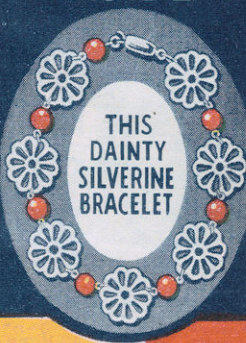


Nº 1 OF A NEW 7 STORY PAPER *for* GIRLS

The CRYSTAL^{2D}

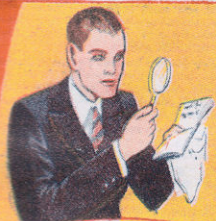
FREE INSIDE



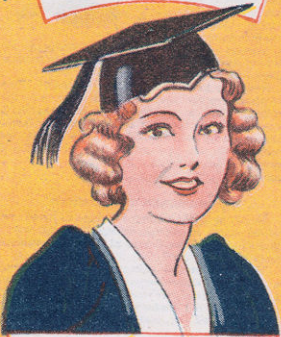
MAZDA
THE GIRL WHO KNEW NO PITY



FILM STRUCK
FAY



NOEL RAYMOND
DETECTIVE



THE MADCAP
FORM MISTRESS

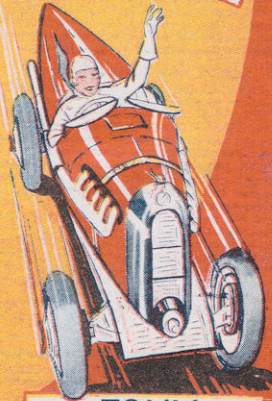


NURSE ROSEMARY

ALL
THESE
7 *Enthralling*
STORIES
INSIDE



SHE WAS A
FUGITIVE



TONY
THE SPEED GIRL



OVER THE TEA-CUPS

The "Crystal" Office,
The Fleetsay House,
Farringdon Street, London, E.C.A.

HELLO, GIRLS!—First, I suppose I must introduce myself to you or you will be wondering who this person is who has dared to bag the first reading page of your brand new paper!

I am your Editor, and you, of course, are my new readers. Well, I'm delighted to meet you and hope we're going to be awfully good friends, who will meet week by week in the pages of THE CRYSTAL.

Having got that over, you'll forgive me if I breathe a tiny sigh of relief, won't you? For introductions are always rather difficult, I'm sure you agree.

Now I can ask you how you like THE CRYSTAL. And what do you think of the FREE GIFT? You simply couldn't resist trying on the SILVERINE BRACELET before you even peeped at the stories, now, could you?

Claudine, who is our very charming Good Looks Expert, and Penelope, who has such bright ideas on sewing and what-to-wear subjects, helped me to choose it.

Penelope said it was novel and assured me that all girls like things that are different. Claudine said it was a perfect pet, and so useful because it can be worn with the sportiest jersey or with the fluffiest chiffon frock. And Claudine's authority on such things, I can tell you, I like it—well, because I felt sure you would.

After donning your bracelet I expect you settled down in earnest to read THE CRYSTAL. Seven stories! I wonder how you decided which one to read first. And having read them, could you decide which one you enjoyed most?

Do, when you have time, write and tell me how you like THE CRYSTAL. I shall love to hear from you and shall feel that we really are friends then. You'll see my address at the top of the page.

MORE FREE GIFTS TO COME

In next Friday's CRYSTAL you will receive another magnificent FREE GIFT—a superb FILM STAR AUTOGRAPH AND PHOTOGRAPH ALBUM. This 52-page Album—with its attractive silver cover—contains the photographs of no less than 80 famous stars!

This Album also contains pages for the autographs of the film stars whose photographs appear in it. These 80 autographs will be given away free in THE CRYSTAL. NEXT week you will receive—free—the ALBUM containing the 80 photographs, also the first big sheet of 10 autographs. The remaining 70 autographs will be given away during the seven following weeks, 10 each week. So that when this unique Album is completed you will have the autographs and photographs of 80 film stars!

Such a splendid record of the famous film stars of to-day is, I'm sure, a gift you will treasure for many years.

COLLAR AND CUFFS—FROM HANKIES

Penelope, in that delightfully feminine way of hers, insists that the SILVERINE bracelet reminds her of an idea she has for you—for brightening a favourite Autumn frock, with new collars and cuffs made from handkerchiefs.

You will want two gaily-coloured hankies for this. Striped ones would be particularly effective, especially if the colours match or contrast with your frock. Yellow or green would look well if your frock is brown; red, light blue, or blue and white, if your frock is navy.

It sounds most destructive to me, but you must cut both handkerchiefs from corner to corner. Bind the edges if you are good at sewing; just hem them, taking care not to stretch them, if you are not.

Now you have four identical triangles. Two of these are for the cuffs, and two make the collar. With a glance at the diagram here, sew these on to the neck and cuffs of your frock, and you'll be so delighted you'll be longing for someone to ask you out to tea—where they'll certainly be admired. Even I am impressed now.



A NECKLACE FROM NUTS

Necklines again remind Penelope of necklaces, which seems reasonable enough. So she asks you to try your hand next at making a necklace from nuts.

You will require thirteen monkey-nuts and a length of embroidery silk for this novelty. Use more nuts if you want your necklace longer, and choose red embroidery silk if you want your necklace to match your FREE GIFT bracelet.

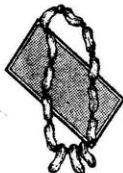
Thread a large darning needle with your silk and thread this through one nut. You'll probably split the first nut—Penelope did—but at a penny a bag, who cares? Having threaded one successfully, make a large knot in your silk at the point where your needle came out of the nut.

Then thread on—as many nuts as you like—making a bright, big knot between each nutty bead. Three nuts threaded the short instead of the long way will make a finish-off in the front of the necklace.

If your necklace is short, you'll probably fasten it with a fastener from an old necklace, but if you decide to have a long necklace, then, of course, it will slip over your head and will not require a fastening.

The beige-coloured nuts with the bold red knots in between will look very attractive, but if you feel particularly energetic or are of an artistic turn of mind, you can paint the nuts themselves.

Silver nuts with the



red knots between would look very gay—and how the necklace would match your bracelet then! Gold would look jolly, too, or white, or cream—in fact, any colour, painted all over or in dots.

Penelope's so pleased with the idea she's making several, and whispers that she's saving them for small doses for Christmas. I didn't tell her I thought it was a little early to think seriously of Christmas yet, for fear she would agree and perhaps offer me a monkey nut! It's the one nut I refuse to eat, even when on a visit to the Zoo!

NEXT FRIDAY'S STORIES

Now, I know you're simply longing to know something of next week's stories and features in THE CRYSTAL.

Yes, there will be SEVEN stories again. You will meet the irresistible Ned Raymond, the charming Mademoiselle Form-mistress, Nurse Rosemary and Tony, the Speed Girl, in the COMPLETE stories.

Fay Royce, blinded by the glamour of film-land, and an unquenchable belief in her own ability, continues her determined fight to reach her goal, undaunted by any obstacle, confident in herself.

There seems no end to Mazda's cunning. The Girl Who Knows No Pity has only just started her heartless revenge on the Rayson family.

In "She Was a Fugitive," you will read how Gilda Marsh, with all the world against her, fights on determined to prove her innocence even with such odds against her.

Marvella will tell you how to read fortunes from the hand, in her corner next Friday. You'll enjoy this.

"Eyes Bright for Beauty" is Claudine's Good Looks subject, while Penelope will have some more novelty notions and some ingenious how-to-make suggestions.

With this programme of reading you will get free the superb 52-page AUTOGRAPH AND PHOTOGRAPH ALBUM and first Big Sheet of Autographs, so next Friday's CRYSTAL must certainly not be missed. You can imagine what a rush there will be for this number, so I do most earnestly advise you to run round to your news-agent, and ask him to save you your copy—just to make sure of it.

Better still, ask him to save it EVERY week for you or to have it delivered to your home.

And now, if I am to get on with some of those things which make an Editor's life such a busy one, I must say good-bye until next Friday.

Cheerio!

Tom Editor

INTRIGUING MYSTERIES SOLVED BY
The World's Most
FASCINATING DETECTIVE



NOEL RAYMOND

Detective

By PETER LANGLEY

THE MYSTERY MAN IN THE MASK

JOVE! It's a girl!" Noel Raymond, the debonair detective, brought his powerful Kildare Twelve to a sudden stop and leapt out. Languid, Noel might appear at times, but not when action was called for. At twenty-four, and comparatively fresh from college, he had already made a name for himself as a private investigator.

His services certainly seemed needed now, for beside the road lay huddled the figure of a girl. In two athletic strides Noel reached the bank, and, careless of the immaculate creases in his trousers, he dropped to one knee.

"I say, you know," he said gently, "this won't do!" The girl started convulsively; there was fear in her eyes. But Noel smiled at her reassuringly, and there was something about him that gave her confidence. She started to get to her feet, and Noel was quick to help her.

"Are you sure you are all right?" he asked anxiously. "Not hurt, are you, Miss Denby?" The girl, who was clutching her flimsy handkerchief, stared blankly. "You—you know my name!" she gasped. "But how—"

Noel smiled boyishly. "It's on the corner of your hanky," he said; "couldn't miss it. But, I say, why are you running away?"

The girl's eyes opened even wider. "How did you guess that?" she asked. Noel glanced quizzically from the girl's torn frock to the scrap of similar material fluttering in the narrow gap in the hedge; his practised scrutiny, masked by the lazy droop of his eyelids, had already noted the trail of small footprints zigzagging across the ploughed field beyond.

And yet there were no signs of the girl having been chased. And then abruptly the young detective noticed a house that stood on the skyline, half concealed by the gaunt trees; a curious house to be found in so typically an English setting. It was built pagoda fashion and roofed with fantastic green tiles. "Just puttin' two an' two together," re-

turned Noel lazily, as he produced a gold cigarette-case and held it out. "Smoke?" he inquired.

"Not now, thanks," Jill Denby said. Noel closed the case with a snap. "Miss Denby," he said, "I want you to tell me the truth. You are running away from the House of the Pagoda, and it has something to do with this."

He reached out with a gesture that was firm yet chivalrous to touch a curious green mark on the girl's wrist; it was shaped like a dragon, and looked as if it had been stamped on with indelible ink. Jill Denby drew back with an involuntary shudder.

"Oh, I hate it!" she whispered. "I want to get rid of the ghastly thing—and I don't know how!" Noel's eyelids drooped over his keen eyes.

"It was put on without your knowing?" he queried. "When?" "This—this morning." The girl shivered. "I—I found it when I woke up. That was why I ran away. You see—"

She paused, realising suddenly that she had begun to confide in a young man who, though nice, was a complete stranger.

Noel, as though sensing her hesitation, produced a pigskin notecase—and slipped a card into the girl's hand. Jill stared at it, her eyes dilating.

"Noel Raymond—Private Investigator," she breathed. "Why, I believe—I'm almost sure I've heard about you!"

"Possibly," Noel smiled humorously, showing a flash of white teeth against his suntanned, good-looking face. "People will talk. But let's talk about you. I know that sounds impertinent; but, you see, I'm no end interested. I want to help you, Miss Denby—if you'll trust me."

He glanced at her quizzically, and Jill's lingering doubts vanished. Impulsively she caught at his hand.

"All right," she cried, "I'll—I'll tell you everything."

"Good!" returned Noel gravely. "Fire ahead!"

He moved suddenly, imagining that he heard a rustle in the bushes behind him, but he could see nothing.

Noel, however, was not taking risks. He still had his gold cigarette-case in his hand, and he held it in such a way that it formed a mirror.

The girl was speaking jerkily, almost in a whisper; her story was sufficiently curious.

The House of the Pagoda, it seemed, belonged to her uncle, a rather eccentric man, who had lived most of his life in China. The servants, with the exception of the elderly secretary and an English valet, were all Chinese.

Jill, an orphan, had been struggling to earn her living in London, when she had received an offer from her uncle to come and stay with him. She had accepted gratefully, but on arriving at the house had discovered that her uncle had been called away.

However, he had left a message that she should make herself at home and await his return.

"When did you first realise you were scared?" demanded Noel suddenly, reading between the lines of her story.

The girl looked at him in a frightened fashion.

"I—I don't know," she breathed. "From the first, I think. There was something—something about the atmosphere of the house. And then—then, on the third night—"

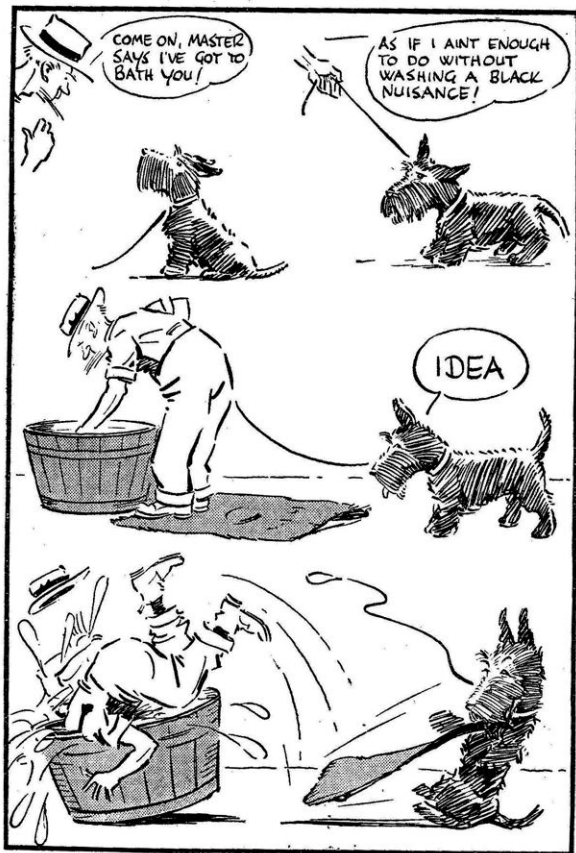
She spoke more quickly, her gaze fixed on Noel. It had been on the third night that she had heard a voice—seeming to materialise out of space, and warning her to return to London.

It had happened again on the fourth night; and it warned her that to stay meant death at the hands of the Green Dragon.

Terrified, she had reported the matter to Mr. Grant, the rather crabby old secretary;

This Week: THE MENACE OF THE GREEN DRAGON

THAT SCAMP SCOTTIE



but after questioning the Chinese servants he had pooch-pooched the idea—suggested she had been dreaming.

"And then—then, this morning," whispered Jill, holding out her wrist, "I—I found this!" Noel's jaws tightened.

"Beastly!" he said. "Don't blame you for running away. But where are you going now?"

The girl's lips trembled. "I—I don't know," she admitted. "I do," returned Noel. "You're going back!"

"Back?" The girl recoiled, white to the lips. "Back there?"

Noel's manner changed abruptly; his large hand closed reassuringly over the girl's small, slender one. He smiled—and Noel's smile was irresistible at times.

"Listen, Miss Denby! I want you to be brave; you are, you know, really. You're going back to that house, but not alone. I am going with you, in the guise of your cousin, Jack Gayford. That is my name from now on, and—"

Noel broke off and eyed the girl urgently. "Don't look round," he whispered. "Talk about the weather, or something."

Bewildered, Jill stared at him in surprise. He was looking at the gold case in his hand. Reflected in the lid was the figure of a Chinaman—a man who had stealthily emerged from the bushes.

"Toppin' weather for the time of the year—what?" remarked Noel.

The man's face was concealed by a yellow mask, embroidered with a green dragon. In one hand he held a knife. On he crept—nearer and nearer. And then suddenly, unexpectedly, Noel acted.

Spinning on his heel, he sprang in the same movement, landing lightly within a foot of the crouching figure.

The figure leapt to its feet, as Noel's left shot out with unerring aim. There was a dull crack, but the man must have had a jaw like an ox.

He reeled back as the open knife clattered to the ground. Through slits in the yellow mask a pair of coal-black eyes glittered vindictively.

Then, with an agile and unexpected backward spring, the masked figure plunged into the undergrowth, and was lost to sight.

"Jolly little feller—what?" Unruffled and smiling, Noel Raymond bent

to pick up the knife, holding it gingerly between his fingers. Producing a spotless silk handkerchief, he wrapped it carefully round the handle of the knife, and dropped it on the rear seat of the car.

Then, still smiling, he turned to confront the white-faced girl.

"That settles it, Miss Denby," he remarked. "Jack Gayford will call on his cousin at the House of the Pagoda—to-night!"

NOEL—AUTOGRAPH HUNTER

BOOM!
Jack Gayford—alias Noel Raymond—started as he glanced across the softly lit dinner-table at his attractive young hostess.

Noel rather overdid the start, but that was part of his assumed character.

"Jolly old gongs take a bit of gettin' used to—what?" he inquired. "Helps the Chinese johnnies to feel sort of at home—eh? Mustn't begrudge 'em their little pleasures."

Jill laughed softly as she encountered the humorous glance in her guest's blue eyes. Noel was good company. No one would have dreamt that he was here on a grim mission of life or death.

The young detective had arrived at the House of the Pagoda an hour ago, to be warmly welcomed by Mr. Grant, the elderly secretary.

The room he had been given was the best in the house, and the English valet, Hammond, who had been instructed to look after Noel's requirements, was a perfect model of a gentleman's gentleman.

And yet Noel was not convinced. There was something here that he did not like; something sinister about the atmosphere of the house.

The debonaire detective drained a cup of fragrant black coffee, and asked Jill's permission to light a cigarette.

"Toppin' dinner you put up!" he remarked, blowing an appreciative smoke ring into the air. "A dinner worth rememberin'. Who's the jolly old genius behind the cooking-pots? You, Fu Li?"

He glanced at the impassive Chinaman who waited behind his chair. The man shook his head.

"No, sir; Sing Lung, him cook. Veele good cook; chop-stey, one time."

"He used to be a chef in a Chinese restaurant," explained Jill, smiling.

Noel's blue eyes flickered with interest. "Which is Sing Lung?" he asked.

A very fat Chinaman waddled forward, with a low bow, in response to Jill's beckoning finger.

"Congrats on the dinner, Sing Lung," said Noel, gravely adjusting a monocle. "Wonder if you'd do me a favour?"

As the Chinaman bowed, Noel produced from his pocket a slim book with metal covers.

"Jolly old autograph in native writing, y'know," he explained airily. "Bit of a feather in my cap to show chappies at home the signature of the famous Sing Lung!"

He smiled disarmingly as he held out the book, together with a gold-mounted fountain-pen.

Sing Lung wrote his name in sprawling Chinese characters, and, with another low bow, backed away.

"Thanks awfully, old top," said Noel, making to replace the book in his wallet; then, as though struck by an after-thought, he added: "I say, I might as well have your signature while I'm about it, Fu Li."

The impassive Chinese waiter stepped forward, and Noel, turning away for an instant, placed the book on the table in full view. Jill stared, for she had noticed a surprising fact. Noel, in one lightning movement, had exchanged the original book for another, exactly similar!

Jill's bewilderment increased when, having obtained Fu Li's signature, Noel played the same trick on the third servant, Chang, substituting an entirely fresh book.

"Well, well," remarked Noel airily, tapping the ash from his cigarette. "What about those jolly old curios you promised to show me, Jill?"

Jill nodded and rose to her feet, Noel following her example.

The room to which Jill led the way was furnished in a typically Oriental fashion. Heavy velvet curtains, embroidered with gold, hung from the walls; three beautiful silver lanterns depended from the domed ceiling.

Jill closed the door and faced Noel, a slight flush on her cheeks; but he signalled to her not to ask questions.

"I'm going to try a little experiment," he said, crossing to a small table, and placing on it the three metal-covered books. Then from his pocket he produced a small rubber bulb and, squeezing it sharply, scattered a cloud of white powder over the metal objects.

"What—what's that for?" asked Jill, moving forward curiously.

"Finger-prints," said Noel briefly.

He slipped a hand into his breast-pocket and drew out the knife he had wrested from the masked Chinaman. He sprayed powder on it also, then compared the finger-prints on all four objects. An expression of disappointment crossed his face; no two sets of finger-prints were similar.

"That lets out the servants," said Noel, with a puzzled frown. "Unless"—he swung round suddenly. "Any more Chinese employed in the house, Miss Denby?"

Jill shook her head in perplexity. Noel pursed his lips, tapping thoughtfully on the table with his strong, lean fingers.

Then who, or what, was the Green Dragon? Someone outside the house? It seemed the only explanation.

There came a gentle tapping on the door. Quickly Noel swept the objects from the table into his pocket, and, crossing swiftly to the door, opened it.

It was the valet, Hammond, with a message from Mr. Grant, the secretary.

"Mr. Grant's compliments, sir! He hopes you have found everything to your satisfaction. He apologises for having been unable to join you and Miss Jill at dinner, as he has some urgent correspondence. He has asked me to see that your room is in readiness, sir."

"Thanks, old top!" said Noel cheerfully, with a swift, cautioning glance at Jill. "I'll just say good-night to my cousin, and then I'll be coming up. I'm deucedly tired," he added, with a stifled yawn.

The valet bowed unobtrusively from the room. Noel crossed to Jill's side and took her hand.

"Don't worry, Miss Denby," he said quietly. "Remember—I'm here now! My room's in the same corridor as yours, and I'm a very light sleeper!"

Jill pressed his hand gratefully, and Noel followed the valet to his room.

But it was not Noel's intention to sleep; he meant to spend the night awake, and on the alert!

A LITTLE dark under the eyes, but as brisk and debonair as ever, Noel Raymond joined Jill Denby and the elderly Mr. Grant at breakfast the next morning.

"I trust you slept well, Mr. Gayford?" inquired the secretary courteously.

"Toppingly, thanks!" Noel grinned cheerfully at Jill. "Nothing like a good night's rest to give a chap an appetite!"

And Noel proceeded to wade into the mushrooms and bacon as though he meant it!

He did not think it necessary to admit, even to Jill, that he had spent the night crouched uncomfortably in a dark corner of the landing, ready for any alarm!

But nothing had happened that night—as Jill herself confirmed—and nothing happened the following night, though Noel slept but fitfully, and rose in the early hours to keep his faithful vigil.

It began to appear to the young detective that perhaps, after all, Jill Denby had allowed her imagination to run away with her; but then, on the third evening of his visit, something happened that pulled Noel up with a jerk and drove him hot on the scent.

He was about to enter his room to dress for dinner when he caught sight of the valet Hammond, searching through his suitcase!

The man straightened himself hurriedly and

made some excuse as Noel stepped into the room.

Noel gave no indication that he had noticed anything unusual about the valet's behaviour. Crossing to the dressing-chest, he carelessly pocketed the half-used tablet of soap that lay there.

"By the way, Hammond, old top," he remarked, "where's the jolly old soap?"

"Soap, sir?" repeated the valet, in surprise. "It's there, sir!"

"Not it!" returned Noel, shaking his head. "Sorry, sir! I can't think what has happened to it, but I'll see about another tablet at once, sir!"

The valet left the room, to return a few moments later with the soap.

"It's a new tablet, sir," he said. "I took the liberty of borrowing it from Mr. Grant's room, sir, as he has more than one, and we seem to have run rather short."

"Thanks!" returned Noel carelessly. "Put it down over there. That'll be all!"

The valet hesitated in the doorway.

"Beg pardon, sir, but I was going to ask if you could spare me for an hour or two this evening. I was thinking of slipping down to the men's club in the village, sir."

"Rather!" returned Noel. "By all means buzz along, Hammond. Miss Jill and I'll be spending a quiet evening on our own."

A hissing intake of breath announced that the two were identical!

"Hammond—the Green Dragon?" breathed Noel, straightening up. "It hardly seems possible—and yet, this is proof! What's the man's game?"

Noel's perplexity deepened as he dressed for dinner. During the meal, both Jill and Mr. Grant, the secretary, remarked on his unusual abstraction.

Noel, grimacing faintly, pleaded tiredness; but he could see that Jill did not believe him.

After dinner, the secretary retired, as usual, to continue his work, and Noel and Jill took coffee alone in the Chinese drawing-room.

Hammond, the valet, brought in the coffee, and hovered behind their chairs.

"I'm just about to go, sir," he murmured, "to the club, sir!"

"All right!" said Noel, and when the man had gone, he crossed the room and locked the door.

"Listen, Miss Denby," he said, taking the surprised Jill by both hands. "You'll be all right here. But don't unlock the door to anyone—till I come back!"

"Where—where are you going?" asked Jill, her face paling.

Noel grinned, though his eyes were serious. "Out of the window! Don't worry, I'm quite sane, but there's something I want to find out, and it's the only way. Shut the window after me, will you?"

Jill nodded; and, climbing out of the window, Noel went shinning up a rainpipe.

He had already discovered the position of the valet's room, and a few moments later he had reached and entered it.

Hammond's room was like the man himself—impeccably neat and orderly. A swift yet thorough search failed to disclose the object Noel was seeking—the embroidered yellow mask of the Green Dragon.

It disclosed, however, one small clue—a few strands of blue material, similar to the blouse the murderous "Chinaman" had been wearing!

"Good enough," thought Noel, his eyes glinting.

He walked noiselessly to the door and tried the handle; then he frowned. The door was locked on the outside!

The sound of a mocking laugh brought him spinning round—in time to see a pair of heavy shutters close to with a clatter outside the casement window!

The debonair detective sprang forward, his hands clenched. He had been trapped like a blundering schoolboy! And Jill—Jill—

Just then, through the silent house, there echoed a muffled scream—a girl's cry of terror.

IN THE GREEN DRAGON'S POWER!

ALONE—with her fear!

When Noel had left her and she had closed the window, Jill Denby stood motionless in the fantastically furnished apartment, pluckily fighting back her vague terrors.

Noel was in the house, and he would take care of her. Over and over again Jill assured



"Don't look round!" Noel whispered urgently. The girl stared at him in surprise. She did not know what the young detective could see reflected in the lid of his gold cigarette case!

herself of this. Nevertheless, she felt uneasy, and suddenly she had cause for real terror.

From somewhere behind her came a sinister chuckle. Jill spun round and a piercing scream escaped her lips.

For confronting her, an evil glitter in his black eyes, was a masked figure—the Green Dragon himself!

Paralysed, helpless, Jill could only stare. "You dare defy me, Miss Denby—to ignore my commands," the Green Dragon said. "You are a fool, and will pay for your folly, unless you obey me now! This young man you have brought into the house—did you imagine he could fool me—ME—with his disguise and foppish mannerisms? I know him, and unless you do as I say, he'll pay for his meddling with his life!"

"I—I don't believe you!" gasped Jill. "You can't do anything—you wouldn't dare!" The Green Dragon laughed unpleasantly. "So? You defy me! You little fool! Do you think I threaten in vain? Listen!"

A yellow-gloved hand was raised towards Jill, and she shrank back.

"I give you one more chance of life. You will pack up your things to-night and return to London; you will not dare to communicate with your uncle in any way. And that young man, Noel Raymond, will go with you. You will tell him that you have been mistaken—that alarm is needless. You understand?"

Jill fought for control; she thought of Noel—of his daring, boyish smile. It gave her courage.

"And if I refuse?" she gasped. "With an effort she staggered towards the door. She must escape—get help! But the Green Dragon barred her way. In his hand was a glittering, cut-glass object like a scepter-spray.

Jill was conscious of a stream of pungent, sickly perfume. She choked, fighting for breath, then her senses left her, and the Green Dragon caught her limp figure just in time. Picking her up, he crossed to one wall, and his finger touched the panelling. With a faint whirr a dark gap appeared in the wall.

The masked figure stepped through, carrying his insensible burden.

"Little fool!" he muttered. "None can defy the Green Dragon—and live!"

The panel closed behind him.

HIS teeth clenched, his blue eyes glittering, Noel Raymond flung himself at the bedroom door, hoping to force it open; but the lock was a strong one, and his attempt failed.

Baffled, he looked around, then a delighted ejaculation escaped his lips.

There was a skylight in the ceiling, half-hidden by a tall cupboard, and thick with dust and cobwebs. Climbing on to the cupboard, Noel wrapped a handkerchief round his hand and lunged at the leaded panes.

There was a splintering crash and a tinkle of falling glass.

Noel's wrist was cut; there was an ugly gash on his forehead where a splinter of glass had struck him. But details like that were of no account.

Wriggling through the narrow aperture, Noel crept out on to the roof.

Now to get down! It was no easy matter—but Noel's athletic record stood him in good stead. Below the sloping eaves was a rain-pipe. Noel clambered down it to the ground.

The Chinese drawing-room! That was Noel's objective. Scrambling through an open window he raced along thickly-carpeted passages.

The door of the Chinese drawing-room was locked, and getting no reply to his shout, Noel smashed it open, then looked about him.

There was no sign of Jill. An overturned chair and a little crumpled handkerchief were the only signs of its recent occupant.

And yet the window was fastened—and the door had been locked on the inside!

Baffled, with a dread at his heart that he did not dare to analyse, Noel raced from the room.

What a fool he had been to let the valet go! But it was too late now for reproaches. But something must be done—without delay!

The elderly secretary? The man appeared to be doddering and useless—but, at least, he might be able to give some information.

Noel raced to the study—the room where Jill's uncle, Colonel Denby, carried out his business.

The secretary was there—grey-haired and crabby-looking as ever—writing industriously at the big desk. He looked up vaguely, peering over his spectacles as Noel flung open the door.

"Why—Mr. Gayford—how you startled me!" he remarked, in his rather high-pitched voice. "Bless me—" He caught sight of Noel's dishevelled condition. "Has there been an accident?"

"Accident?" Noel laughed mirthlessly as he strode forward. "Jill—Miss Denby has vanished! When did you see her last?"

The secretary stared at Noel in bewilderment.

"What didn't you know?" he inquired. "I thought she had told you. Miss Jill decided to return to London unexpectedly."

"What?" gasped Noel incredulously. "This is the first I knew of it."

"Tut, tut—how foolish of me! Of course, she left a note for you."

Noel snatched the faintly-scented envelope the secretary handed to him and ripped it open.

Jill's handwriting was not familiar to him; but the note had evidently been written under the stress of great agitation.

"Dear Noel—I'm sorry. I brought you here on a wild-goose chase. I realise now what a little idiot I have been, and I have returned to London."

"Please forgive me—and forget all about me. There is a good train for London at ten o'clock."

"JILL DENBY."

Noel re-read the note three times, while the grey-haired secretary watched him curiously.

He glared at the secretary; there was no need now to keep up his languid pose.

"The note?" he snapped. "When did you receive it?"

"I found it on my desk when I came here to finish my work," murmured the secretary. "There was a short covering note for myself—informing me of her decision. It is very strange—"

"Strange?" interrupted Noel grimly. "It's more than that!" He clenched his hands, struck by a sudden thought. The valet!

"Where's Hammond?" he demanded sharply. The secretary blinked over his spectacles.

"He told me he was spending the evening at the village club," he murmured. "But"—he lowered his voice—"between you and me, I have never liked the man."

"Is there a phone in the house?" demanded Noel.

"In the hall," murmured the secretary. "Just outside."

Noel strode from the room and snatched up the receiver. Swiftly he dialed the number of the village club, then waited, biting his lip.

A voice replied. "The secretary of the club speaking." Mr. Hammond? Yes—he had been there, playing billiards, since eight o'clock.

Of course he was sure. Was there any message?

"No, thanks."

Noel slammed down the receiver and turned, a baffled look in his eyes. Then Hammond the valet, could not possibly be the Green Dragon!

All Noel's theories had come crashing to the ground.

He leaned against the wall, thinking rapidly—going over the various clues that had led him to his supposition. The fingerprints on the cake of soap—

"Ah!"

A curious ejaculation escaped Noel's lips. What an idiot he had been! The fingerprints on the soap were those of the Green Dragon. And he had jumped to the conclusion that they were Hammond's!

Hadn't Hammond said he had got the soap from Mr. Grant's room?

Controlling his excitement, Noel walked back to the study. The elderly secretary was bend-

ing down behind the desk, apparently staring at the wall.

Noel coughed to announce his presence, and Mr. Grant straightened up with a start. "I'm following Miss Denby to London," announced Noel crisply. "I'll be catching the ten o'clock train. Just popped in to say good-bye."

"Good-bye, Mr. Gayford—and a pleasant journey."

"Thanks!"

Noel retreated, closing the door and walking heavily down the passage. Then—turning, he ran back on tiptoe and listened outside the study door.

He heard a faint click—a muffled, whimpering cry.

Noel's eyes blazed; he flung open the door and burst into the room.

The grey-haired secretary was standing by a gaping cavity in the wall. As he caught sight of Noel, a snarl escaped his lips and he made a hurried move.

Noel sprang across the room—but too late! The panel closed with a faint click—and from behind came a mocking laugh, followed by a stifled scream.

Noel saw red. Snatching up a heavy chair, he whirled it over his head and brought it crashing against the panel.

The woodwork splintered and caved in. Noel, his fists bunched, charged through the opening—to find himself in a bare, stone-walled compartment lit by a flickering gas-jet.

And there, tied hand and foot to a staple in the wall, was Jill Denby!

The secretary was bending over her—but he spun round as Noel sprang through the opening. His face was twisted with baffled rage. Something flashed in his hand—a knife!

Noel leapt like a lion; there was a harsh scream as his bunched fist caught the secretary under the chin. The knife clattered to the ground, and the secretary, with a groan, slumped after it, to lie in a huddled heap.

With barely a glance at him, Noel snatched up the knife and darted to Jill's side. A swift slash, and the ropes were severed.

Stumbling, Jill clung to Noel's arm.

"Did he—did he hurt you?" asked Noel anxiously.

Jill shook her head, choking back a sob.

"No," she faltered. "But—but he threatened horrible things—"

"The cur!" Noel's teeth came together with a snap. "Lucky for him he didn't hurt you. Can you stand, Miss Denby? I just want to take a look at that chap's pocket-book."

Bending over the fallen man—who was just coming to—Noel found what he had been seeking. Papers that explained the whole baffling mystery—and a letter from Jill's uncle.

It seemed that Colonel Denby had intended to make his niece his secretary in Grant's stead. The man had failed to satisfy him.

Scared at the thought of losing his job—and even more terrified that certain defalcations in the books, stretching over a period of years, would be discovered, Grant had determined to scare Jill out of the house.

How nearly he had succeeded, only Jill herself could say.

Tears of gratitude in her eyes, she clung to Noel's arm as he put a trunk-call through to her uncle, after handcuffing the scoundrel, Grant.

"How—how can I ever thank you?" she faltered.

Noel smiled.

"It's I who should thank you, Miss Denby," he returned gallantly. "If this hadn't happened, we might never have met—and think how awful that would have been!"

And Noel Raymond, the debonair detective, laughed joyfully as he patted the girl's shoulder.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

The Girl Who Dared Not Talk! What was the strange secret that terrorised her? That's what Noel Raymond is out to discover in next Friday's CRYSTAL—and don't forget that with No. 2 you will get FREE a magnificent Film Star Album and first big sheet of Autographs!

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