "Perhaps the real Sally Blythe. I'm beginning to think that my name isn't Blythe at all, but if only I could remember—if only I could remember!"

SALLY SEES HER BROTHER!

"THEY shan't keep me from Charlie! I will see him! I don't care what that doctor says! I will find out the truth!"

Anger and fierce determination had replaced Sally's storm of tears. It was the next day.



"What were you doing in there?" snapped the grim-faced hospital Sister. Sally's heart missed a beat. What if the woman should guess her real identity?

and the girl was seated in the cheap little bed-sitting-room she had booked for herself.

But how was she to get to her brother? In face of the doctor's ban it seemed impossible. And then she had a brain-wave. What about trying to get a job at the hospital?

She would have to disguise herself, of course, and adopt a false name; but that would be easy. A wig would conceal her own hair and make her look slightly different. But were there any jobs going?

That was a question quickly answered. She rang up the hospital, to learn that though they had no vacancies at the moment, one of the wardmaids might be leaving at the end of the week. If Sally would see the matron on Saturday, something might be done.

How eagerly she waited for the days to pass! Promptly at nine o'clock on Saturday morning she called at the hospital. Again she had to interview that suspicious clerk in the inquiry office.

Her heart beat fearfully; it was nervously that she asked for the matron. Would he recognise her? But he hardly gave this poorly dressed girl a second look.

"Come for a job, eh?" he growled. "Very well, you will find the matron in her office. Along the hall, up the stairs, and the second door on the left."

Thanking him, Sally hurried off. The matron proved to be friendly. The only difficulty she raised was the matter of references. Desperately Sally bluffed.

"I only want the job temporarily. You see, I'm—I'm waiting until my friends at home can send me sufficient money to get back to England," she said. "I—I'd be willing to work without wages, and if you'd write to Mrs. van Dell at Rome, she would vouch for me."

To her relief this was satisfactory, and a minute or two later she found herself engaged.

It was two days before Sally discovered that Charlie was in the opposite wing to where she worked; another day before she learnt that he occupied a private ward on his own. This vital information obtained, she set about getting transferred to the other wing.

This didn't prove difficult. And one afternoon she found herself detailed to polish the floor of the long corridor that gave access to the private wards.

With what excitement she got out her tins of polishes, mop, and other cleansing materials.

On hands and knees she scrubbed and mopped at the green linoleum. There, just round the corner, was Ward B 3—Charlie's room! Soon she would be working outside the actual door.

It was past visiting hours; neither doctor nor nurse was likely to be around until after tea. The coast was clear. There was nothing to stop her from gaining her ambition.

Energetically she worked her way along the floor, and at last the white-painted door loomed before her. She looked anxiously about. No one to be seen. Somewhere a patient coughed; otherwise the hospital seemed to be wrapt in sleep.

Trembling, she wiped her soapy hands, undid the sacking apron she wore, and rose to her feet. Gently she tapped; there came no reply, so she tapped again.

Still no summons to enter. Was Charlie asleep? If so, she would not be so cruel as to wake him. Much as she longed to talk with him, his comfort must come first. He was very ill, and must not be worried.

Turning the handle, she softly pressed the door open, peering in with misty eyes.

There, right in front of her, was the bed, with a thin form lying between the sheets.

Sally felt herself gulp. How terribly ill her brother looked! His cheeks were sunken; there were dark circles around his eyes; his lips were pallid, and the two pale hands lying on the coverlet were thin and fragile.

Her brother!

Sadly Sally surveyed him. If only she could do something to help him. If only she could tend him herself. Her heart went out to that fragile figure lying there so still.

And then she realised that his eyes were

open; with dark, wondering gaze he was returning her look.

Softly she moved across to the bed; tenderly she bent over him, her lips creasing into a soothing smile.

"How are you getting on?" she whispered. "Not so bad!" Pluckily he tried to smile. "They're sports here—not like that other place. Ugh!"

He shivered with remembrance, and Sally, recalling that dingy house and surly matron at Reatox, shivered, too.

"I expect you have more visitors here?" she said. But he shook his head, his eyes wistful and longing.

"No. No one ever comes—no one," he gulped—"not even Mary! Oh, if only Mary would come—if only she would write!"

"Mary?" prompted Sally.

"Yes—my sister, you know. The only relative I've got. Mary and I were always such good pals, and yet—and yet—"

Mary Staines—that was her name. The truth was out at last. She wasn't Sally Blythe at all. That had only been a cunning invention of her guardian. Why he should have given her a fresh name she couldn't even guess, but now she was certain she was on the right track.

"Mary Staines—Mary Staines."

Silently she repeated the name again and again, and to her joy a chord of remembrance echoed in her brain. Yes, that was her name. There could be no doubt about it.

For weeks she had been an unwilling impostor; for weeks she had been fooled into assuming another girl's identity. But those days were over. She had found Charlie now, and soon would learn the whole truth.

The coughing seemed to have exhausted him, and he sighed as she lowered his head back to pillow.

"Thank you," he whispered. "I—I like you. But who are you? I have never seen you before, and yet—" He stared at her with puzzled eyes. "There is something about you I seem to recognise," he went on weakly. "You remind me of Mary, but she isn't a servant, and her hair is curly—"

He broke off, too weak to talk on, and Sally, though her whole being was palpitating with eagerness to reveal her real identity, resisted the temptation. She must break the news gently. Charlie must not be worried. Now he must sleep; in his present state it would be unkind to over-excite him.

"Would you like me to come and see you again?" she whispered.

"Oh, please!—Would you—really?"

His eagerness was pathetic, and one fragile hand closed lovingly around Sally's own fingers. She smiled, though there were tears in her eyes.

"Of course I will," she promised. "Tomorrow—perhaps, after breakfast, and—Charlie—"

"Yes?"

"I may have news about Mary for you then. Don't worry, dear. Mary is not far away. Soon she will be coming to see you. Now you must be a good boy and go to sleep."

"Yes," he nodded agreeably. "I feel very tired. It's that cough, you know. It—it exhausts me. But you will come again to-morrow—you promise?"

Sally nodded, and, a happy smile on his lips, he closed his burning eyes. The girl stood there, watching over him until he was asleep; then, with a start, she remembered her work. From the corridor outside came a testy voice:

"Where can that girl have got to? How dare she leave all this litter lying about!"

Sally gave a startled gasp.

"My goodness, the ward Sister!" she cried, and simply flew out of the room.

The Swiss Sister eyed her in surprise.

"What are you doing in there?" she demanded.

"I—I thought I heard him call out, so I went in to see if he was all right," stammered Sally. "But you needn't worry. He's sleeping now."

The Sister sniffed.

"In future please attend to your own duties and leave others to perform theirs!" she snapped. "Your job is to clean the place, not to attend patients—and for goodness' sake hurry up and get all this litter cleared away!"

"Yes, Sister—certainly, Sister!" gasped Sally, and, with frenzied haste, set about collecting up her mop, pail, brushes, and dusters.

She knew no rest until next day. She was longing to have another talk with Charlie. Already he had given her startling information; on the next visit he might be able to clear up the whole mystery.

When she arrived next morning she brought with her a bunch of beautiful carnations. She kept the flowers wrapped up in her spare apron until after the doctor had made his rounds, then, thinking the coast was clear, she abandoned her job of polishing the stairs, and made her way upstairs.

This would be her only chance to see Charlie to-day, for this afternoon she would be at work in the other wing.

Reaching the corridor, she flung an apprehensive glance about her, then unwrapped the bundle she carried, and rearranged the flowers.

Clutching them tenderly, she hurried forward, but as she rounded the bend she got a shock. The door of Room B 3 opened, and out stepped the grim Swiss nurse she had encountered the previous day.

The Sister surveyed her in angry surprise.

"What are you doing up here?" she demanded. "And who are those flowers for?"

Sally, who had frantically tried to hide the carnations under her apron, flushed guiltily.

"Oh, I—I thought the little boy in the ward would like them!" she faltered. "He never has any visitors, so I thought—"

The Sister sniffed unsympathetically.

"You're not paid to think!" she cut in icily. "And you ought to know the regulations. It is forbidden for any of the staff to bring patients presents. Give me those flowers at once!"

She held out a commanding hand, and then, as Sally did not obey, she made a sudden snatch at them.

"Give me them, I say!" she shrielled, and tearing the carnations out of the girl's grasp she flung them into the wastepaper-basket that stood against the wall. "Perhaps that will teach you not to be impudent!" she snapped.

Sally gazed in dismay at the broken, ruined blooms; then indignation banished the tears from her eyes.

"Oh, you're cruel!" she gulped. "You'd be right to do that!"

"No right?" The Sister glared at her. "Listen to me, whatever your name is! I am in charge of this wing, and I will not have you interfering with my patients. Ever since you visited this ward yesterday the boy Staines has been fretting. He's had a relapse, thanks to you, and may not be able to travel to-day."

Sally stared incredulously.

"Travel!" she gasped. "Do—do you mean he's going to leave here?"

The Sister nodded.

"Yes, though what business it is of yours, I don't know!" she snapped.

"I'm his—his sister," she faltered. "Oh, I can't explain, but I must see him! Won't you just let me go in for a minute? I promise won't upset him. Let me just say good-bye to the Sister frowned incredulously.

"Then why didn't you call and see him the ordinary way?" demanded the nurse.

"Look here! I don't know what your objection is, but plain it is you're a trickster. Go on about under a false name! This settles it, no girl; you'll come along with me to matron. I'm going to keep an eye on you until I've seen you safely outside the hospital."

She tried to pull Sally forcibly along, and the girl resisted, she felt her wig slipping. Agitatedly she raised a hand to tug it straight but it was too late. Her captor gave a startled gasp and clutched at the false hair.

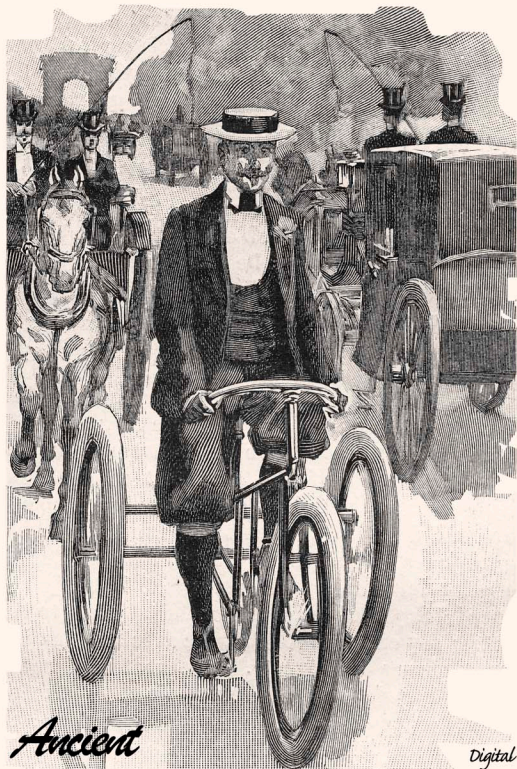
"So you wear a wig, do you?" she snapped.

"No wonder I don't trust you!"

She snatched off the disguising wig just as footsteps sounded round the bend. Sally looked up, and then her heart sank. Striding towards them was the American doctor who had given orders for her not to be admitted.

This means the end to Sally's hopes! Out of the hospital she will have to go. There are many thrills in next week's instalment. Remember the GIRLS' CRYSTAL will be on sale on Thursday instead of Friday.

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