

KENNEL-MAID AT PHANTOM ABBEY THIS EXCITING MYSTERY STORY BEGINS INSIDE

GIRLS' CRYSTAL ^{2^D} WEEKLY



HER DARING DECISION

Pat's rival had deliberately tried to lose the race. So the Head Girl meant to take the wheel herself. See "The Schoolgirl Speed Star"—inside.



Penelope's Page

HALLO, EVERYBODY!—Here's your Penelope again, still working hard, while everyone—even editors—are away on holiday.

But just you wait! I've an idea that the weather is going to be at its very best for your Penelope and chum Nora, when they go away the week after next.

Another nice thing about having holidays late is that the poor old stay-at-home gets lots of exciting cards. I'm sure I could almost paper a room with those I have received this year—many of them from you. If you're away at the same time as everyone else, you miss that!

A lot of people seem to be going right away into the country this year, I've noticed—staying at dinky little farmhouses and going all rural. Lovely! I'm afraid I'm too much of a town-girl myself to like farm life in the winter, but for a holiday, when the weather's fine, I think it's grand. Country holidays are often so much cheaper than seaside ones, too.

But one thing I've found in the country that I don't find at the sea—is "pests"! I mean little insect pests. And can't they bite, too!

Why midges seem to adore some people and ignore others is a mystery to me.

If you find they have a particular fondness for you, you've simply got to do something about it, or they'll sting you most relentlessly. OIL OF LAVENDER is one of the best preparations for keeping away their attentions.

Smear this on the fronts of bare legs and on exposed arms. A dab on the back of the neck and some more behind each ear should scent you enough to keep the pests away, for they hate the smell.

After a sting—which can't always be prevented—a dab of iodine is very soothing as well as

antiseptic. On of these useful little "iodine pencils" is well worth threepence of your summer pocket-money; they're so handy.

A sting from a mosquito can be very painful—and tickly. Try not to rub these, though, for the skin shouldn't be broken. Apply iodine—or some other antiseptic—as soon as ever you can after one of these. A dab of ordinary vinegar is also very soothing.

A smear of ordinary soap will give relief from a very tickly spot, if nothing else is handy. But do avoid scratching, whatever you do.

A wasp-sting can be very painful, as probably you know. It's a golden rule to try not to move if a wasp should alight on you. But should you get stung, be very brave, and in spite of the pain, suck out the sting, which will be quite visible. But you don't have to swallow it!

TWO HATS FROM ONE

Have you got a nice summery beach hat? I don't suppose for a moment you wear one much of the time. But they are useful now and again for all that.



One old straw hat will make both of these in the picture here.

With the crown cut out of the old hat, you have the latest Juliet cap. You can bind the edge with braid or ribbon, using a strong needle for the actual sewing.

The second hat style is one that's very fashionable at the moment—the hair-revealing style. After binding the raw edge of the old hat-brim, you must sew one piece of ribbon right across, from front to back, and another from side to side. It's a good plan to try the brim on your head first and measure the ribbon across to make sure of the fit.

CARD FROM COUSIN KATHLEEN

I had a card from my young Cousin Kathleen, on holiday in Scotland, this morning—a very vivid one of purple mountains and suspiciously

blue lakes with a very bored-looking and rather scarlet cow plonked in the foreground.

As usual, Kathleen's card was the most care-free thing. She's no spelling expert to begin with, and her "stops," or punctuation, just don't exist.

"This was the only card I could get in this potty little vilage," it ran. "I fell into the lake this morning and was fished out like an old boot wish you were there love, Kathleen. P.S.—wish my name was Katrine sounds so Scottish, och aye!"

Only one "l" in vilage—bad child. And she would go and fall into a lake, of course. I suppose she was looking for the monster!

What she means by wishing I were there, I'm not quite sure. Did she mean she wished I'd fallen in the lake with her? Or does she merely wish I was in Scotland?

As for changing her name. If Kathleen possessed half the names she's always sighing for, they'd fill a telephone directory!

BELT AND BRACELET FROM BEADS

Doesn't the damsel in the picture here look rather sweet? If you examine it, you'll see that she is wearing a belt and bracelet to match.

In real holiday mood these things are, too! If you'd like to make yourself the set, I can tell you how—and it won't take long to make, either.

Your first requirements are some big wooden beads. These can be all mixed colours—or all one colour.

If you have lots and lots of beads, you can make the belt as well as the bangle, but if you only have a few, then I should make just the bangle, if I were you.

Slip the beads on to a length of elastic big enough to fit snugly round your wrist, and join the ends of the elastic.

Make the belt in exactly the same way, using many more beads and a longer piece of elastic. The belt will have to slip over your head, of course, for it has no join for fastening.

Cheers!

Your own

PENELOPE

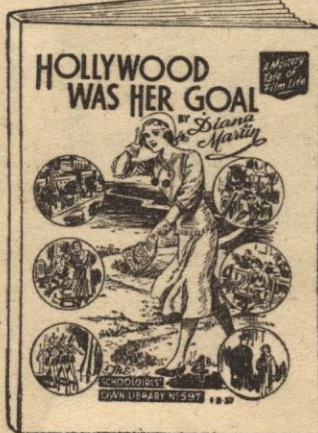


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ROSINA THE TREASURE HUNTER



THE RIVAL DETECTIVES

"HIDDEN treasure!" murmured Noel Raymond, a thoughtful gleam in his eyes. "The old place looks as though it might be honeycombed with secrets—but treasure's another matter. Some of those queer family traditions die hard!"

He sprang out of his car, glancing with interest at the rambling, creeper-covered mansion. His interest was enjoyed by an elderly maid.

"Miss Carvell is expecting me, I believe," said Noel, smiling as he produced his card. He was ushered into a lofty, panelled hall, and presently an attractive, auburn-haired girl hurried forward to greet him.

"Why—Mr. Raymond!" she exclaimed, the pleasure in her tone slightly mingled with bewilderment. "So you changed your mind, after all?"

"I beg your pardon?" Noel smiled quizzically. "I don't understand. Wasn't it arranged that I should come this afternoon to investigate the story of your family treasure?"

"Why, yes; you promised you would, when I saw you in town," replied Doris Carvell, a trifle breathlessly. "But after that you—or your manservant—phoned to say that you had remembered a previous engagement, and wouldn't be able to come—"

"I assure you, Miss Carvell," put in Noel, with a puzzled frown, "there must be some mistake! I certainly didn't phone—and my man was not even aware of my proposed visit."

A dismayed expression crossed the girl's attractive face; she glanced at Noel apologetically.

"It's all dad's fault!" she declared. "He took the message; but he's so absent-minded when he's working on his book that he probably got it all mixed up. And now he's engaged another detective—a lady. Oh, it's too bad!"

Noel frowned, and then smiled. "In that case, Miss Carvell," he said, "I'd better be pushing off—"

"No—wait!" The girl caught impulsively at his sleeve. "Here comes dad, I believe, and Miss Strudwick!"

As she spoke a door opened, and two people entered the hall—a grey-haired, elderly man, whom Noel surmised was Professor Carvell, and a tall, well-groomed woman of rather masculine appearance.

"Dad!" Doris darted towards the newcomers. "Dad, there's been a silly mistake! Mr. Raymond doesn't know anything about

that phone message. He's turned up, according to arrangement. Now what are we going to do?"

There was a moment's awkward silence. The professor looked embarrassed, his companion faintly amused.

"I was about to suggest, sir—" began Noel pleasantly, but the professor interrupted as he shook hands.

"Tut, tut! Very stupid of me—very!" he cut in. "I must have mistaken the message. But now that you're here, Mr. Raymond, you must stay—of course! I insist. We should appreciate your help—er—that is, if Miss—er—Strudwick has no objection."

Noel glanced at his professional rival, who returned his gaze a shade patronisingly.

She was of indeterminate age, brisk of manner, and self-assured; she wore a costume of masculine cut, and her sleek hair was drawn back from her forehead, to be coiled about her ears. A pair of rimless spectacles completed her efficient appearance.

"I'd hate to drive Mr. Raymond away," she remarked sarcastically; her voice was husky, her manner abrupt. "No doubt he has his own methods, as I have mine. I see no reason why we should not each tackle the problem in our own way, without interference from the other."

Noel flushed slightly, swift to sense the antagonism behind the other's tone.

He was about to make up some equally abrupt excuse when Doris Carvell plucked him by the sleeve.

"Please!" she whispered, her eyes appealing. That settled it. Instinctive chivalry over-

Noel Raymond in Another Thrilling Detective Story.

By
PETER LANGLEY

came Noel's excusable annoyance as he bowed, a trifle frigidly, towards his rival.

"I accept your suggestion, Miss Strudwick. We are both here for the same purpose—to find the Carvell treasure, supposed to be hidden somewhere in or around the old mansion."

"I know you'll both do your best!" Doris said impulsively. "So much depends on this for dad and me. If—if the Carvell treasure isn't found we'll have to sell up the old house."

Professor Carvell nodded, coughing to hide his emotion.

"That's true," he said gruffly. "I'm afraid Doris and I are basing our hopes on a frail chance—an old and musty legend. But to come to business—er—"

"Precisely," remarked the efficient Miss Strudwick, producing a notebook. "The less time wasted, the better. I, for my part, am prepared to start work immediately."

"And I," said Noel coolly, encountering the woman's slightly condescending glance. "I believe, Miss Carvell"—he turned to the girl—"you have some proof that this family treasure once existed?"

Doris nodded eagerly. "Daddy has locked it up in his study."

"To be sure—to be sure!" put in the professor, and he led the way from the room. "Just an old book, with a quaint inscription written on the flyleaf. It certainly refers to the Carvell treasure—though, personally, I've never been able to make head or tail of it. It's a job for an expert, and that is why I decided to engage a detective."

"A very proper step on your part," remarked Miss Strudwick.

Noel said nothing; he became aware that several interested pairs of eyes were watching them as they approached the study. For in the adjoining lounge were several guests.

"My—er—daughter is entertaining a few of her friends," explained the professor, observing the direction of Noel's glance. "But that need not interfere with our present business."

Engaged to find the lost treasure of the Carvells! With boyish zest Noel looked forward to the fascinating quest. He did not realise that he was to have a rival—Rosina, the most audacious girl crook in Europe!

He led them into his study, closed the door, then crossed to a bureau in the corner. Unlocking it, he took out a small volume, bound in tattered calf, its thick parchment pages yellowed with age.

"The history of Carvell Hall," remarked the professor. "And here, on the flyleaf, is the inscription—"

He broke off, staring blankly. A horrified cry escaped his daughter's lips.

"Dad—it's gone!"

"Gone!" echoed Miss Strudwick, pouncing on the volume and peering at it suspiciously. "Most extraordinary! When did you last open it?"

"Permit me—" murmured Noel, holding out his hand for the book.

With a tolerant smile the woman detective pushed it towards him.

"There's not much to be seen; the flyleaf appears to have fallen out. I notice that several other pages are loose. Possibly it is still in the bureau."

Doris Carvell had dropped to her knees by the bureau and was searching anxiously through the pigeon-holes; her father turned to assist her.

Noel had unostentatiously produced a small but powerful magnifying-glass and was closely scrutinising the volume.

"Pardon me, professor," he said abruptly, "I'm afraid you'll be wasting your time in searching for the missing page. It did not fall out, as Miss Strudwick assumes—it was deliberately cut out with some sharp instrument, possibly a penknife! If you look closely you can see the slightly serrated edges."

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated the professor.

"But I was looking at it only yesterday," protested Doris, a startled expression in her eyes. "And—it's been locked in dad's desk ever since."

"Are you certain of that?" asked Noel, frowning slightly.

"Absolutely," replied the professor. "I looked it there myself after Doris had been showing it to some of her friends. The key has not been out of my possession."

Miss Strudwick sniffed.

"There you are! Personally I think Mr. Raymond is making a mountain out of a molehill; no doubt there is some perfectly simple explanation for the missing page. It may have slipped down a crevice in the back of the bureau. Allow me."

With an air of cool efficiency she commenced to pull out the various drawers, turning over their contents.

Noel bit his lip. He had been openly snubbed—his theory disregarded. But he was still convinced that he was right. He commenced to prow around the study, examining the window-fastenings, the floors, and the walls. Suddenly he stiffened, pouncing on something lying on the floor behind a heavy curtain.

It was a tiny cambric handkerchief, exquisitely embroidered and daintily feminine. He raised it instinctively to his face, sniffing the faint, elusive perfume that clung to it.

A startled expression flashed into his eyes.

"Rosina!" he whispered.

Incredulously he stared at the handkerchief. That scent—elusive though it was—he had recognised immediately. It was a rare Continental scent, and he knew only one person in England who invariably used it.

A mental picture flashed before him—the picture of a dainty, alluring figure, with pouting red lips and mocking violet eyes, eyes that concealed a brain as shrewd and unscrupulous as that of any criminal in Europe.

Rosina Fontaine, the baffling girl crook with whom he had crossed swords already on two occasions!

Was it possible that she was here, in this house, masquerading as one of the guests?

Noel's hands clenched at his sides. Rosina's presence in the house could mean only one thing. She, too, was after the Carvell treasure, and it had been she who had removed the vital page!

"Miss Carvell," he said suddenly, "are all your guests known to you personally?"

"Why, yes, of course!" The girl stared at him in surprise. "They're all old friends, with one or two exceptions; and those few have been introduced personally by the others."

Noel's eyes hardened.

"Your father mentioned that you were showing the book to some of your friends yesterday; who was present at the time?"

Doris looked perplexed.

"Why, there were Julie and Gwen—two old school chums of mine—Julie's brother Dick, and Gwen's fiance—oh, and the countess—"

"Countess!" echoed Noel swiftly.

"The Countess de Lile," explained Doris. "Julie met her abroad. She's rather a dear, and—"

"One minute, Mr. Raymond," put in the professor, frowning slightly. "I may be dense, but I don't quite see what Julie's friends have to do with this quest of ours—"

"Precisely!" It was the efficient Miss Strudwick who intervened, as she rose to her feet, a trifle dishevelled but with a triumphant smile on her lips. "Mr. Raymond appears to wish to make a sensation out of a trivial matter of a missing page. We are here, I take it, professor, in the capacity of treasure-seekers, purely and simply, and not as sleuths paid to pry into the affairs of your guests?"

She glanced sarcastically at Noel as she spoke.

"Quite—quite so!" agreed the professor heartily.

"Pardon me," intervened Noel dryly, "Miss Strudwick overlooks the fact that our only clue to the hidden treasure is the missing page, and"—he spoke slowly and dramatically—"I have reason to believe that the missing page is at present in the hands of a daring crook masquerading as one of your guests!"

"Mr. Raymond," gasped Doris reproachfully, "how can you say such a thing?"

"Preposterous!" declared the professor, flushing angrily. "What do you say, Miss Strudwick?"

The woman detective smiled condescendingly.

"An amusing theory, professor, but more suited to the cinema than real life. I should have thought that Mr. Raymond was above such childishness. If he will kindly examine the back of the bureau—his arm is longer than mine, and I can't quite reach it—I think he will find something. It appears to have slipped down through a crevice behind the pigeon-holes, and is wedged behind the second drawer. Be careful of the spilt ink, Mr. Raymond; someone seems to have been rather clumsy—doubtless one of the maids."

With a frown, Noel dropped to his knees and reached through the opening, groping at the back of the drawer.

His fingers closed on a crumpled scrap of paper. As he drew it out he saw that it was a scrap of yellowed parchment, covered with a large ink-stain, through which, still dimly visible, appeared a few disjointed words in straggling handwriting.

A little cry of relief escaped Doris Carvell's lips.

"Why, it's the missing page!" she exclaimed.

Her eyes encountered Noel's in a slightly scornful glance as she snatched the page from his hand.

There was a baffled look on the young detective's face as he rose to his feet. He had been made to look a fool by the astuteness of his woman rival. And yet—that handkerchief, that elusive scent—he could have sworn they belonged to Rosina!

He stared at the ink-stained page which Doris Carvell was smoothing out on the table. His eyes narrowed suddenly. Was that ink-stain as accidental as it appeared? It practically obliterated the faint writing except for a few disjointed words.

A startling theory flashed into his mind, and he looked up suddenly, encountering the efficient Miss Strudwick's slightly amused gaze.

His glance wandered to the door; it had opened, to admit a group of excited-looking guests, among them a slim, foreign-looking woman wearing deep black, her face heavily made up.

As he stared slowly round the group Noel thought for a moment that he saw a pair of violet eyes flash at him in gentle mockery.

He caught in his breath sharply, his hands clenching.

"Great heavens!" he breathed. "Is it possible—"

"Did you speak, Mr. Raymond?" inquired Miss Strudwick pointedly.

Noel controlled his feelings, bowing ironically towards his rival.

"I merely remarked, Miss Strudwick," he said gallantly, "that you win!"

ROSINA SHOWS HER HAND

"COME, come!" put in Professor Carvell, breaking the rather awkward pause. "Everyone is liable to make a mistake—only human. Mr. Raymond has admitted his mistake like a gentleman. We can now proceed with our interrupted search—Ha! That is, if Miss Strudwick is clever enough to decipher what is left of our one clue."

It was significant that he appealed only to the woman detective. Noel's opinion had ceased to be of any importance.

The detective smiled dryly, making no attempt to intervene.

As Miss Strudwick examined the ink-stained page, while the professor and his daughter, with several of the young guests, stared eagerly over her shoulder, Noel made a rapid examination of the bureau.

He found, as he had suspected, certain marks that convinced him it had been recently tampered with.

But he refrained from making any remark, realising that his word would carry no weight.

His theory, instead of being shaken by the finding of the missing page, was merely strengthened. He was certain that the page had been deliberately obliterated and left behind the drawer to hamper the would-be treasure-hunters.

But why had it not been destroyed? That, in itself, was proof of the cunning brain at work behind the scenes.

If the missing page had not turned up, suspicion would fall on everyone in the house—the guests and the servants. There would have been awkward inquiries, especially with two detectives on the scene.

As it was, the vital clue had been rendered useless, and no suspicions had been aroused, except in Noel's mind.

The whole plot—simple, yet cunning—bore the hall-mark of Rosina's subtle brain.

The girl crook was here in one of her amazing disguises, bent on finding the treasure for herself.

Noel smiled grimly as he stared quickly round the group. Though he had his suspicions, it was going to be no easy matter to unmask Rosina, especially as he was handicapped by the presence of the interfering and too-efficient Miss Strudwick, now the object of respectful admiration on the part of the younger guests.

Only one guest stood apart from the others, regarding the scene from inscrutable eyes veiled by her long lashes.

The Countess de Lile aroused Noel's interest. He approached her, with a pleasant smile.

"Are you interested in the buried treasure, countess?"

The other shrugged with an expressive gesture.

"Who is not? But I have no longer—how you say?—the energy of youth. I am content to be the looker-on."

Noel smiled faintly. He was convinced that the countess was younger than her words suggested.

"For me," she added, in an undertone, "I do not think much of the so-efficient Miss Strudwick. She talk too much—yes. You hear her?"

Noel nodded. He could not help but hear the rather strident tones of the woman detective as she expressed her opinions on the treasure.

"These two lines, professor, definitely hold the clue; what has been spoilt was probably mere padding to deceive the reader. I'm sure Mr. Raymond would agree."

She glanced sarcastically towards the young detective.

With a murmured apology to the countess, Noel moved to join the group.

"May I see?" he asked, holding out his hand for the paper.

Two lines stood out from the inky blur, one partially obliterated. Noel read them aloud:

"... there, where the shadows are deepest, the treasure Lies hidden away for him that hath eyes."

"The cellars, of course!" declared Miss Strudwick.

"Bless my soul! I believe you're right!" exclaimed the professor.

Noel merely shrugged.

"Don't you agree?" asked Doris, flashing him a quick glance.

"Without seeing the context of the previous lines," remarked the young detective dryly, "I wouldn't like to commit myself. I suppose you don't remember how they ran, Miss Carvell?"

Doris frowned, puckering her forehead attractively.

"Oh, there was a lot of meaningless rhyme about three brothers in the moonlight! I could never make sense of it."

"Sheer jargon," remarked Miss Strudwick briskly, "simply intended to mislead the reader! I have made a special study of this kind of thing. Professor"—she turned her back pointedly on Noel—"with your permission I shall start investigations in the cellars right away."

"Certainly—certainly!" replied the professor. "I have the greatest faith in your suggestion, Miss Strudwick, and I'm sure you can rely on us all to help."

He glanced round the group. There came an eager murmur of agreement from the younger members. Noel, encountering the professor's glance, smiled grimly as he lit a cigarette.

"Miss Strudwick has her own methods," he remarked dryly. "Personally, I shall concentrate on searching elsewhere."

"As you please, Mr. Raymond."

With a slight frown, the professor turned away, escorting the lady detective from the room. They were followed by Doris and the guests.

When he was alone Noel unlocked the bureau with his master-key, and made a rapid search of the papers scattered there.

If, as he surmised, Rosina had deliberately blotted out the vital page in order to hamper the search, she would first have taken a copy for herself. Not that Noel expected to find the copy; he was clinging to one faint hope.

Among the objects in the desk was a writing-pad and an indelible pencil. Trying to put himself in Rosina's place, he decided that the writing-pad would have been the obviously handy thing on which to have dotted down the clue.

Through his powerful magnifying-glass he scrutinised the blank top page. His eyes glittered with satisfaction as he saw the faint indentations left by the pressure of the pencil.

From his pocket he took a small tin, attached to a rubber bulb, and blew a fine spray of black powder on the page, rubbing it in lightly with his finger.

The indented words now stood out more clearly. Slowly and methodically Noel deciphered them, jotting them down in a notebook.

A puzzled frown crept into his eyes as he read the result of his efforts:

"When the moon rises behind eastern turret, Shadowy fingers reach out to the west; Where the three brothers stand, whispering secrets,

Watching three brothers alike as their kin; There, where the shadows are deepest, the treasure Lies hidden away—for him that hath eyes."

"Eastern turret," murmured Noel thoughtfully. "Three brothers! H'm! I wonder—"

He stared out of the window into the dazzling rays of the setting sun; then, with sudden decision, he slipped the paper into his pocket, and made his way into the grounds.

For a long time Noel prowled round the house, staring up at the creeper-covered walls, and jotting down various diagrams in his notebook.

Then, returning indoors, he made his way up a winding flight of stairs into the east turret. There was only one room in the turret—obviously used as a lumber-room. Rusted suits

of armour, old pictures and books, were heaped about in dusty confusion.

Probing among the pictures, Noel's attention was riveted by a small framed miniature, scarcely larger than his hand, and bearing a faded oil-painting of three young men in cavalier attire.

Noel whistled softly.

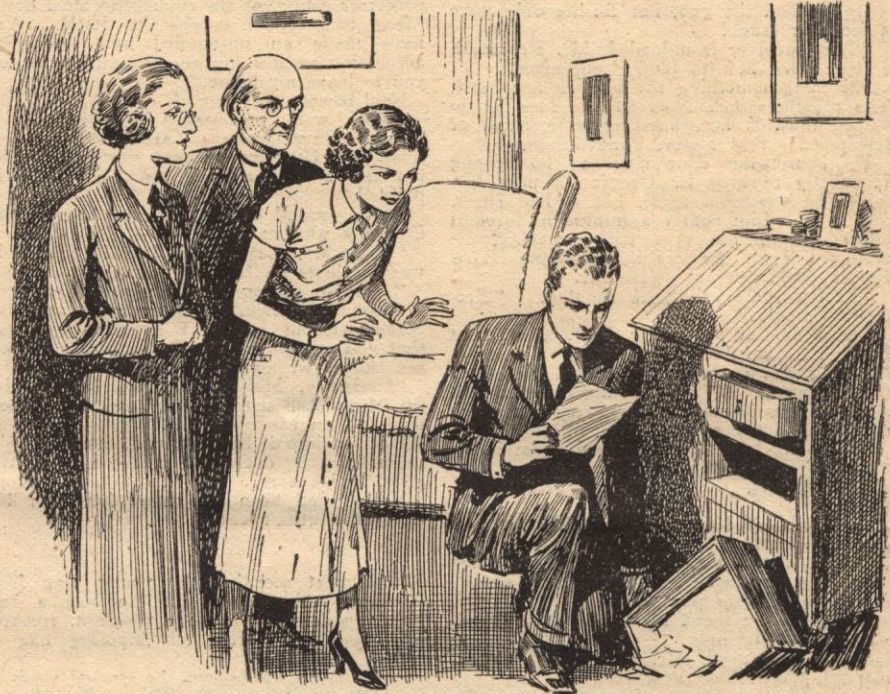
"The three brothers?" he murmured. "I wonder!"

He tried to force the miniature out of its tarnished metal frame, but failed. He was staring at it, holding it up to the fading sunlight, when abruptly he stiffened, an excited gleam flashing into his eyes.

Dropping the miniature into his pocket, he spun suddenly on his heel, staring out of the narrow turret window.

For a long time he stood there motionless, his eyes narrowed; then, whipping out his notebook, he swiftly drew another diagram, this time including part of the grounds.

"When the moon rises," quoted Noel softly. "Right! We'll see if it works."



"Why—it's the missing page!" Doris Carvell gasped. Noel stared at it in bewilderment, while the woman detected looked on in scorn. It certainly appeared that Noel had made a mistake this time.

A few minutes later he left the turret-room, closing the door carefully behind him. As an afterthought, he turned the key in the lock, slipping it into his pocket.

In the hall he encountered the rest of the party, looking very excited, and clustering round the lady detective.

Miss Strudwick was smiling in a complacent way, and she darted a triumphant glance at Noel.

"Well, Mr. Raymond, did you find anything?" she inquired.

Noel shrugged. He could see the slim figure of the countess on the outskirts of the group, and he decided to be careful.

"Nothing of any importance," he replied carelessly.

Doris Carvell looked at him a trifle scornfully.

"Well, Miss Strudwick found something!" she declared. "There are several loose bricks in the cellar, and she's convinced there's something hidden behind them. We're going to try to move them after dinner."

"I congratulate Miss Strudwick!" Noel murmured. "I wish you every success."

For a moment he wondered if, after all, he was on the wrong track; but he thrust the thought aside. In a few hours he would have the proof he needed.

Dinner was a lively meal, though Noel found himself practically ignored. Not that he minded. He was watching the faces of the other guests, wondering what they would think if they realised that among them, laughing and chatting with the rest, was a daring girl crook, bent on purloining the treasure for herself!

After dinner a merry party of guests, armed with crowbars, hurried down to the cellar to attempt to remove the loose bricks. The untiring Miss Strudwick did not accompany them, announcing that she wished to make certain calculations connected with her discovery. Armed with paper and pencil, she made her way to the writing-room.

The countess pleaded a headache, and retired early to bed. Doris Carvell accompanied the searchers, while the professor sought the library for a quiet smoke.

No one asked Noel what he was going to do. His movements were of little consequence.

Smiling grimly, the young detective awaited his chance. The house was very silent as he

NOEL IN DISGUISE

ROSINA laughed softly as she removed the cigarette from her lips, blowing a little curl of scented smoke into Noel's face.

"So our paths cross again, Mr. Detective Raymond," she murmured. "But this time I think I win. The miniature, please!"

Noel peered desperately, trying to see what disguise the girl crook wore; but she was careful to keep in the shadows. Her figure was but a dim outline, and it was impossible to tell which member of the household she was.

"The miniature!" hissed Rosina again, and she flourished the revolver menacingly.

Slowly Noel drew the miniature from his pocket, handing it to the girl.

But as she seized it he made a lightning grab at her revolver. Taken by surprise, she lost possession of it, though she still clutched the miniature.

"Stand just where you are, Miss Fontaine!" Noel cried. "You're beaten this time!"

He levelled the gun, but Rosina only gave a mocking laugh.

"That revolver is unloaded, Mr. Raymond. I, too, know how to bluff!" she cried.

She flung something she held in her hand. The missile struck Noel in the face as he leaped towards her, bursting in a cloud of fine powder that almost blinded him.

He heard the door slam as he sprang frantically towards it. Groping blindly forward, he wrenched at it, but it had stuck, and it took him nearly a minute to force it open. Then, his eyes still watering, he stumbled down the flight of narrow stairs. Rosina could not have gone far.

"Professor Carvell!" he shouted. "Professor Carvell!"

There came an answering shout. A moment later the bewildered professor appeared, hurrying down the passage that led from the library. A few moments later the efficient Miss Strudwick appeared from the direction of the writing-room.

"Bless my soul, Mr. Raymond, what is the matter?" demanded the professor.

"Is anything wrong?" asked Miss Strudwick.

Noel bit his lip, staring swiftly up and down the passage.

"There was a girl in the turret-room just now!" he snapped. "A dangerous crook! Did either of you pass her?"

The professor shook his head. Miss Strudwick smiled pityingly.

"What you need, Mr. Raymond," she remarked, "is a nice long rest."

Noel clenched his hands, biting back the sharp retort that rose to his lips. Just then a little crowd of guests appeared, headed by Doris Carvell. They had returned from their search of the cellar, and were obviously excited.

"Dad," began Doris breathlessly, "Miss Strudwick's a marvel! There's something hidden behind those bricks in the cellar—"

She broke off, realising that something was amiss.

"Mr. Raymond," remarked Miss Strudwick sarcastically, "has also found something—or so he says."

Noel's eyes narrowed as he looked around the group, who had now been joined by the Countess de Lile. Again he thought he glimpsed a mocking pair of eyes.

The time had passed for beating about the bush, he decided. The daring masquerader was here—among this group—and he was determined to unmask her.

"Professor Carvell," he said abruptly, "the name of the crook I mentioned is Rosina Fontaine—and she is here, within a few feet of where you are standing!"

His words caused a sensation. The amazed guests stared from one to the other.

"Preposterous—incredible!" exclaimed the professor. "How dare you make such a statement, Mr. Raymond? Rosina Fontaine—Why, bless my soul, the young woman is notorious—known to the police—"

"Exactly!" put in Miss Strudwick briskly. "Mr. Raymond is more to be pitied than blamed. He is evidently suffering from overwork. As it happens, I came across a

reference to the young woman in question in this evening's paper— Ah, here it is!"

From one of her ample pockets she produced a folded newspaper, pointing to the "Stop Press" column.

The professor adjusted his spectacles, reading out aloud:

"Ah-hem! 'The unknown young woman who boarded the s.s. Marvella, as it was about to sail, and whose arrival caused such excitement at the time, has now been identified, from papers in her cabin, as Rosina Fontaine, the notorious adventuress.

"She has been detained by the captain, and will be handed over to the police when the Marvella arrives in New York—"

With an incredulous ejaculation, Noel snatched the paper unceremoniously from the professor's hand, scanning the bold, black print.

In some amazing fashion Rosina had hoodwinked him, after all.

"I think, Mr. Raymond," remarked the professor coldly, as the commotion died down, "that this report speaks for itself. You have made an unfounded and scandalous accusation against my guests, and I must ask you to leave my house."

Noel bowed. "Very well, professor," he said quietly; "but I warn you—you are making a big mistake! That newspaper report is false! No doubt Rosina arranged for it to be printed."

As he turned on his heel, he heard Doris Carvell's whisper:

"Poor Mr. Raymond! And I thought he was so clever—"

"A mere posing amateur, my dear," put in Miss Strudwick. "We shall get on much better without him. I suggest, professor, that you engage someone to excavate beneath the cellars without delay."

"Certainly, Miss Strudwick! I shall ring up Marwicks, the builders, and have them send a man up to-morrow."

Noel collected his hat and coat, and let himself quietly out of the house, a thoughtful glint in his eyes.

Rosina had been too smart for him; but the game wasn't ended yet.

THE next morning the young man from the builders arrived. He was a red-haired young man, with a pleasant, freckled face, and he carried an imposing bag of tools.

Amid much excitement, he started work in the cellar, under the direction of Miss Strudwick. After the first few blows of his pickaxe, he unearthed a piece of mouldering wood, on which was carved an inscription:

"Dig deep beneath this sign, and fortune will be thine."

Doris Carvell clapped her hands delightedly.

"Miss Strudwick," she exclaimed, "you're a wonder! How did you guess it was there? Mr. Raymond would never have found it if he'd searched for months."

The lady detective smiled composedly. "It's method, my dear," she murmured. "I do not make wild guesses. You are well rid of that conceited young detective."

The man from the builders concealed a grin as he continued to ply his pick.

After a while he was left to his task. The guests drifted away on more pleasurable pursuits, announcing their intention of returning as soon as anything exciting came to light.

As the last loiterer departed the young man relinquished his task, and, removing his red wig, mopped his perspiring forehead. It was Noel Raymond in disguise!

"Phew!" he muttered, throwing aside the weighty pick. "I don't know how much longer I could have kept that up!"

He bent to pick up the piece of ancient wood with its carved inscription. Carefully he scratched the surface of the wood with his penknife.

"If that inscription was written more than twenty-four hours ago, I'm a Dutchman!" he announced. "The whole thing's a fake—and Rosina's at the bottom of it!"

For a moment Noel frowned at the piece of wood, deep in thought.

"I think I see her game," he muttered.

At intervals, during the day, Noel might have been seen busy with his task; but only at such times when he anticipated a visit from the curious guests.

Meanwhile, he made several mysterious excursions out into the grounds, especially in the vicinity of the ornamental lake that lay, half-screened by trees, at the foot of the sloping lawn.

When evening came he packed up his tools and departed.

But he did not go far. Dumping his tools among the bushes, he made his way back stealthily towards the house, concealing himself in the shrubbery.

It was a long and tedious vigil, but Noel was confident that something would come of it.

As the moon rose behind the turrets of the old house he stepped from his hiding-place, his pulses racing.

For the dark shadow of the east turret was flung across the lawn, like a giant finger pointing towards the lake!

Swiftly Noel hurried down to the lakeside, watching the place where the end of the shadow rested.

Three gnarled willow-trees stood in the opposite bank, for all the world like three old men, and beneath their overhanging branches their reflections rippled in the moonlit surface of the lake.

Noel drew in his breath sharply as he quoted:

"Where the three brothers stand, whispering secrets, watching three brothers akin to themselves—"

"My hat," he muttered, "it's as plain as a pikestaff!"

There was no time to lose. Even now, the daring Rosina might have discovered the secret and be prepared to unearth the treasure.

The young detective hurried back to the gate, where he caught sight of a broad-shouldered figure, pacing the narrow lane.

The constable saluted as Noel beckoned him.

"We got your message at the station, sir.

Anything doing?"

"I don't know yet," said Noel tersely.

"Better come with me—just in case."

He led the way round to the far side of the lake, where a small boat was drawn up.

Noel sprang in and the constable followed.

The young detective took the oars, edging the boat noiselessly along in the shelter of the bank till they reached the three willows.

"It's somewhere just about here," he muttered. "Better wait in the boat, constable, while I investigate."

Climbing out on to the bank he whipped his torch from his pocket and commenced a hurried search. Suddenly he stiffened.

Clearly indented on the muddy bank were the footprints of a girl's high-heeled shoes!

"Rosina's!" he breathed sharply.

He thrust aside the tangled bushes, and his eyes glittered as he saw the dark entrance of a tunnel, close to the water's edge.

On his hands and knees he crept through it, rising to his feet as the tunnel widened into a natural grotto.

Then his hand crept to the revolver in his pocket, and his lips curved in a grim smile.

On the other side of the grotto, a torch grasped in her hand as she bent over a small, iron-bound chest, was a familiar figure.

"The game's up, Rosina!" remarked Noel quietly.

With a choking cry, the other spun round, revealing the bespectacled features of the efficient Miss Strudwick!

"What—what does this mean?" she demanded haughtily.

Noel smiled grimly.

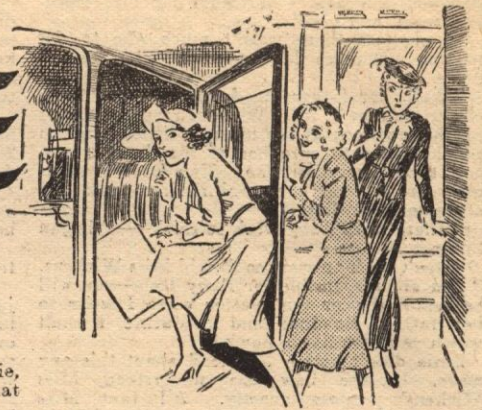
"It won't do, Rosina. You were clever, but you didn't quite hoodwink me. I've a constable outside, waiting to escort you to the police station. Better take off that wig!"

(Continued on page 14.)



The Dancer SUSIE Befriended

By ELISE PROBYN



her eyes were glowing. "If I cut off, Susie, do you think you can wangle it so that Wickens won't know?"

"Sure! Leave it to me!" laughed Susie. "Off you go, ducks!"

It was a slack afternoon, and there was no need for Ruby's excited gratitude as she left Susie and scurried out of the work-room.

All Susie did was to move one of the tall dress-racks and place it, screen-wise, at the back of Ruby's chair. In that position it completely concealed the vacant chair and machine from view of Miss Wickens' office. Then Susie finished off the dress that Ruby had been working on, and, with plenty of time to spare, she resumed her own job.

The afternoon dragged on. Then at five o'clock Miss Wickens returned to her office, to catch Susie laughing with one of the other girls.

"Bowling, what are you doing?" she rasped out.

"Simkins' order, ma'am—the tea-gowns, you know," Susie answered blandly.

"You can't fool me!" grated Miss Wickens. "You have been idling! Bring your work to me! I will inspect it!"

Susie carried the gowns across to her, and to Miss Wickens' disappointment, she could find no fault with them. The forewoman scowled.

"Has Ruby Dale finished those sports frocks?" she asked.

Susie turned brightly to the place where Ruby should have been seated.

"Have you, Ruby?" she asked clearly. She was talking to an empty chair, but the dress-rack screened the fact from Miss Wickens.

"Thanks, Ruby!" said Susie; and from behind the screen she picked up a frock and held it up. "Yes, ma'am; this is the last of them!"

"Let me see it!" snapped Miss Wickens. Susie took the frock along to her, and Miss Wickens seized it greedily. Ruby Dale being a beginner, and not very apt at that, it was always easy to find faults in her work. But again Miss Wickens met with a disappointment. This frock happened to be the one which Susie herself had finished off, and it bore no cause for complaint.

"This is the last one, is it? Then what is Ruby Dale getting on with now?" sniffed Miss Wickens. She called across the work-room: "Ruby! Ruby Dale!"

"I'll go and ask her, ma'am," said Susie, and hurried back to the bench.

She disappeared behind the screen, and held

MISS WICKENS IS SUSPICIOUS

"Of course I'll do you a favour, ducks! Didn't I promise your dad I'd be your special chum when you came to work here? What is it you want?"

Susie Bowling spoke merrily to the girl working beside her in the machine-room of Spollard's, gown and mantle manufacturers. She had known Ruby Dale only a few days, but had taken a warm liking to her.

"Can old Wickens hear us?" whispered Ruby, referring to the sour-tempered forewoman.

"No. She's gone up to the sales-room," said Susie, with a glance towards Miss Wickens' empty office.

"Gee, that's my chance!" beamed Ruby. "Be a sport and help me, Sue! I want to sneak the afternoon off!"

"I noticed you were kind of restless!" chuckled Susie.

Ruby was the daughter of one of Spollard's directors, and she had been sent down from her provincial home to learn the rudiments of the business here in the work-room. Susie could guess how deadly drab she must find it after the leisured and moneyed life she was used to at home, yet there was a most lovable cheerfulness about Ruby Dale.

"Surely you don't need permission to have time off, Ruby—" began Susie.

"Permission!" exclaimed Ruby. "Miss Wickens would put her foot down like a sledgehammer if I asked her!"

Susie had noticed that attitude on the forewoman's part. So far from allowing the director's daughter any privilege over the other girls, Miss Wickens seemed to be particularly harsh towards her.

"I suppose it's because you've joined up with me, ducks," murmured Susie. "Miss Wickens loathes me, and any friend of mine is a pain in the neck to her. I don't see why you shouldn't have the afternoon off, anyway. I can easily finish your job for you. Got anywhere special to go?"

"Extra special!" breathed Ruby; and now

an imaginary conversation with Ruby, who wasn't there.

"All right, Ruby! You go on cleaning your machine, ducks!" Susie said loudly, emerging. "Miss Wickens only wanted to know what you were doing!"

Again Miss Wickens felt sorely stumped. She had tried in vain to pick a row with Susie, and then with Susie's friend, and she wouldn't be satisfied till she had achieved it. She glared across at the dress-rack which screened Ruby's place.

"Why has Ruby Dale stuck that thing up there?" she demanded.

"That rack?" Susie said carelessly. "Oh, I shoved it there, ma'am!"

"Why?"

"Just to get it out of the way."

"Don't tell me that, Bowling! It looks to me as if Ruby Dale's up to some mischief behind there!"

And, to Susie's dismay, the forewoman strode across the room.

"Come on, Ruby Dale!" she ordered. "It's no use hiding behind that rack. What are you doing?"

Meeting with no answer, Miss Wickens gazed triumphantly round at the workgirls. She paused in order to give full effect to the exposure she was about to make.

"So you're ashamed to speak, are you, Ruby Dale? Ashamed to show yourself! But you are caught—and caught red-handed!"

With a dramatic gesture Miss Wickens swept the screen aside. Then she gaped stupidly at the empty chair. A bowl of laughter went up from the rest of the girls, but Susie's grin was mirthless. She knew now that Ruby's absence would have to be admitted.

"Not here!" gasped Miss Wickens. "Where is she—where is Ruby Dale?"

"Well, you see, it was a slack afternoon, ma'am—" Susie began.

"Has she gone out?" cried Miss Wickens. "Answer me! I'll have no lies!"

"Ruby wanted to go out, and I didn't see why she shouldn't, ma'am," Susie answered, in her pleasant manner. "I cleared up her work for her, and I've cleared up my own, too, so there's no harm done; now, is there, honestly?"

"Is that why you helped her in this deliberate deceit?" accused Miss Wickens, pointing at the screen.

"I was just being a pal to her," shrugged Susie. "After all, I promised her dad that. And I'm sure he wouldn't object to her having the afternoon off!"

"Mr. Dale said nothing about your being a 'pal,' as you call it," flashed Miss Wickens. "He placed you in charge of his daughter, because he had the impression—quite a false one—that you were a responsible person who could be trusted to look after her. Ruby Dale has been a lazy and good-for-nothing gadabout at home, and she was sent here to be taught discipline!"

"Wha-at?" gasped Susie. "Why, you wouldn't meet a better girl than Ruby in a twelvemonth."

"Ruby Dale is dance mad!" cut in Miss Wickens. "She has been the despair of her father, and you don't know anything about it, Bowling. Her mind is on nothing but dancing."

Susie sympathised with Ruby Dale. It was a shame that she should be forced to learn dress-making when she longed to become a dancer. And despite opposition, Susie meant Ruby to have her chance!

At home she wasted her time dancing, morning, noon, and night!"

"I suppose there wasn't much else to do, ma'am, up there in the country," reasoned Susie.

"Well, her father has found her something else to do now!" Miss Wickens rasped. "He's put her to work at the machine-bench; and he put her here to cure her of the dance craze, and teach her discipline. You have deliberately encouraged her to shirk her work this afternoon, Bowling!"

"There wasn't any work to shirk—" began Susie.

"Don't back-answer me!" said Miss Wickens. "You are responsible for Ruby Dale—you will be reported over this matter when I write to her father, Bowling—and in future I shall watch you both like a hawk!"

Susie didn't bother her head about this any more, because now she understood Miss Wickens' purpose exactly. All that Miss Wickens was doing was to try to get her in trouble with the director, using Ruby merely as an excuse. Forewarned was forearmed. Susie promised herself that Miss Wickens wouldn't get another chance.

Six o'clock came, and the welcome knocking-off bell sounded. The girls made for the hostel.

After tea most of the girls went out, but Susie had heaps of stockings to mend. Left alone in the dormitory, seated on her bed, she began to work on the innumerable ladders.

Suddenly swift footsteps sounded on the stairs.

The door shot open, and Ruby Dale burst in with a whoop of excitement.

"I've done it, Susie!"

"Done what, ducks?" blinked Susie.

Breathlessly Ruby closed the door. Her face was shining, and never had Susie seen her looking so exuberant.

"It's got to be a secret, Susie! Not a word to anyone else," burbled Ruby, "or it'll spoil everything and get me into a frightful row with dad. You see, I'm not supposed to do it—"

"Do what, you chump?" howled Susie.

"I'm just going to tell you—about the audition!"

"What audition?"

"The one I went to this afternoon—the dance audition!"

Susie's mouth dropped open—and then all in one breath Ruby was telling her:

"I'm crazy about dancing, you know. And dad's dead against it. And I know I could make a living at it, if only I had a chance, and I'll never be any good at anything else. And I heard there was an audition at the Frivolity Theatre to-day, Susie—to choose a dancer for a week's trial. So I rushed along there. That's why I wanted the afternoon off—"

"Eh?" gasped Susie.

"And what do you think, Susie?" Ruby could hardly get the words out for excitement. "I passed the audition! They chose me out of fourteen other girls. And they've signed me on for a week's trial, and I'm to dance every night at the Frivolity Theatre!"

Susie's head whirled dizzily, while one half of her brain absorbed what Ruby was saying, and the other half reminded her of what Miss Wickens had said.

"You've been a wonderful pal to me, Susie, and that's why I'm letting you into the secret!" Ruby finished up rapturously. "I'd never have got this chance if you hadn't helped me to-day!"

That was the whole trouble! Susie gave a loud and agonised groan. By helping Ruby to slip out this afternoon, she had innocently aided and abetted her to do the very thing which Mr. Dale had forbidden! Ruby had booked herself up for a week's dance engagement. Susie was responsible for her. And, meantime, Miss Wickens was going to watch them both like a hawk.

KEEPING RUBY'S SECRET

RUBY! You can't do it! Oh, you chump—you've let yourself in the soup, and me, too!"

With a gasp Susie dropped the stockings she was mending. But Ruby looked at her so appealingly that it was impossible to be angry with her for long.

"You see, Susie," she said at the end, "dad didn't actually forbid me to go dancing any more—he wouldn't be as hard as that; he knows how I love it. He only said I'd got to work here and break myself of the craze—those were his words—"

"And the first thing you do is to go and fix up for a week's dancing at the Frivolity Theatre!" exclaimed Susie. "Would your dad allow that if he knew?"

"No, of course not! Susie, he mustn't know yet—no one must know!" pleaded Ruby breathlessly. "I'm trusting you!"

She caught Susie by the hands, and she was trembling with earnestness.

"Susie, dad doesn't understand. It isn't just a 'craze' I've got for dancing. I want to make a career of it; it's been my ambition ever since I was a kiddy. So when father said he was sending me here to London to work, I saw my chance—"

"Your chance?" And Susie began laughing helplessly. "Oh, ducks, this is rich!"

"I knew that if I could only get a professional engagement, Susie, dad would change his opinion and be the last one to stand in my way!" rattled on Ruby. "Now do you see what I mean, dear? I've got my chance now. I'm on a week's trial at the Frivolity. If I flop, that's the finish. But if I make a hit, they'll give me a contract and book me up for an engagement at a regular salary!"

Susie's brow was wrinkled in sympathy.

"I'm wondering how you're going to get away with it, Ruby—going out night after night dancing, and old Wickens on the prowl!" she muttered.

"You won't give me away, Susie?" coaxed Ruby. "You're on my side, aren't you?"

Susie was heart and soul on Ruby's side. Nothing would please her more than to see Ruby realise her ambition. But if Miss Wickens should find out what was going on, Susie knew—without saying it—that she would be the one who "got it in the neck." Miss Wickens would report her to Mr. Dale, laying all the blame upon her, and quite probably getting her the sack.

Yet there was no way out of the predicament now.

"We'll have to see you through, ducks, but it's going to be a ticklish job!" murmured Susie. "When do you start?"

"To-morrow evening—Tuesday; and it will only be till Saturday, then I shall know my luck!" breathed Ruby. "You're a great sport to help me, Susie—I couldn't have managed it at all without you!"

Eagerly she began unwrapping a parcel she had brought with her.

"Look! Like to see my stage costume? I'm wearing this for a Redskin dance!"

In high excitement she held up a dainty Redskin costume, feathered headdress, and moccasins. Susie admired them and suggested that Ruby should don them and give her a sample of what she could do. Ruby hailed the suggestion with glee, and she was dancing to the music of Susie's gramophone, when suddenly Susie heard footsteps on the stairs.

"That'll be Miss Wickens," she cried. "Quick—off with that costume!"

With a gasp of dismay Ruby tore it off—just as the door opened. Susie whisked the costume out of sight as Miss Wickens entered. The forewoman stared at Ruby.

"So you have returned," she sniffed. "Might I ask if you enjoyed your French leave?"

"Ruby enjoyed herself very much, thank you, ma'am," answered Susie meekly, "and she hopes you will excuse the liberty she took!"

Miss Wickens looked very hard at Susie. It was these meek moods which Miss Wickens always suspected. Her face now was cunning with suspicion, but there was nothing she could do.

"I wasn't asking you, Bowling—but I've no doubt you could give me plenty of information!" she said darkly, and went out.

Susie hoped Miss Wickens hadn't seen that costume; but she had no hope at all of Miss Wickens ceasing to spy. At work next day, Susie noticed that the curtain was drawn across the office window; but a chink had been left uncovered, and through this chink the forewoman's eye was continually watching Ruby and herself.

When evening came, Susie crept downstairs to reconnoitre before letting Ruby go off to the theatre. She knew that Miss Wickens was quite capable of hiding and then going after Ruby.

And Susie was right.

Peeping over the banisters, she saw a figure hovering slyly behind some packing-cases in the lobby. It was Miss Wickens, and she had chosen a position that gave her a good view of the street door and anyone who went out.

Susie hit upon a plan instantly.

Walking boldly downstairs, she sang out in a general voice:

"Has anyone seen Miss Wickens?"

There was a shuffling movement by the packing-cases, and Miss Wickens emerged, trying to look as if she had been working there.

"Oh, Miss Wickens!" said Susie. "Please may I have the key of the first-aid locker? I want some aspirins!"

"What for?" snapped Miss Wickens.

"For Ruby Dale, ma'am!" said Susie. "She's got a splitting headache, and I want her to take some aspirins and go to bed, and stay there quietly all the evening!"

"H'm! Got a headache, has she?" sniffed Miss Wickens. "That sounds as if she's been dancing again and overdoing it!"

Grudgingly she gave Susie the aspirins, and Susie streaked upstairs to Ruby, who was waiting in the dormitory.

"Just as I thought, ducks—old Wickens was on the spy!" Susie said, explaining matters to her. "You're supposed to be lying up here in bed for the evening, with a headache!"

"Eh?" gasped Ruby.

"So all you've got to do," went on Susie, "is to put on my hat and coat, and hurry out quickly, looking as if you're me. See? Wear my famous green coat and"—Susie laughed—"you'll easily get by, as long as Wickens doesn't see your face!"

Ruby threw off her own coat, and hurriedly made the change. Downstairs she went, and the ruse was a complete success, because Susie heard Miss Wickens call after her:

"Don't be late, Bowling, or you'll find yourself locked out!"

Chuckling, Susie lingered upstairs in the dormitory. She put Ruby's coat on and sat down on the bed. Presently she heard a creaking sound on the staircase.

Quicker than thought, Susie seized a towel, whisked it round her head and face, and flopped back on to Ruby's bed.

She only acted in the nick of time. Next second the door opened and Miss Wickens stepped into the dormitory.

"I just came to see how you are, Ruby Dale!" said Miss Wickens. "Is the headache very bad?"

"Awful!" groaned Susie in a smothered voice from under the towel.

"I don't wonder at it—being with that noisy hooligan Bowling all day!" said Miss Wickens.

She drew closer to the bed, and now Susie heard her voice change to a sly, insinuating tone.

"You know, I could make things very easy for you here if I wanted to, Ruby, in spite of what your father said about discipline. I don't want to be hard on you—if we could come to a little understanding between us. It's Susie Bowling I'm after!"

Susie answered with another groan, but she was listening eagerly.

"I could close my eyes to a lot of things, Ruby. I could let you go out dancing and do whatever you liked. I could give a very good report about you to your father. But the condition would be," Miss Wickens said very slyly, "that you put the nails in Susie Bowling's coffin! You'd only have to give her a bad name to your father and keep on at him, and you would get her the sack. Couldn't we come to a little understanding like this, Ruby?"

Susie made another groaning sound, and Miss Wickens wasn't sure whether it meant yes or no.

"I wish you'd take that towel off your face, Ruby! I can't hear you!" she complained.

"My headache's too bad!" mumbled Susie.

"You couldn't care for a common wretch like Susie Bowling—" began Miss Wickens.

And then Susie heard a sudden gasp from her:

"You've got Bowling's shoes on!" Miss Wickens gave a yelp. Susie felt a hand jab at her, and before she knew it the towel was dragged from her face.

"Did I hear my name mentioned, ma'am?" said Susie, sitting up and blinking innocently.

Miss Wickens was purple with chagrin. Her eyes were protruding like organ stops.

"I knew it all the time! I knew it was you, Bowling!" she howled.

"Oh, then that's all right, ma'am!" smiled Susie. "I thought I'd heard something I wasn't supposed to hear!"

"I—I was only saying it to catch you out!" spluttered Miss Wickens. "I—I knew I wasn't talking to Ruby Dale. You lied to me about her having a headache, Bowling. You did it so that she could sneak out somewhere on the sly—somewhere she's got no right to be, I'll be bound!"

Susie looked the forewoman straight in the eyes.

"P'raps she's gone out to buy those nails for my coffin, ma'am!" she said softly.

In sick mortification, Miss Wickens stamped out of the room. Her tongue had given her away, but her spite against Susie was only increased a thousandfold.

Ruby came home at night, and whispered an exciting account to Susie of her first experience on the Frivolity stage. Susie enthused with her and wished her luck, but inwardly she felt anxious qualms about the intervening nights until Saturday.

It took a deal of wangling to cover Ruby's retreat on Wednesday evening. Susie accomplished it by getting Miss Wickens to look for an imaginary mouse in the basement.

Thursday evening offered no difficulty. Miss Wickens herself had an appointment, and she hurried out immediately after tea.

Next morning Susie was sitting at the crowded breakfast-table with Ruby, both of them enjoying their bacon and tomatoes and keeping up a bland conversation about machine work, for the benefit of Miss Wickens, who was listening in.

Suddenly, during a moment's lull, one of the girls blurted out across the table:

"Is anyone going to the Frivolity to-night?" Susie's tea went down the wrong way and nearly choked her. Ruby upset the marmalade in her agitation.

"They're holding a competition to-night for talented amateurs; they hold it every Friday!" the girl went on—Mabel Barge was her name. "I'm going in for it. Anyone else coming? What about you, Susie?"

Susie nudged Ruby swiftly under the table.

"Yes, I'll come along and cheer you, Mabel. I'll bring some pals with me!" she said promptly. "What are you going to do?"

"Oh, a song-and-dance act! Of course, I don't hope to win. I'm going in just for the fun of it. But be a pal, Susie—bring a crowd along to cheer me on!"

"Rather! Depend on me, ducks!" promised Susie.

As she said afterwards to Ruby in the work-room, Mabel Barge had simplified matters for them this evening. Now they could both go along openly to the Frivolity, and nothing would be thought of it.

Susie chose a whole bunch of her trusted friends at the tea-table.

"We'll make up a party for the Frivolity, eh, troops?" she said, adding loudly for Miss Wickens' hearing: "We must give old Mabel a rouser!"

She skipped upstairs with Ruby to the dormitory, and while they washed and changed Susie said to her:

"I'll let the others in on the secret as soon as we get out, ducks. They're safe. And they'll see your show goes off with a wow to-night, trust me!"

In boisterous spirits she grabbed Ruby's arm and sailed downstairs.

"One moment, you two!" said a voice in the lobby.

Miss Wickens stepped in front of them, wearing her hat and coat.

"You are taking Ruby to the theatre, are you, Bowling?" she observed. "Do you think her father would approve of it, under the circumstances?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am!" Susie said brightly. "Ruby's with me!"

Miss Wickens gave a thin and curious smile. "Quite!" she said. "But just to make it entirely open and above board, I am going to join you both! In fact, seats for us have been booked in the grand circle." She paused and smiled maliciously.

"I have a surprise for you both. Ruby's father is in London, and he booked the seats at my suggestion. He is meeting us at the Frivolity, and we are all going to enjoy the show together!"

THE REDSKIN DANCING GIRL!

A DOZEN wild ideas struggled in Susie's brain—each one crazier than the first.

She knew she was trapped. She had put her head into a noose. Miss Wickens had found out everything, and had spun this rope to catch her.

Ruby stood looking simply stunned. "Come along, my dears!" And with spiteful joy Miss Wickens ushered them both out of

The cab-rank was only at the next corner. Susie bundled Ruby into the first taxi, slammed the door upon her, and shouted an order to the driver—just as Miss Wickens came rushing into sight.

The taxi glided away and Susie felt herself grasped by a bony hand.

"Think yourself clever, don't you!" panted the forewoman. "But let me tell you, you've done the very thing I wanted you to do! I heard what you told the driver. Frivolity Theatre, stage door! Will you be surprised to hear that I knew Ruby Dale was dancing there? I went to the show last night and saw her with my own eyes!"

Susie wasn't surprised. She had already guessed that this was the nature of Miss Wickens' "appointment" last night, and that she had found out the truth by hiding outside Spollard's and following Ruby to the theatre.

"So that's why you got her dad to come along to-night, ma'am?" murmured Susie.

Miss Wickens nodded with a malevolent smile, and beckoned the next taxi on the rank.

"I suspected something of this sort when you helped Ruby Dale to shirk her work the other



"So you're ashamed to show yourself, Ruby Dale!" Miss Wickens shrieked and swept the curtain aside. The girls roared with laughter as Miss Wickens saw no one was there. But Susie did not smile; for now the forewoman would want to know where Ruby was.

the door. "We mustn't keep Mr. Dale waiting, you know!"

Susie staggered out into the street. She groped for Ruby's arm. In a hoarse whisper, half-drowned by the noise of the traffic, she bade her cheer up. Something had got to be done. Susie had more to lose than Ruby, if the other had only known it.

Behind them came a stream of girls pouring out of Spollard's staff exit.

"Hi, Susie! Wait for us!" yelled Mabel Barge.

Susie stopped. A hazy plan flickered somewhere in the back of her mind.

"Shall we go along with the girls, Miss Wickens—or would you rather we had a taxi?" she jerked out.

"A taxi, most decidedly!" said Miss Wickens, who intended to make her own malicious enjoyment complete.

Susie tugged Ruby by the arm.

"We'll fetch one, ma'am—I know where the rank is!" she called over her shoulder.

Before Miss Wickens could stop her, Susie rushed Ruby away out of sight along the crowded pavement. She gave her breathless instructions as they ran.

"Hop into a taxi and drive straight to the stage door, ducks. Don't let your dad see you. Get into your dressing-room and wait for me!"

afternoon, Bowling. And especially when I saw that Redskin costume you tried to hide from my eyes! You didn't know that, did you?"

Tittering with triumph, Miss Wickens stepped into the taxi, and she didn't invite Susie to join her.

"I say, can't I have the theatre ticket that Mr. Dale bought me, ma'am?" said Susie.

"Oh, yes, by all means—if you have the audacity to come!" gloated Miss Wickens, handing her the ticket through the taxi window. "Mr. Dale knows the part you've played in this scandal, Bowling—and if you don't meet him to-night, you will certainly meet him to-morrow morning, when he comes to give you the sack!"

With a dogged glitter in her eyes, Susie hurried away to the bus stop. She was just in time to join Mabel Barge & Co. as they scrambled on a bus bound for the Frivolity Theatre.

MISS WICKENS sat in the grand circle of the Frivolity beside Mr. Dale. She had a large box of chocolates on her lap. The show had already started—and if Mr. Dale didn't seem to be enjoying himself the least little bit, Miss Wickens certainly did.

She kept whispering sly hints in his ear.—
"I know it's going to be a very painful spectacle for you, sir—to see your daughter defying you in this way. But it is all due to a bad companion, Mr. Dale. Susie Bowling is the one who egged her on to do it!"

One of the amateur turns came on—dove-tailed between the regular acts. It was a girl pianist, and she gave a very creditable performance. It made Mr. Dale chafe all the more.

"You see, that is the result of hard work and serious study—not just jazzing round wasting time the way Ruby has wasted hers!" he said between his teeth. "My girl is simply featherbrained, though I hate to say it!"

"She's like Susie Bowling, sir!" said Miss Wickens.

The curtain went down, and at this point who should enter the circle but Susie herself.

Miss Wickens saw her creeping meekly towards the director, and Miss Wickens was delighted at the grim reception Mr. Dale gave Susie.

"Sit down here, my girl!" he said in a heated whisper. "I'll talk to you afterwards!"

The curtain rang up again, and a skilled troupe gave an acrobatic display. Girls and men alike, they went through their show with the precision of clockwork.

"Efficiency, that's what that is!" declared Mr. Dale. "They didn't learn these tricks by shirking their work of an afternoon—or by encouraging others to! Do you hear what I'm saying, my girl?"

"Yes, sir!" said Susie meekly.

"You'll know what Mr. Dale means to-morrow morning, Bowling!" warned Miss Wickens.

Then she sat up eagerly—for now the curtain had gone down, and the stage manager stepped up to the footlights.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he announced. "The next item on the programme is a solo dance act. The young lady prefers not to give her name—but I may tell you that she works as a seamstress in the day-time, at a well-known gown manufacturers' in Edgware Road. It will be for you to judge her talent!"

Miss Wickens clutched Mr. Dale's arm in her excitement.

"This is Miss Ruby, sir—this is your daughter! Yes! Here she is!"

The curtain swung up, and a girl disguised as a Red Indian came dancing on to the stage. Her movements were graceful, but undistinguished. Compared with the professionals before her, she was depressingly amateurish—and she was over-confident.

Mr. Dale sat staring at her with his lips drawn tight.

"Even her make-up is hopeless. That red stain is daubed on too thick to show her looks!" he groaned. "As for her dancing—I can see for myself that it's just mediocre!"

"It's fairly good, sir," Susie said, but without conviction.

"No, it isn't! You know it isn't, and so does everybody else!" snapped Mr. Dale. "They are polite, but they are not interested!"

Susie couldn't dispute it. There was rather an uncomfortable hush in the audience, and lots of people were fidgeting with chocolate wrappings, or lighting cigarettes.

On the stage, the Redskin dancer seemed rather happier than the band conductor, who was trying awkwardly to keep some sort of rhythm. The girl was inclined to get out of time with the orchestra.

"I should hardly think you are proud, Mr. Dale!" sympathised Miss Wickens.

"Be fair, ma'am!" pleaded Susie. "She's doing her best!"

"Then she's a sorry failure, and she's proved it!" Mr. Dale said harshly.

His irritation wasn't lessened by the polite applause that came at the end of the act. It was brief and kind, and the only hearty applause came from Spollard's girls up in the gallery.

To make matters worse, the Redskin act was followed by another girl dancer—this time an "extra" on the bill.

But the moment that extra tripped on to the stage, she had the whole house with her.

Dressed in a charming little Topsy costume, her face chocolate-coloured and a fuzzy wig on her head, she was as dainty as a sprite.

"Gee, what a dancer!" exclaimed Susie. "She's lovely!"

"She's got talent, that's why, and she has worked for it!" Mr. Dale said feelingly. "Look, Miss Wickens! Could anyone say I was wrong, or that I don't know real art and talent when I see it? There's all the difference in the world between this girl's dancing and Ruby's!"

"Would you like to see Ruby dance like that, sir?" murmured Susie.

"I'd like to see Ruby do anything properly!" snapped Mr. Dale.

"Even if it was dancing?"

"Of course I would—if it was up to that standard!" Mr. Dale said, with a note of real jealousy in his voice as he watched Topsy.

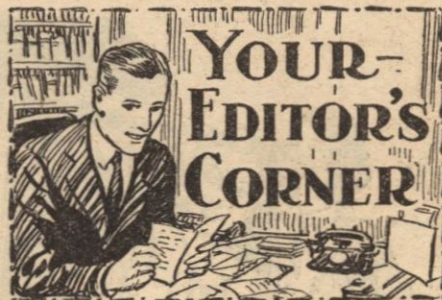
"This girl is an artist!"

"She certainly is!" gushed Miss Wickens.

"But you must remember," pointed out Susie, "that this girl probably had more encouragement at home than Ruby had!"

"Whose fault would that be?" snorted Mr. Dale.

"Yours, sir—if she had any talent that you didn't recognise!" asserted Susie.



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

HALLO, GIRLS!—No, this isn't your Editor—I've caught you! It's Penelope, feeling very important and taking his place for two weeks.

I was going to tell you all about the Duties of an Editress—only a holiday-time one, of course—but find there just isn't room.

And your Editor's last words to me were: "Now, don't forget, Penelope, nice as your chatter is, you're supposed to tell the readers about next week's stories in the Editor's Corner!"

So here goes:

Instalment Two of that new serial, "KENNEL-MAID AT PHANTOM ABBEY," will be one of the big reasons why you'll be longing for next Friday.

It's jolly good, too—all ghostly and thrilling, as well as charming, for you can't help loving Kitty and Bridget and their pets.

"SUSIE AND HER CAMERA" is a perfect gem of a story, featuring "our Sue." I chuckled and chuckled as I read it; it really is a scream. There are laughs in almost every line. A frankly funny story, that will delight all you with a sense of humour—and that's every one of you!

"THE THREATENED GIRL RECORD-BREAKER" is a seaside story featuring Noel Raymond. A daring speedboat girl is out to break the record, but some unknown danger menaces her. And it's this that Noel sets out to clear up.

There will be another entertaining story of the Happy-Go-Lucky Hikers, and our two serials featuring popular Pat Summers and Stella Conway will continue every bit as enthralling as ever.

That Scamp Scottie will have a smile for you, too; while Page 2 will be given up to that wondrous, marvellous, staggering feature called— Well, you guess!

Bye-bye till next week, when I shall be here again!

Your own
PENELOPE
(For the Editor).

Her cheek took Miss Wickens' breath away and made Mr. Dale go red in the face.

"Talent is another word for efficiency!" he hissed. "Do you infer that I don't know efficiency when I see it?"

"I was only suggesting, sir!" apologised Susie. "I was only wondering if you'd have given Ruby a chance, if it was dancing she excelled in!"

"I tell you yes!" hissed Mr. Dale. "I tell you I envy the parents of a girl like this. They've got a little star there, and I hope they know it. If I had a girl with such talent, I would make her name for her!"

"You think she's got it in her, sir?" inquired Susie.

"Of course! She is wonderful!" And Mr. Dale wiped his spectacles and gazed harder at the dancer. "She is peculiarly attractive!"

"To you, sir?"

"To everybody!" retorted Mr. Dale. "Ah! Just listen to the applause! Bravo, young lady! Bravo!"

The dance had finished, and the audience were clapping and stamping their applause. Miss Wickens joined in and beckoned Susie to do the same. Mr. Dale was clapping louder than anyone else.

"Just supposing that was Ruby, sir—" began Susie.

"Don't be so irritating, girl! I was trying to forget my annoyance for a moment!" And angrily Mr. Dale broke off in the middle of clapping. "Here is Ruby slinking along to me now!"

For a girl had walked in through the circle entrance, wearing a Redskin costume under her coat. She wasn't slinking. She was hurrying eagerly across to Susie, and waving to her in pleased excitement.

"How did I get on, Susie?" she shouted, before she was half-way across to the seat.

"Jolly fine, ducks!" Susie called back to her. "Come and meet Mr. Dale!"

Mr. Dale gaped. That girl hadn't reveal Ruby's voice. That red stain didn't reveal Ruby's features.

"Th-this isn't Ruby!" he stammered.

"No, sir! This is Mabel Barge, who did the Redskin dance!" Susie said brightly. "There's Ruby on the stage—just taking her Topsy wig off!"

Mr. Dale jumped up from his seat with an amazed cry.

That girl at the footlights had thrown off her fuzzy wig. Underneath sparkled the curly golden hair of Ruby Dale. The cheers of the audience died away to an unexpected hush as the manager came from the wings and placed his hand on her arm.

"Ladies and gentlemen, our trial turn has scored a hit yet again to-night!" he boomed. "To-morrow night is the final for her. If you really mean to give her her chance, come in your thousands and bring your friends, and vote for Miss Ruby Dale!"

"What do you know about that, sir?" whooped Susie, to the director.

But Mr. Dale was out of his seat and rushing away to the stage lobby. Susie had never seen a prouder father in all her life. As for Miss Wickens, she had dropped her chocolates and was groping faintly for her smelling-salts.

SSUSIE knocked twice at Ruby's dressing-room before anyone heard her. Then she popped her head inside. There was Mr. Dale standing, with his arm held fondly round Ruby, and if she had asked him for the moon, you could see that he wouldn't have refused her.

"Excuse me, sir! I don't want you to blame Ruby for wasting her time this week dancing," Susie said solemnly. "It was all my fault!"

"Susie, you young rascal!" laughed Mr. Dale, while Ruby beamed at her in ecstasy. "You've given me the happiest surprise of my life. I thought Ruby was just a little lazy-bones, and all the time she's got more talent than anyone else in the family! She's going to be a great star some day, and she owes her chance to you!"

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

Next week Susie takes up photography. Her adventures with a camera will make you chuckle with delight. Order your **GIRLS' CRYSTAL** now.

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KENNEL-MAID at PHANTOM ABBEY



KITTY'S NEW HOME

"WELL, here I am at last—thank goodness! I was beginning to think I'd never get to Lorne Fen."

Kitty Graham heaved a sigh of relief as she climbed down from the ramshackle old train. She felt stiff and tired, for she had been travelling several hours.

Dumping her suitcase down on the platform of the wayside station, she looked about her with interest.

In the distance she could see the grey rooftops of the straggling village, and beyond them she had a clear view of the fen from which the station took its name.

In the failing light of late afternoon that flat, marshy countryside looked depressing. But Kitty was not conscious of its dreariness. There was a flush on her cheeks, a happy sparkle in her brown eyes. For there, barely a mile away, she saw a grassy hillock crowned with a picturesque, ivy-clad building.

"That must be the abbey," she told herself; and her heart gave a wild leap.

She had reason to be excited, for that ancient abbey was to be her future home. With pride she looked towards it. Though all but one wing was in ruins, there was a grandeur about that ivy-covered building that made her pulses thrill.

"Oh, isn't it wonderful!" she exclaimed. "Fancy me, an ordinary kennel-maid, owning a place like that! Even now I can hardly believe it!"

But it was true enough. The lawyer's letter had made it plain. James Lorne, the grandfather she had never seen, had died, and she was his heiress. The keys were in her pocket, and here she was on her way to take possession of her romantic legacy.

Picking up her suitcase, Kitty hurried across to the barrier. She was eager to get to her new home. The grizzled old man, who combined the duties of porter and booking clerk, grinned as he took her ticket.

"Hope you haven't far to go, missy," he said, "for there ain't no cab. Old Sam's gone over to Herva Major with it for a wedding."

"Oh, it doesn't matter, thank you!" smiled Kitty. "I'm only going to the abbey, and it doesn't look far."

"The abbey!" The porter gave a start. "You don't mean you're going to bide there, do you, missy?"

Kitty chuckled.

"Rather!" she cried enthusiastically. "I'm the new owner, you know."

"The new owner!" He gave a gasp. "So you're the young lady I've heard tell of—her who was granddaughter to old Mr. Lorne. But—" He paused, and a look of incredulity crossed his weather-beaten face. "You never be going to live there!" he exclaimed. "Not at the abbey!"

Kitty looked at him.

"But, of course," she replied. "Why shouldn't I? I know most of it is in ruins, but there's plenty of room in the new wing."

The old man shook his head, and then impulsively stretched out a gnarled hand, placing it urgently on Kitty's arm.

"Missy," he said, his voice low and husky, "turn back while you're safe."

"Safe!" Kitty's smile vanished. The compelling look in his eyes frightened her. "Why, what ever do you mean?" she gasped.

His grip on her arm tightened.

"I mean that things happen in yon old abbey," he answered. "Things that wise folk shun. Be warned, missy. Keep away from the Phantom Monk."

A romantic old abbey—what a wonderful place in which to establish her kennels! Her new home thrilled Kitty. The fact that it was supposed to be haunted only made it seem more romantic than ever. But the ghost was no idle legend. The Phantom Monk was a grim reality!

"Phantom Monk!" stammered Kitty. For a moment she knew a feeling of uneasiness. Then abruptly she chuckled. "Oh, I see what you mean!" she exclaimed. "The Phantom Monk's a ghost! Oh, how lovely!"

Her eyes sparkled. She didn't for a moment believe in ghosts, but the fact that the abbey had a legend attached only added to its romance. Picking up her suitcase again, she smiled roguishly at the superstitious old porter.

"Thanks for the warning!" she said. "I'll keep a good look-out for his spookiness. But if he does appear, I bet he'll be more scared of me than I am of him."

Still chuckling, she passed through the booking hall, and out into the street.

As she strode briskly through the village, making her way down the desolate road that led to the abbey, her mind was full of the wonderful plans she had made.

Thanks to this unexpected legacy, she could realise the ambition of her life—become the owner of a kennels.

Always had Kitty been fond of dogs. Ever since her parents had died she had worked as a kennel-maid. She had loved the life. But the prospect that lay before her now was ever so more fascinating.

To own her own kennels—to have dozens of dogs to look after, to train them, to exhibit them at shows—what a thrilling thought that was! She hadn't much money, but Uncle James had left her enough to set up on her own, and, of course, there would be Bridget to help her.

Kitty smiled as she thought of Bridget O'Brien, the big-hearted, lovable Irish maid who, when she had heard the news, had insisted on throwing up her own job at the London kennels, and had declared her intention of joining Kitty in the country.

"By the time she arrives to-morrow I'll have everything spick-and-span," Kitty told herself, pushing open the rickety gate that gave access to the abbey's winding carriage drive.

She paused to survey the abbey that now loomed before her, old, ivy-covered, and eerily silent.

In the grey twilight the abbey certainly did look forbidding. All but one small wing was in ruins, and through chinks in the crumbling masonry the wind moaned and sighed.

Willows lined the weed-overgrown garden—long, mournful rows of them, looking like silent sentinels with bowed heads. And from the distance came the gurgle of water, the rustle of tall, swaying rushes.

Unaccountably Kitty shivered, and then she forced a laugh to her lips.

"Pooh! What a silly I am!" she exclaimed. "It's the long journey. I'll feel better when I've made myself a cup of tea."

Resolutely she stepped up to the arched porch, pushing the key in the lock of the massive oak door. The door creaked as it swung open. From the panelled hall beyond came a rush of musty air, and Kitty grimaced wryly.

"Wants a good spring clean, by the look of it," she told herself. "The place is covered with dust and cobwebs. But then, I suppose,

that's only to be expected. It's been shut up since grandfather died."

Putting down her suitcase, she went to explore. Certainly the abbey was dark and uninviting. There was a mournful look about the old furniture. The floorboards creaked. The armoured figures in the library cast frightening shadows across the worn carpet. But Kitty refused to be downcast. A scrub down would make a big difference. So would bright, chintz curtains. And then there would be Bridget's infectious high spirits.

"In a day or two no one will know it," she said. "The Phantom Monk will think he's come to the wrong address if he does turn up."

She chuckled and went in search of fuel. There was plenty of wood in the shed at the back, and as she gathered up an armful she looked about her with interest.

Already her mind was busy planning. Those old stables would make excellent temporary kennels, she decided. And that paddock would do for the dogs' exercise ground.

Humming happily, she lit a fire and prepared herself some supper. Fortunately she had thought to bring tea, milk, and provisions with her.

The crackling logs made a cheerful glow. The forbidding shadows drew back, and when the lamp was lit, the library—which was the only room downstairs that was habitable, except for the kitchen—looked snug and cosy.

Still dreaming of the future, Kitty sat there for an hour or two, curled up in one of the big armchairs, then suddenly she yawned.

"Early to bed and early to rise," she quoted. "And as I'll have tons of work to do tomorrow—"

She paused, jumping up out of the chair, and looking round in alarm. What was that? She listened, her heart unaccountably beginning to palpitate. A strange, creepy, scratching sound came from the hall. It was followed by a low, blood-chilling whine. Instinctively Kitty thought of the Phantom Monk, and then, as the scratching was repeated, she gave a shaky laugh.

"Why, it—it sounds like a dog!" she exclaimed.

Rather nervously she crossed to the door and opened it, her tensed face breaking into a smile of relief as she glimpsed the black shape that crouched on the floor.

"It is a dog!" she cried in delight, and held out a friendly hand. "But how did you get in, old fellow?" she asked. "My goodness, and what a state you're in!"

Her eyes filled with sympathy as she saw the dog's pitiful condition. He was a black retriever and had once been a magnificent animal. But now he looked starved and dejected. His once luxuriant coat was tattered and caked with mud, and his ribs showed through his fur.

"Oh, you poor darling!" Kitty cried.

She took a step forward and bent over him. As she stretched down her hand he whined doubtfully, and his big eyes—brown like her own—looked anxious.

Kitty smiled.

"I'm not going to hurt you, silly," she whispered. "I'm going to wash you—feed you—look after you. By the look of it, you haven't had a decent home for weeks."

Tenderly she patted him, and then her gaze went to his collar. On the tarnished brass plate there was engraved a single word: "Remus."

"Why, what a funny name!" she exclaimed; and put her hand on the big leather collar.

Remus' reaction was startling. His brown eyes blazed, his fangs showed in an angry snarl, and, leaping to his feet, he backed away from her.

"Why, what's the matter, you poor pet?" asked Kitty, in astonishment. "Why don't you like me touching your collar? Is it sore underneath? Come on, let me have a look!"

Coaxingly she advanced, but Remus continued to back away. Then, whipping round, suddenly he bounded through the door. Kitty followed, calling after him.

But Remus went charging on across the garden. Several times he paused, looking back as though wishing he could believe this soft-voiced girl were really a friend, but he did not stay long enough for her to reach him.

Finally he disappeared through the fence that separated the abbey from the grounds of

the property next door. Kitty climbed the fence, but she looked in vain for the mystery stray. Reluctantly she was about to give up the search, when a girl of about her own age appeared.

The girl, who was wearing riding breeches and a white blouse, scowled in surprise as she saw Kitty standing there.

"Hallo, where've you sprung from?" she demanded.

Kitty flushed, realising she was trespassing. "Oh, I'm sorry," she said, "but I was looking for a poor stray! Have you seen it? It was a big black retriever."

The other girl shook her head.

"No, I haven't; but if I do spot it I'll soon send it about its business. We don't want any strays here. But who are you, anyway?"

"I'm Kitty Graham—the abbey's new owner," Kitty explained. "You'll be Miss Bligh, I expect. Mr. Turner, the lawyer, told me about you. It was your father who wanted to buy the abbey, wasn't it?"

A resentful scowl crossed Judith Bligh's face as she nodded.

"Yes, and we mean to have it, too," she declared. "Now, look here, why don't you be sensible? That tumbledown ruin is of no earthly use to you, and by all accounts, you're hard-up. So why don't you snap up the money dad offered?"

Kitty's flush deepened. The other girl's sneering taunt made her feel angry.

"Thank you, but the abbey is of use to me," she said curtly. "I intend to start a kennels here."

"A kennels!" Judith Bligh gave a gasp. "Well, of all the cheek!" she exclaimed. "Let me tell you," she went on, her eyes flashing, "that I'm the only one who's going to run a dog business here. Of course, I only do it for fun. I don't need the money." Her red lips curled into another sneer, then she stamped her foot. "But I won't have you poaching on my preserves. D'you hear?" she shrieked.

With an effort Kitty kept her temper.

"I'm sorry if my new venture upsets you," she said quietly, "but I'm afraid it's too late to alter my plans now—even if I wanted to."

And coldly Kitty turned and walked back to the abbey.

THE GREEN FRIAR APPEARS

IT was rather glumly that Kitty locked up and made her way up to the big front bed-room, where she had set blankets and sheets to air before a roaring fire.

The argument with her neighbour's daughter had upset her, and in vain she tried to recover her usual high spirits as she undressed and got into bed.

For a long time she lay there, wondering whether Mr. Turner, the lawyer, hadn't been wise, after all, in suggesting that she sold the property.

Kitty sighed, and stirred uneasily in the bed. Suddenly the dark room felt oppressively stuffy. There was something about its atmosphere she did not like.

The fire flickered redly. Somewhere a floorboard creaked, and the wind was growing stronger every moment. It moaned and howled around the ruins, rattling the weather-beaten shutters, rustling the ivy.

Suddenly Kitty felt herself shivering, and she drew the blankets more tightly around her. Then, at last, her tired eyelids closed and her fears were swallowed up in sleep.

How long she slept she did not know, but suddenly she awoke, to find her heart palpitating.

What was it that had awakened her? Sitting up in bed, she looked around. The fire had gone out. The bed-room was in pitch blackness. And all was deathly still. Even the wind had died down.

Unaccountably she remembered the porter's words of warning, and she found herself listening—though for what she did not know.

And then she heard it again. Cr-ee-ak! The sound of a floorboard creaking, as though someone were on the stairs. Yes, there it

was again! Creak—creak! Steadily getting louder, steadily getting nearer.

Kitty gulped. She felt her heart thumping wildly. She sat there, in the big four-poster bed, as though petrified. Then a sudden hope flashed through her scared mind.

"Perhaps it's that poor dog again," she muttered. "Maybe he's found his way indoors."

With an effort she gathered together her ebbing courage. Throwing back her blankets, she put on her dressing-gown, groped for her slippers, then lit the candle that stood beside the bed.

Holding the flickering light before her, she nervously crept across to the door. Her free hand on the old-fashioned latch, she paused, listening. All was quiet now. That unnerving noise had ceased. She remained still a moment longer; then her quivering fingers lifted the latch, and the door creaked open.

"Hallo, old chap!" she called, expecting, despite her fears, to find the stray out there on the landing. But the candlelight revealed no sign of life. She walked towards the stairs. "Remus!" she shouted. "Remus, where are you? Come on, you silly! There's no need to—"

And then she stopped, the words dying in her throat. For suddenly she saw—saw what was descending the stairs at the end of the long passage.

Her hand flew to her mouth. The blood drained from her limbs. For it was a cowed shape that stood there. An awesome figure, that wore a green, eerily glowing robe.

The Phantom Monk!

Kitty tried to scream, but not a sound escaped her quivering lips. Petrified, she stood there, fascinated, helpless.

Kitty drew in a shuddering breath. For one moment longer she stood there, staring, then her pent-up feelings found vent in a scream. Still clutching the flickering candle, she turned, fled blindly back down the landing. Sobbing, she regained her own room, letting the candlestick clatter down on the table, then slamming the door.

Oh, what a relief it was to shut out that vision! Gulping, she turned the key in the lock, but even as it turned the blood drained from Kitty's face again. Something was in the room with her.

Slowly she turned; and then she recoiled, for there stood the Phantom Monk. To her it seemed that he had walked through the solid wall. Cowed head thrust forward, his robe sending green shimmers flashing through the darkness, he advanced with outflung hands.

Kitty gave another shriek, and, panting, she drew back—until she could back no more. Trapped in a corner, she could only watch and wait.

The Green Friar glided nearer—nearer. Kitty's head was reeling, her eyes felt as if they were growing bigger and bigger; her mouth was hot and parched.

"Stop! Stop!" she cried; but her voice was only a whisper. Then, just as she felt she could stand no more, it happened.

There came the pad of paws, a low, ferocious snarl, and, as though from nowhere, a black, four-legged shape loomed into view. For a second Kitty stared blankly, then a desperate shout escaped her lips.

"Remus!" she gulped. "Remus! Oh, save me! Save me!"

For it was the mysterious black retriever who had so unexpectedly appeared. At her call the dog bared his fangs, gave another angry snarl, then crouched for a spring.

The Green Friar spun round in alarm. Kitty heard him give a shout, heard Remus give a full-blooded bark, then, like a tiger, the dog launched himself across the room.

There was another shout, the noise of a heavy fall, then something seemed to snap in Kitty's brain. She gave a gulp, clutched wildly at the bedpost, then fell headlong, merciful oblivion sweeping over her.

When she regained consciousness she found herself lying full length on the bed, and as she struggled to a sitting position she realised that not only was the room empty, but that the

warm morning sun was streaming through the open window.

For a minute or two she sat there, dazed and bewildered. Her head throbbed and her heart was still palpitating. At first she could hardly remember what had happened, then at last she gave a cry

"Remus—and that ghost monk!" she gasped. "What's become of them?"

Getting to her feet, she stumbled across to the door. It was still locked, and the key was on the inside. Next she went to the window. It was small, and divided by an iron bar. Impossible for anyone to have escaped that way.

Then how had the Phantom Monk and his attacker managed to disappear? Surely she couldn't have dreamt it all? It was true she had been thinking about the abbey's strange legend before she had fallen asleep. But all that terrifying experience—surely it wasn't just imagination?

Bewildered, dazed, Kitty stared around, then on a sudden impulse she crossed to the wall through which the spectral figure had seemed to appear. She beat on the panels with her fists, but the wall seemed solid enough. There was no secret door there. Yet how else could those strange vanishings be explained?

White-faced, she flopped down on to the edge of the bed, putting a quivering hand to her brow.

"I can't have dreamt it—it's impossible," she told herself, and yet now, in the clear light of morning, the whole thing seemed so absurd.

She sighed heavily. "I give it up," she muttered. "I only know one thing. I'll be glad when Bridget turns up. I certainly wouldn't spend another night here on my own."

Getting to her feet, she crossed to the wash-stand and filled the basin with cool rain-water. The wash refreshed her, did her good, and it was more calmly that she proceeded to dress.

As she combed her hair she happened to glance at the little travelling clock on the Queen Anne dressing-table. An incredulous gasp escaped her.

"Nine o'clock!" she exclaimed. "Goodness, but I've never slept so long in my life. Why, Bridget will be here any minute—"

At that moment there came the sound of a motor-horn down below, and on looking out of the window she saw a dilapidated taxi draw up outside the porch.

"Bridget!" she exclaimed in delight, and, throwing down her comb, she went rushing downstairs.

A START FOR THE KENNELS

BY the time Kitty had gained the hall and opened the front door Bridget had dragged her luggage out of the taxi and had paid off the driver.

She was a plump girl, with red cheeks and twinkling blue eyes. At sight of Kitty her broad face split into a beam of pleasure.

"Top o' the morning to you, Miss Kitty!" she cried. "I hope 'tis as pleased you are to see me as I am yourself."

"Pleased!" whooped Kitty. "I'm more than pleased. You're better than any tonic, Bridget!"

And in her excitement she rushed forward and gave the Irish maid a hug. The warmth of the greeting pleased Bridget, though she pretended to be alarmed.

"Careful, Miss Kitty!" she urged. "If you squash my new hat, 'tis myself who'll never forgive you. Three-and-eleven it cost me, and never again shall I get such a bargain. Look at the feather—shure, and 'tis the queen of all peacocks it must have come from."

And she proudly nodded her head, so that the long, rainbow feather in the hat waggled to and fro. Kitty laughed. She felt better already. There was nothing like Bridget to cheer you up.

"Let me give you a hand with your bags," she said. "Then we'll have breakfast. 'I'm afraid I've only just got up. And please not so much of the 'Miss Kitty.' You're not a maid now. You're one of the family."

"Shure and I understand, Miss Kitty," chuckled the Irish girl.

Together they dragged the luggage into the

hall, then Kitty insisted that Bridget should look round while she got the breakfast.

It was not until they were seated at the table that Kitty told the friendly Irish girl of the night's happenings.

Bridget's blue eyes opened wide as she listened. Her mouth fell agape. Exclamations of wonder escaped her lips. When Kitty had finished she sat back and gasped.

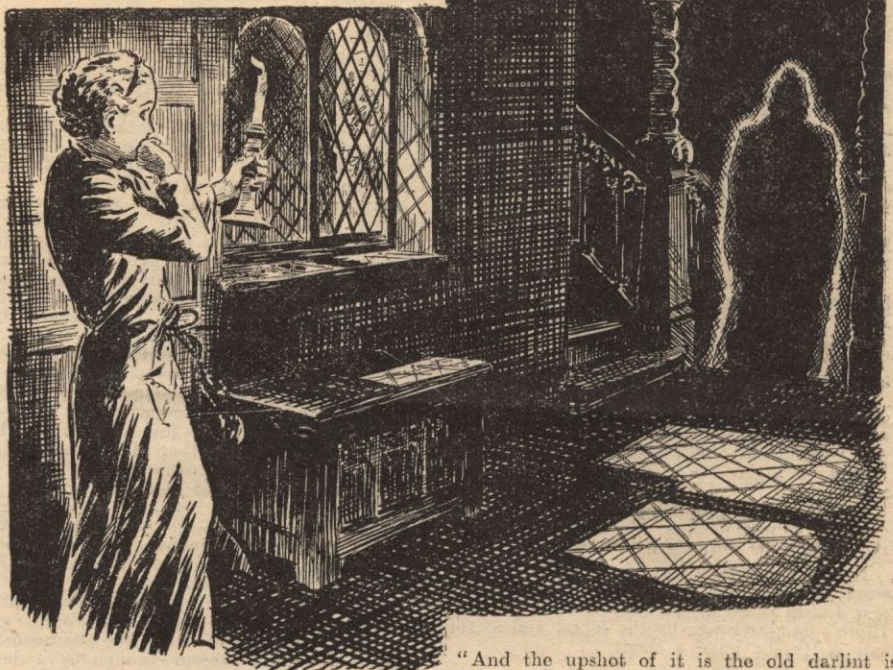
"Never have I heard the like of this," she exclaimed. "'Tis not even the old woman of Killarney could tell a better story."

Kitty looked up in dismay. "You—you mean you think I've invented it!" she whispered.

Bridget laughed, and, jumping to her feet, darted round the table, to put a plump arm around the other girl.

"Shure and I believe every word of it," she declared stoutly. "But it wasn't a real ghost you saw, me darlint. You just dreamt it. What did you have for supper? Bread and cheese? Begorrah, then that proves it! 'Twas my own father who always warned me against such food. Suffered terribly himself from nightmares, he did. Why, once—"

She broke off, to give the white-faced Kitty a cheerful look of comfort.



Kitty's hand flew to her mouth. For it was a glowing, cowed figure that stood there. The Phantom Monk!

"Get your breakfast inside you, Miss Kitty," she urged. "'Tis not like you to mope. Come on, now, cheer up. That old ghost won't dare show up while Bridget O'Brien is here. If he does, shure and 'tis myself will beat some manners into him with my best rolling-pin!"

Kitty caught her breath. "Then—then what I've told you makes no difference? You will stay here with me—despite the Phantom Monk?"

Bridget laughed. "Stay here!" she cried. "Bejabbers, but 'tis myself who'd like to see anyone show me the door! Of course, I'm staying, me darlint, and between us we'll make this old abbey the best-known kennels outside Ireland! And that reminds me!"

Flopping back into her chair, she raised her hands in dismay.

"Here's me running on like a fire-engine, and I've not yet told you the news!" she gasped.

"News? Kitty looked up eagerly. "Is it good news?"

"Shure it is!" The Irish girl beamed. "Would it be myself grinning like a Cheshire cheese if it wasn't the best news in all the

world? Miss Kitty, 'tis the first client I've got for you!"

"A client—you mean someone who wants us to look after their dog?" cried Kitty, in surprise.

Bridget nodded. "The very same. But 'tis not only one dog. For if you look after the first one properly, 'tis a whole army of the darlins Mrs. Ferguson will send you. But listen, and I'll tell you all about it."

Bridget's story was soon told. It seemed that while waiting at Turnley Junction for the local train to Lorne Fen, she had helped a fellow-traveller to get some drinking-water for her dog—a comical little Scottie.

Pogo was the dog's name, and his mistress—Mrs. Ferguson—had got into conversation with the Irish girl. She had told her that, in addition to Scottie, she owned four other dogs, including two valuable greyhounds. She was rather worried what to do with them, as shortly she intended going abroad.

"Shure, and I soon told her," went on Bridget, with another of her Irish chuckles.

"And the upshot of it is the old darlint is going to let you look after Pogo for a day or two. Then, if she's satisfied, she'll send on the greyhounds."

"Oh, how lovely!"

Kitty's eyes sparkled. This was wonderful news. It meant that the kennels would be able to be started in earnest right away. And, what was even more thrilling, Mrs. Ferguson lived in the near-by market town of Harborborough. If Kitty pleased her, then she would be sure to recommend the Abbey Kennels to all her friends.

"You're a marvel, Bridget!" the delighted Kitty declared, and, jumping up, she threw her arms around the other girl. "A regular mascot!"

As soon as breakfast was over she set out for the village, there to catch the first bus to Harborborough. She did not mean to give Mrs. Ferguson a chance to change her mind!

Pogo's mistress proved to be a stern-faced woman of about fifty. She sniffed and seemed doubtful when Kitty told her that actually the kennels had not been established yet. But, fortunately, Pongo, when he was introduced, seemed to take an instant liking to the girl.

Mrs. Ferguson thawed as she saw Kitty snatch up the comical little dog and make a fuss of him.

"He seems to have taken to you," she commented.

"He's a perfect darling—aren't you?" Kitty

added, gently pulling one of the Scottie's pointed ears.

Pogo barked and did his best to wash her face. Mrs. Ferguson nodded, obviously pleased.

"Very well," she said, "we will regard it as settled. But, remember, if I am not satisfied at the end of the week, I shall take Pogo away and send my greyhounds elsewhere."

"Of course," smiled Kitty, and she rubbed her cheek against the little dog's head. "But I'm sure Pogo and I will get on fine. Can I take him with me?"

Mrs. Ferguson nodded, and ten minutes later Kitty was on her way back to Lorne Fen in the bus.

After a meal, the little Scottie seemed quite at home at the abbey. After their own dinner, Kitty and Bridget set to work on the stables, whitewashing them, and generally making them habitable.

Mrs. Ferguson, though a dog-lover, didn't believe in keeping even Pogo in the house, and she had insisted that he should have his own kennel outside.

The two girls soon had a comfortable home made for him, and, to their delight, the little Scottie seemed to have settled down already.

It was happily that Kitty went to bed that night, for, thanks to Bridget's fortunate meeting with Mrs. Ferguson, it looked as if there was every chance of the newly established kennels being a success.

Though, as she undressed, Kitty found herself wondering apprehensively about the Green Friar, she was too tired to keep awake. The moment her head was on the pillow she dozed off—to sleep undisturbed until Bridget called her next morning.

The Irish girl had a cup of tea with her as she entered the bed-room, and she chuckled roguishly as Kitty sat up, rubbing her eyes.

"Top of the morning to you, me darlint!" Bridget said. "And where's his Highness the Ghost?"

"I—I don't know!" stammered Kitty. "I'm beginning to think I did dream it, Bridget. He certainly didn't worry me last night."

"And he never will again—as long as you keep off bread and cheese for supper!" grinned Bridget.

The day passed happily. There was tons of work to do, and Kitty and Bridget were not ones to slack. They made the new curtains, and very bright and cheerful they looked—as, indeed, did the whole wing that was their home.

They finished preparing the kennels, even erecting a wire-netting run for any puppies they might be entrusted with.

It was when Kitty was giving Pogo his final scamper before putting him to bed that she saw Judith Bligh for the second time. Samuel Bligh's daughter was by the fence, and as she saw Kitty she gave a shout.

"Hey, you!" she cried.

Leaving the Scottie sniffing inquisitively at a rabbit-hole, Kitty stepped forward.

"What is it?" she asked quietly.

"It's that wretched stray of yours!" Judith snapped. "It's been digging up dad's rose-bushes this afternoon. I just thought I'd warn you that if it comes on our property again it'll be shot."

Kitty stared in horror. She couldn't believe that a girl who kept dogs could be so callous.

"He isn't my stray," she said. "I only wish he were. He'd be a lovely fellow if he were looked after properly. But you couldn't be so cruel as to shoot him!"

Judith sneered.

"Couldn't I! You just let me catch the brute prowling around again, that's all!" Then she nodded to the scampering Scottie. "I see you've started business," she grinned; "but I shouldn't be too optimistic about getting Mrs. Ferguson's greyhounds, if I were you."

Kitty stared, wondering what that remark meant; but at that moment she heard Bridget calling her, so, with a curt nod to the grinning Judith, she gathered Pogo up in her arms, and went back to the abbey.

The Irish girl's usually beaming face was overcast.

"'Tis a telegram that's come," she said. "And, as it wasn't addressed to you personally, I took the liberty of opening it." She

paused and frowned. "'Tis from Mrs. Ferguson," she added, and held it out.

Kitty's own face clouded over as she read the message:

"Are the rumours I hear about the abbey true? Expect me to-morrow—9 a.m. Must satisfy myself that Pogo is all right.—Mrs. FERGUSON."

"Rumours—what rumours?" asked Kitty, in bewilderment.

Bridget made a grimace.

"Shure, an 'tis the ghost she must mean," she said. "By the look of it 'tis the Green Friar himself she expects to harm her pet."

Kitty gave a gasp, and instinctively she looked across the paddock to where Judith Bligh's figure could just be seen on the other side of the fence. Was it possible that it had been Judith who had been trying to upset Mrs. Ferguson?

"I wouldn't be surprised," Kitty told herself. "She's mean enough to do a spiteful thing like that." And then her face cleared, and she smiled down at the dog in her arms. "But there's no need to worry," she said. "You're in the pink, aren't you, old chap?"

She tickled Pogo's tummy, and carried him to the stable that acted as his sleeping quarters. Kitty locked him in, and then gave a cry, for from among the bushes had crept a forlorn, furtive figure.

Remus, the stray retriever! His big brown eyes were fixed hungrily on the plate of scraps Bridget had put out for him; but at sight of Kitty, he turned and backed away.

Coaxingly she tried to soothe his fears. "There's no need to be frightened, Remus," she whispered. "I want to be friends. Come on, there's a good dog!"

Snapping her fingers, she stole forward, smiling and talking softly to him. For a moment Remus seemed tempted. His longing eyes met hers, and she thought she had won. Then, unexpectedly, his tail went down between his legs; he gave a mournful whine, and, like a flash, he charged across the garden, quickly to disappear.

Baffled by the mystery of it all, Kitty went to bed. She was soon asleep, but she was not allowed to sleep for long.

Suddenly an unusual sound caused her eyes to flicker open. For a few seconds she lay there in the darkness, that old vague feeling of uneasiness stealing over her.

What was it that had disturbed her?

Apprehensively she listened. Somewhere a floorboard creaked. Eerie rustles came from the ivy outside the window. Again the bedroom seemed to become oppressively stuffy, though the windows were open.

She felt her heart begin to thump; little prickles of fear ran down her spine, and then abruptly she stiffened. For the uncanny stillness had been broken—broken by a dog's excited barking.

"Pogo!" she gasped, instantly recognising the Scottie's shrill yapping.

Agitatedly she flung back the bedclothes, and reached for her slippers and dressing-gown. Donning them, she ran to the window and looked out.

She had a clear view of the old stables; but at first she could see nothing amiss. Then Pogo's barks were renewed. Wilder—more frantic this time. There was something wrong. Pogo was scared.

Kitty's face paled. Again she peered out of the window, and then all the blood seemed to drain away from her limbs.

For down below, out there in the darkness, could just be discerned a greenish, glowing figure. A cowed shape that was emerging from the stable doorway.

"The Phantom Monk!" Kitty gasped.

Spellbound, she watched that spectral figure steal out into the open; then another series of agitated, terrified yaps sent her heart thudding madly.

"He's got Pogo! He's taking him away!" she cried; and her fear of the Green Friar was overwhelmed by an even greater fear—fear for the little Scottie's safety.

Kitty will have to brave the Phantom Monk's vengeance if she is to rescue little Pogo! Aren't you enjoying this baffling mystery? Don't miss next Friday's instalment of this splendid serial. Order your **GIRLS' CRYSTAL** at once.

ROSINA THE TREASURE

HUNTER (Continued from page 6)

"You w'n, Mr. Raymond!" With a shrug the girl obeyed; the disfiguring wig and spectacles were flung to the ground, revealing a head of close-cropped dark hair and a pair of violet eyes. "I nearly got away with it!" she murmured regretfully, with a glance at the iron-bound box.

The lid was open, and the light from Noel's torch fell on a heap of priceless jewels.

"Nearly—but not quite," remarked Noel grimly. "Kindly walk in front of me—and no tricks!"

Meekly Rosina obeyed; as they emerged from the tunnel the constable barred the way.

"Your prisoner, constable," remarked Noel. "I fancy this will mean promotion for you. Permit me to introduce Rosina Fontaine, the girl crook!"

"Jumping rattlesnakes!" ejaculated the constable, as he seized Rosina by the arm. "What luck!"

As a pair of handcuffs clicked on the girl's wrists Noel returned for the iron-bound chest.

"Better take charge of this, too," he said, as he emerged from the tunnel with it. "I'll join you in a moment. I just want to see if anything's been left behind."

Again he made his way back into the grotto, picking up Rosina's wig and spectacles, for evidence. Slipping them into his pocket, he returned to the mouth of the tunnel.

And then he received a shock. The boat, the constable, and Rosina had vanished!

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Noel. "Surely she can't have—"

He scrambled on to the bank, running madly round the lake. On the far side he found the boat, floating adrift; but there were no signs of the constable or his beautiful young captive.

Madly Noel raced up to the house, almost colliding with Professor Carvell and a group of startled guests.

"The phone!" shouted Noel. "Quickly!"

"Raymond!" stuttered the amazed professor. "What are you doing here? Why—"

Noel thrust him aside, and grabbed up the telephone. A moment later he was speaking to the local police station.

"That constable you sent," barked Noel, "is he reliable?"

"But we didn't send a man, Mr. Raymond," protested the inspector. "You phoned cancelling the arrangement. You said you'd call on us—"

"Confound it!" shouted Noel. "She's tricked us again! That policeman must have been a fake. He is Pierre, her servant."

He slammed down the receiver, turning on the amazed professor.

"You see," he snapped, holding out the fair wig and the rimless spectacles. "Miss Strudwick—the so-called detective—was really Rosina Fontaine. She found the treasure—and she's got away!"

A broken cry escaped Doris Carvell's lips. "Then—then we're ruined!" she whispered.

"Not quite," said Noel dryly. "I've been fooled, and Rosina's got away; but she didn't take the treasure. It is only the empty chest I handed her confederate."

As he spoke he unslung the toolbag from his shoulder and emptied it on to the hall table.

A shower of glittering stones were scattered before the eyes of the amazed assembly.

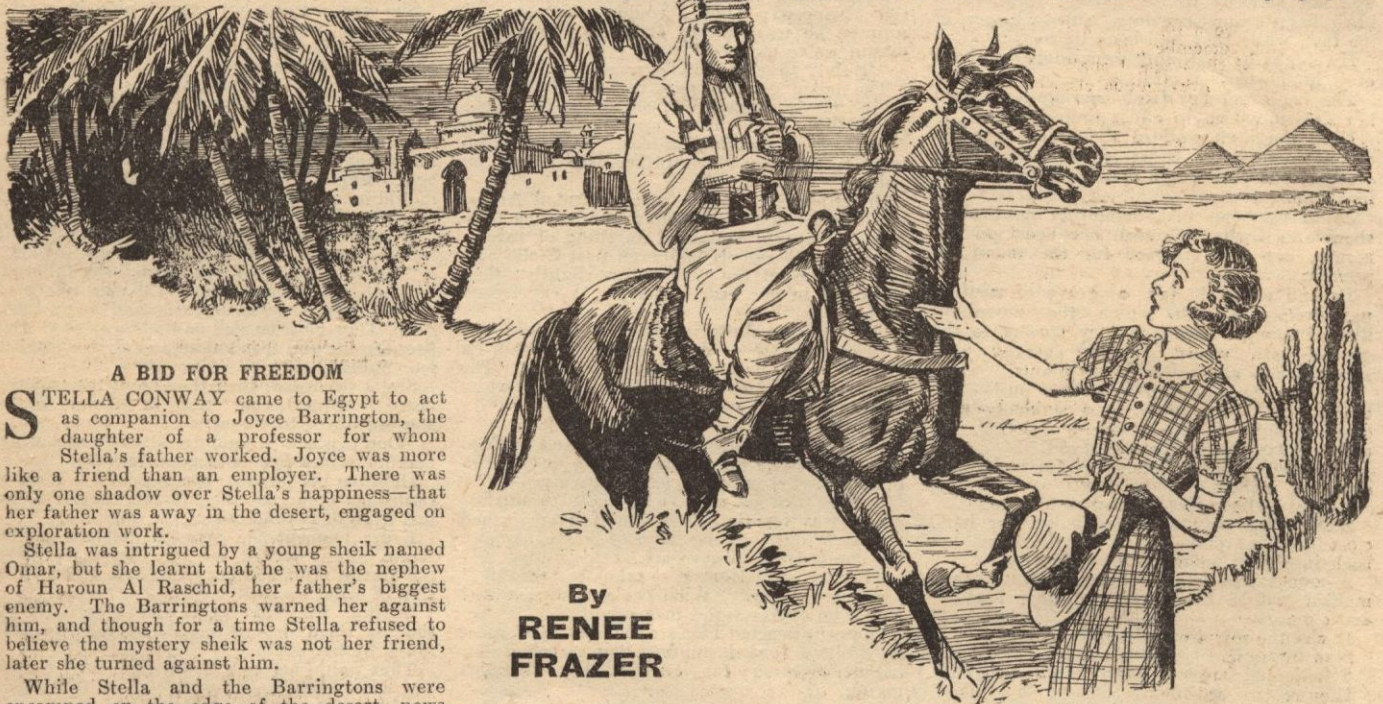
"Knowing Rosina," said Noel grimly, "I took precautions. I'm just waiting now for the pleasure of meeting that young lady again!"

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

"THE THREATENED GIRL RECORD-BREAKER." That is the title of next Friday's thrilling detective story. In it you will read how Noel helps a daring girl speed-boatist who is menaced by a mysterious enemy.

GIRLS' CRYSTAL
28/8/37

STELLA and the SHEIK of MYSTERY



A BID FOR FREEDOM

STELLA CONWAY came to Egypt to act as companion to Joyce Barrington, the daughter of a professor for whom Stella's father worked. Joyce was more like a friend than an employer. There was only one shadow over Stella's happiness—that her father was away in the desert, engaged on exploration work.

Stella was intrigued by a young sheik named Omar, but she learnt that he was the nephew of Haroun Al Raschid, her father's biggest enemy. The Barringtons warned her against him, and though for a time Stella refused to believe the mystery sheik was not her friend, later she turned against him.

While Stella and the Barringtons were encamped on the edge of the desert, news came that Mr. Conway was at the Oasis of the Moon and in great danger. It looked as if Sheik Omar was responsible for his plight, and Professor Barrington returned to Cairo to secure help.

Desperately anxious about her father, Stella set out across the desert. Joyce followed, and both girls became lost. They were rescued by the mystery sheik and taken to his desert palace. Although treated as guests, they knew that, in reality, they were prisoners.

Convinced by now that Omar was her enemy, Stella planned to escape. She managed to obtain possession of a bunch of keys, and one night she and Joyce let themselves out of their room.

STELLA'S hand closed on her chum's arm as she heard the approaching footsteps of the guard.

The pale moonlight, streaming through a narrow, barred window, flung eerie patterns across the corridor, leaving the doorway of their own room in the shadow.

The footsteps drew closer and the two girls held their breath. At last the guard came into view. He paused for a moment and then walked on down the passage that ran at right-angles to the main corridor.

Stella gave a little sigh of relief, but there was no time to lose; at any moment the guard would return.

"Quickly!" she whispered, tugging Joyce by the sleeve. "This way! We must go through Zuleika's room. But don't make a sound; if she wakes, she'll give the alarm."

Followed closely by her chum, she crept down the passage, entering Zuleika's room. The woman was asleep, and Stella's eyes gleamed as she saw a heap of garments lying on one of the divans. Motioning to Joyce to follow her example, Stella swiftly donned an Eastern robe, further disguising herself with a flowing veil.

Thus attired, the two girls tiptoed to the outer door. It was locked, but Stella managed to open it by means of one of the keys she had purloined.

Beyond the door was a flight of marble steps. They descended them; then they pulled up in alarm, for their way was barred suddenly by a native servant—a gigantic Sudanese—who stepped noiselessly from a curtained doorway.

By
**RENEE
FRAZER**

The white of the man's eyes stood out against his swarthy face, as he rapped out a startled question in Arabic.

Joyce, who had a smattering of the language, realised that he mistook them for serving-maids. Quickly she replied:

"We have a message for the officer of the guard from Princess Yasmin," she said.

Luckily for them, the giant servant was not quick-witted; his suspicions lulled, he allowed them to pass through the curtained doorway.

Once out of his sight, the chums took to their heels, running for dear life along a stone corridor.

Only in the nick of time. They had barely turned the corner when, behind them, there broke out a terrific clamour.

They heard Zuleika's shrill tones raised in excited wailing; there were shouts and running footsteps, and the brazen note of a gong echoed through the palace.

Their escape had been discovered!

"Quickly!" gasped Stella, grabbing at Joyce's arm. "This way!"

They found their progress barred by a massive door, obviously leading to the courtyard. It was securely locked and chained.

Feverishly Stella dragged the chain from its socket, and fumbled for her keys. Agitatedly she tried one after another, while the palace echoed with ominous shouts and running footsteps.

"Oh, hurry!" breathed Joyce, almost sobbing.

Stella had almost given up hope, when the last key she tried grated pleasantly in the lock and the massive door swung open, letting in the pale moonlight from the courtyard.

They slammed the door behind them and

Stella and Joyce stole past the Arab guard. The palace where they had been imprisoned was left behind. Ahead lay freedom. And then—what a startling shock it was they received!

locked it, staring at each other in the moonlight.

Joyce's eyes flashed an anxious question:

"What now?"

Stella turned, staring across the courtyard. It was a scene of almost eerie loveliness that met her gaze, had she been in the mood to appreciate it. The moonlight, reflecting on the silvery waters of the fountain; the rustling palm-trees; the white marble walls of the palace, silhouetted against the velvety sky.

But Stella's gaze was fastened on the grim figure of the Arab sentry standing, rifle at the alert, in the Moorish gateway.

To gain freedom they would have to pass the sentry!

Together the two chums crept along in the shadow of the wall, approaching the gate. The sentry had his back to them, and was staring out across the palace gardens.

Stella held her breath. If only the man would move away for a moment and give them a chance to slip through the gate!

Even as the hope flashed into her mind, the clamour in the palace reached the ears of the guard. He turned, and then a window was flung open at the far end of the courtyard. Someone shouted an order. The sentry instantly hurried in the direction of the shout.

For a vital moment the gateway was left unguarded!

"Joyce—quickly!" breathed Stella, her voice shaking.

Together they raced for the open gateway, darting recklessly across the moonlit courtyard.

They heard the sentry's angry bellow and the sharp clatter of his rifle; but hand-in-hand they sped madly down a flight of marble steps and plunged among the luxuriant foliage of the palace gardens, losing themselves in a maze of winding paths.

Joyce was panting heavily, but not for an instant did Stella dare to slacken the pace.

Though they had escaped from the palace they would not be safe till they had left the grounds; and even then Stella had no very clear idea as to how they were to act.

She did not even know where the young sheik's palace was situated, though she suspected, from its luxuriant grounds and apparent isolation, that it was actually built in the famous Oasis of the Moon, the secret

goal that had brought her on her reckless journey into the desert.

Of one thing she was convinced—her father was not actually in the palace; they would have heard some rumours, some whisper of the fact, while they had been there.

He might be in hiding somewhere—perhaps even in the oasis itself!

The hope lent her fresh courage—increased her determination to effect their escape.

Even the high wall of the palace gardens did not deter her. It was covered with thick creeper, and both Stella and Joyce were excellent climbers.

Joyce went up first, mounting on Stella's shoulders; Stella followed, her heart in her mouth, her ears strained for the sounds of pursuit.

Beyond the wall lay a grove of rustling palm-trees, through which the moonlight filtered dimly. Together they sprang to the ground—soft, sandy ground, covered with strange cacti and other desert plants.

The trees became thinner as they pushed on, the ground more stony, and suddenly they came in sight of the desert—a desolate, undulating expanse in the moonlight.

The two chums halted instinctively, exchanging glances.

"What—what now?" whispered Joyce. Stella's lips tightened suddenly; her hand closed on her chum's arm as she drew her back into the shadow of the palms.

A sound had reached her straining ears, muffled at first, but growing steadily louder—and closer.

It was the sound of galloping hoofs!

Now Joyce had heard it, and her eyes lit up. "Stella, the rescue party!" she breathed.

"They're coming!" She would have darted out then and there, but Stella held tightly to her arm, her face pale with excitement.

"Wait! We don't know yet. They'll be here in a minute."

Almost choked with suspense, their minds torn between mingled hope and fear, the two girls crouched in the shadow of the trees, waiting and watching.

And suddenly the vanguard of the approaching party appeared—a troop of galloping horses, followed more slowly by a swaying, straggling line of laden camels.

A groan escaped Stella's lips as she caught sight of the white robes of the horsemen and the tall, arrogant figure riding at their head. Her slender hopes were dashed to the ground.

Instead of the rescue party, they had encountered the returning party of Arabs, led by their young sheik—in company with a giant of a man, swarthy and bearded, with an ugly scar across his face.

And as Stella gazed, transfixed, at that scarred, cruel face she remembered where she had seen it before.

It was the face of the old orange-seller of Cairo—the sinister figure who had dogged her footsteps since her arrival in Egypt!

And with the sudden realisation of his identity came the final, damning proof of the young sheik's treachery. For that sinister, bearded figure could be none other than Haroun al Raschid—dread chieftain of the desert, and Omar's uncle!

STELLA MUST STAY BEHIND!

STELLA clenched her hands till the nails bit into her palms. Omar, the young sheik whom she had once trusted, was bringing their arch-enemy to his palace, doubtless to gloat over his young prisoners!

By the smile on his handsome face he appeared pleased with the part he had played.

He turned to his uncle, making some laughing remark and pointing to the line of camels. Al Raschid rapped out an order, and the Arab horsemen dismounted, waiting for the slow-moving caravan to approach.

Stella's hand tightened on her chum's arm. Though they were in a tight corner there was still a faint chance of escape.

She was staring towards the tethered horses. "If only we could grab two horses," she whispered, "and make a dash for it! The rescue party can't be far away. We'll have to wait till the caravan's passed and try our

luck. Did you hear what the young sheik said just now?"

Joyce shook her head. "Something about a prisoner, I believe," she whispered; "but I couldn't be sure. I suppose he was talking about us; he doesn't dream we've escaped!"

"S-sh!" breathed Stella warningly. The laden camels came nearer, swaying in their queer, ungainly fashion, their backs piled high with bales and bundles. Two camels were walking abreast, a queer contraction between them rather like a tent on poles.

On either side strode several armed Arabs, and Stella wondered vaguely whether the tent-like contraption contained anything of value.

As the two camels lumbered past Stella saw the curtains of the tent flutter slightly; then she drew in her breath sharply, a cry frozen on her lips.

Through the fluttering side of the tent was thrust a hand—a lean, sunburnt hand, a broken chain dangling from the wrist. The fingers were clenched, revealing a zigzag white scar across the knuckles.

Deathly pale, Stella sprang to her feet. "Joyce," she gasped, "that hand! You saw it? It's father's hand! He's in there—a prisoner! Let me go to him—let me go—"

It was Joyce, now, who took command: Stella was frantic. She would have dashed recklessly out into the band of Arabs had not her chum dragged her back.

"Stella, for Heaven's sake be careful!" whispered Joyce. "What can you hope to do? You'd be overpowered in a minute."

Her words acted like a douche of cold water to Stella's heated mind. She clenched her hands, fighting for control, her thoughts racing.

It was true; she was helpless. Her father was a prisoner in the hands of the young sheik and his villainous uncle, and there was nothing she could do!

Nothing? Stella's eyes flashed suddenly. She could not stand and allow her father to be carried off to the sheik's palace—possibly to be immured in those dreadful dungeons!

Not while she had life left to fight for him. Yet—her heart misgave her—she had no right to drag Joyce into fresh peril. It was her fault that Joyce had been brought here in the first place; her chum had a claim on her—second only to her father.

Stella clenched her hands, her mind torn by a dreadful dilemma.

On one side was the chance of escape and freedom; on the other, the helpless prisoner whom she believed to be her father.

That zigzag scar on the clenched hand—she could not have mistaken it. It was the scar her father had received in the War, in which he had served as a young lieutenant. She would have known it anywhere.

And that dreadful chain dangling on the wrist spoke for itself; it spoke of captivity and cruelty. The thought of it brought a choking sob to her lips.

Then, like a flash, she saw a solution to the quandary—the only possible solution.

The Arab guards had closed round the swaying tent, and Omar and his bearded relative were riding ahead.

"Joyce," Stella whispered huskily, "they're leaving the horses unguarded! Wait till they're out of sight, then grab one, and ride for your life! I'll—I'll try to cover your retreat! You must find the rescue-party, and bring them back here as soon as you can!"

Joyce, deathly pale, stared incredulously at her chum.

"Stella, are you mad?" she gasped. "Do you think I'd clear off and leave you here, to be made a prisoner again by those dreadful Arabs? If—if you're staying, then so am I!"

Stella's eyes were misted, and there was a lump in her throat, but her face was white with determination.

"Joyce dear, you must listen!" she declared urgently. "I've thought it all out. I can't leave my father. One of us must go and fetch the rescue-party, while the other hides here to see what Omar and his uncle mean to do. If we both stay, the risk will be doubled, and there'll be no one to warn the rescue-party. I promise you I shan't do anything rash. I'm going to hide here in the oasis and keep watch

on the palace. I may try to get in touch with Yamin; I know she's our friend, and that we can trust her. Joyce, please do this for me! It's the only way!"

She had framed her urgent plea in a way that Joyce could hardly resist. She could see that her chum was moved, and she quickly pressed home her appeal.

"It won't be for long, Joyce; you may be back with the rescue-party within an hour or two—by the morning at the latest. I'll be quite safe here till daylight. I'm going to cut loose the other horses, to make them think we've both escaped. They'll never dream that I'm in hiding. If it was your father who was a prisoner, Joyce, would you leave him?"

It was this final plea that broke down Joyce's last resistance. With a little sob, she nodded.

"Stella, I see what you mean," she faltered. "I'll go now, at once, and I'll ride like mad till I'll meet the rescue-party and bring them here. They must be well on their way now. But promise me you won't take any risks—promise me, Stella!"

Stella promised, then they crept towards the horses. Untethering one of them, Stella assisted Joyce to mount.

"Don't waste a minute, dear!" she whispered. "Good-bye—and good luck!"

Holding her breath, she watched her chum canter away across the moonlit desert, to be lost to sight beyond one of the dunes.

Every moment she dreaded that one of the Arabs might return for the horses and give the alarm. But nothing happened, and a little sigh of relief escaped her lips.

Swiftly she cut loose the other horses, shooting them in a direction opposite to that taken by her chum.

That would act as a blind when their escape was discovered, and the absence of the horses would help to create confusion and delay.

Then, as she stepped back, the full realisation of what she had done broke on her with stark clarity.

She had sent Joyce away—and had cut off her last chance of escape by releasing the horses!

She was alone and unprotected—a mere girl against a horde of unfriendly Arabs. But she was near her father, and for his sake she would willingly have risked her life.

She broke into a run, following the trail of the slow-moving camels, but taking care to keep in the shelter of the trees.

In a moment she came in sight of the caravan lumbering towards the palace gate. Omar and his uncle rode ahead.

She saw the sentry race out to meet them, obviously to break the news of the escape of the young prisoners. Then she lost sight of them again as she crept through the thick foliage outside the palace wall.

One desperate purpose was in her mind. At all costs she must catch a glimpse of her father; if possible, smuggle a message to him to assure him that rescue was at hand.

But how could she achieve her purpose?

This time she approached the palace on the opposite side to that from which she and Joyce had escaped. Anxiously she stared up at the rough stone walls. There was a narrow alcove some way above her head directly overlooking the courtyard.

From the other side of the wall came a clatter of hoofs, a buzz of excited voices, intermingled with sharp commands.

Clenching her teeth desperately, Stella commenced to scale the wall, intending to peer down into the courtyard, and, if possible, to catch a glimpse of the prisoner.

But the wall was old, and the mortar baked and crumbling with the burning desert sun. Even as she reached the alcove she felt one of the stones give way beneath her weight.

It fell with a crash into the courtyard, followed by a shower of smaller ones.

There was an immediate outcry. A sentry pointed, shouting excitedly. A sudden rush was made for the wall.

A moment later, Stella, helpless and half-fainting, was dragged down by remorseless hands and thrust into the middle of the courtyard, to confront Haroun Al Raschid and his nephew.

Instinctively she clung to her veil as she stared up into the handsome, arrogant features of the young sheik. His dark eyes seemed to pierce her veil as he gave a curt order.

She was instantly released, and the guards stood back, forming a menacing circle.

Haroun al Raschid leaned towards his nephew, his yellowed teeth bared in a cruel smile as he pointed to Stella, speaking in broken French.

"This young woman—who is she?" he demanded harshly. "By her garb, she appears to belong to your entourage. Speak, nephew! Do we release her, or is she to meet the fate of a spy?"

SAVED BY THE MYSTERY SHEIK

THE fate of a spy!"

Haroun al Raschid's dread words echoed in Stella's ears, as she waited in sickening suspense for the young sheik to reply.

Omar was seated on his horse, his arms folded, his handsome, dusky features revealing nothing of his thoughts.

He shrugged carelessly, turning to his uncle. "I think," he said, speaking in English, "that the girl is one, Ayesha, an attendant on my sister, Yasmin. Doubtless foolish curiosity prompted her to pry on us. But no harm has been done. Let her go to my sister. Wait, I will summon Yasmin to vouch for her!"

A wave of relief swept over Stella; she felt like a doomed prisoner granted a miraculous reprieve. But even in that moment she wondered if the young sheik had really been taken in by her disguise.

The glance he had flashed towards her had held a hint of warning; his very carelessness seemed almost assumed.

A moment later Yasmin appeared. Her face seemed a little pale beneath her dusky hue; her dark eyes flashed a swift question at her brother.

Only Stella saw the meaning glance that passed between them.

"Sister," he remarked loudly, "this young woman was caught spying on us. Does she belong to your entourage; if so, why do you not keep better watch on her?"

Yasmin drew in her breath quickly.

"I crave forgiveness, my brother—and yours, too, mine uncle; this girl is but a foolish damsel, not yet versed in the ways of the palace."

Her voice, soft and musical till now, hardened suddenly as she crossed to Stella's side, grasping her arm.

"Come, Ayesha—thou foolish one! For this thou shalt live on bread and water for a week—and do such menial tasks as ill please you! Come with me!"

Haroun al Raschid laughed loudly—a laugh which was echoed by his followers.

A grim smile curved the lips of the young sheik, and he made some remark that seemed to amuse his uncle all the more.

Her mind in a whirl, Stella was hustled across the courtyard. Her relief was mingled with bewilderment and apprehension; was it possible that Yasmin, too, had been taken in by her disguise, or was this some plot that she could not fathom?

Instinctively she looked round for the prisoner—the unfortunate man whom she believed to be her father; but he was hemmed in by a crowd of Arabs—and she could catch no more than a glimpse of a grey head and bowed shoulders, ere she was pulled through a doorway, the door slamming behind her.

Instinctively she drew back—but Yasmin's voice spoke close to her ear.

"Foolish one—be careful! Come with me, and ask no questions. In my apartment you will be safe—if you keep a still tongue. I do not blame you for what you have done; 'twas an act of brave folly—yet it might have ended in tragedy, but for the mercy of Allah."

As she spoke, she pulled aside a curtain, ushering Stella into an apartment, lit softly by a silver lamp suspended from the domed ceiling.

Words of bewildered inquiry rose to Stella's lips; but Yasmin waved her to silence.

"Nay; I cannot remain and speak with you; my brother demands my presence. I fear you may have aroused his anger by your folly, but I will speak to him on your behalf."

With a warning gesture, she glided from the room, and Stella heard a key turn in the lock.

Dazedly, she sank on to one of the divans,

staring unseeingly in front of her. What did it mean—this new, amazing development?

She was convinced that her father had been taken prisoner by the young sheik—that Omar had tricked and deceived her from the first; yet now it appeared almost as though he had deliberately shielded her from his uncle, the scheming and vengeful Haroun al Raschid!

Then her thoughts flashed to Joyce. Where was her chum now? Had she met the search-party? Perhaps any moment she would hear the sound of hoofs—the welcome shouts that would herald rescue!

But, as the time dragged by, her hope gave place to despondency; new fears crowded into her mind. Supposing anything happened to Joyce? Supposing—

She thrust the dreadful thought from her mind, closing her eyes in utter exhaustion.

She barely heard the door open; was hardly conscious that anyone was in the room until, opening her eyes with a sudden start, she saw the young sheik standing gravely in front of her.

"So, Miss Conway, you chose to act on your own? You ignored my promise of friendship

prisoner; and—and I demand to be taken to him!"

The young sheik stiffened the expression of pity deepening in his eyes.

"Stella," he said huskily, "I cannot grant your request. I must ask you to have patience for a little while—"

But there was a desperate gleam in Stella's eyes; the door behind the young sheik stood ajar, and she could see that he was momentarily off his guard.

With a sudden, unexpected movement she dived past him, racing through the door, and slamming it behind her. The next moment she had turned the key in the lock.

Panting, she crouched against the wall, staring up and down the dim-lit corridor. There was no one in sight.

One thought alone was in her mind, blotting out everything else.

She must find her father! He was here, in this palace, a helpless prisoner; perhaps desperately ill and needing her care.

But which way should she go—where should she commence her search?

The keys she had purloined from the young



A cry froze on Stella's lips as she saw the flaps of the tent flutter and a hand appear. That hand—it was her father's. He was a prisoner in the power of the sheik!

and protection—preferring to run the risk of death for yourself and your friend!"

Stella sprang to her feet, confronting him, her eyes blazing in the pallor of her face.

"Your promises!" she gasped. "Your friendship and protection!" She laughed mirthlessly, bitterly, trying to fight back the smarting tears that sprang unbidden into her eyes. "How dare you talk like that," she choked, "when you know that my father is here—in your palace—your prisoner!"

"Why do you say that?" he demanded. "What proof have you?"

"Proof!" Stella turned on him wildly, her pent-up feelings giving way in a flood of reckless recrimination. "You know it's the truth! You've tricked and deceived me all along, pretending that you were my father's friend—promising to rescue him; when all the time you were holding him prisoner, and waiting your chance to trap Joyce and me. Like a fool I believed in your promises, and your plot nearly succeeded; but you haven't got Joyce! And—and you won't succeed in your villainy—I swear it!"

"My villainy?" he repeated. "I wonder. Fate is sometimes cruel, Miss Conway; Allah's ways are inscrutable to his children. We are but pawns in the game, and can act only as seems fit at the time."

"I don't care what you say," she exclaimed, "you can't deny that my father is your

sheik's room were still in her pocket, beneath the borrowed Eastern robe. They had already proved invaluable; but their worth was even greater now.

Headless of danger, she sped down the passage, seeking for a closed door. The first she came to she unlocked—to find herself confronted by a flight of stone stairs.

"The dungeons!" she gasped.

Was her father down there? Unsteadily she groped her way down the stairs. Ahead of her lay a narrow stone passage, a dim light visible at the far end. As she listened, her heart thumping, she imagined that she heard a faint, hollow groan.

Recklessly, Stella broke into a run—heedless of what peril might await her.

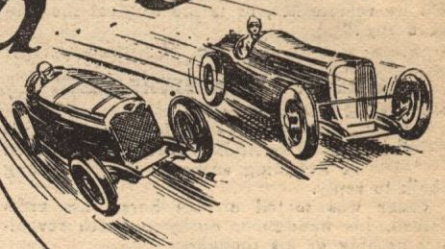
Reaching the end of the passage, she found her way barred by an iron grille, guarding the entrance to a dimly lit cell.

And as she peered fearfully through the bars, a choking, heart-rending cry escaped her lips. Lying motionless on a pallet of straw his head pillowed on his arm, was—her father!

At last Stella has found her father, but will she be able to rescue him? Whatever you do don't miss next Friday's exciting instalment. Order your GIRLS' CRYSTAL now.



The Schoolgirl Speed Star



THE WONDER CAR TAKEN AWAY!

PAT SUMMERS, head girl of Ivydale School, had a great ambition to be a racing motorist. So she was thrilled when wealthy Joshua Fingleton offered her the chance to race his car, the Crimson Comet—especially as Miss Clifton, the headmistress, gave her permission, as this was Pat's last term at school.

Mr. Fingleton made his generous offer on one condition—that Pat should be responsible for his daughter Julie, a new girl at the school.

Gladly Pat promised to do this, little guessing what a wilful, troublesome girl Julie was. She made things very difficult for Pat at times, but Pat stuck by her promise and tried to make Julie settle down at the school.

But her task as head girl was not easy, for Alice Smailes, a prefect, was openly hostile to Pat. She made it quite clear that she was anxious to be head girl herself; Pat also suspected that Alice wanted her to fail on the race track for some reason.

Pat won her first two races in the Crimson Comet, but her position in the school became more difficult than ever, for, thanks to Alice Smailes' scheming, most of the prefects turned against her.

As the result of a foolish escapade, Julie fell over the edge of a cliff. Pat rescued her and brought her back to school, but the Fourth Former became seriously ill. To Pat's dismay, Mr. Fingleton blamed her for his daughter's accident, and he took the Crimson Comet away from her.

THERE was a mist in front of Pat Summers' eyes. There was a heavy ache tugging at her heart as she watched the gates through which her beloved racing car, the Crimson Comet, had disappeared. In that moment she felt empty of all happiness, of all energy.

The Crimson Comet had been taken from her and given into the charge of the man she believed to be her enemy.

It was true. It was the end!

Sick at heart, Pat turned away, and then stopped as she saw the girl who was confronting her. A girl with a sneering smile on her face, whose pale grey eyes were alight with a satisfaction she could not conceal.

Every setback of Pat's was a source of pleasure to Alice Smailes, Pat's scheming rival of the Sixth. She laughed.

"And so," she said, "that finishes the old motor-racing career, Pat Summers?"

Pat just looked at her, too miserable even to reply.

"Bit of a come-down, eh?" Alice went on with relish. "Too bad for the coming girl motor-racing champion! Oh, too bad!" she added scoffingly. "How are the mighty fallen! What will you do now, Pat Summers—now that the motor-racing is at an end? Sell petrol as a career, perhaps?"

Pat bit her lip. The red rushed into her face suddenly.

Alice, of course, was trying to egg her on to a row. Alice was up against Pat, and she

would love to have created a scene. Pat just said—she could not help it:

"You—you're rather a mean-spirited, hateful thing!" and contemptuously swept past her and walked away.

Alice grinned. But she was not finished yet. All her spite was on the surface. She would have liked to let Pat know what part she had played in her downfall. She wanted to tell her that Bert Preedy had got the driving job because she, Alice Smailes, had helped him.

She wanted to hurt, with all that cruel spite of the girl who will kick the other who is down. And Pat wasn't going to get away like that, with that cold, contemptuous look on her face. Alice jumped forward.

"Here, wait a minute!" she cried.

Pat walked on, quickening her step.

Alice's teeth came together. She made a leap. Her hand, shooting forward, clutched Pat's shoulder, the finger-nails biting unnecessarily deep. Then, at that, Pat did fling round, noticing as she did so that a crowd of Fourth Formers were dashing from the school and bearing down upon the scene. Alice's face glared into hers.

"Look here, you're not going to call me names," she blustered. "I'm a prefect. I demand an apology!"

Once again Pat eyed her, trying to control the impatient contempt she felt must be in her eyes. She said:

"Let go, please—at once!"

"Apologise then!"

Pat's lips tightened. She said no more. But suddenly her hand went up; firmly her fingers fastened upon the other's bony wrist, lifting it from its resting place. With a flick of contempt Pat threw it aside.

"Why, you—" Alice began.

And then, as with lightning-like rapidity that crafty brain of hers worked to make the

The car she loved taken from her! Worse than that, the driver who had taken her place deliberately meant to lose the race! Desperately Pat racked her brains. Somehow she must prevent Bert Preedy's treachery from succeeding

By HAZEL ARMITAGE

utmost of the most trifling incident, she reeled back. It was a theatrical reel. It did not deceive Pat, though it might have deceived anyone looking on from a distance.

The reel ended in a crash, as Alice, pretending to lose her balance, fell to the ground, for a moment lying there, a groan of pain on her lips.

In a moment Pat was beside her.

"Alice, what on earth did you do that for?"

"I?" Alice's eyes blazed up. "I did it?" she cried. "I? Oh, my arm! You pushed me," she cried. "You attacked me."

"What?"

"You did! You did! You—" and then Alice's eyes gleamed again as she saw her crouching, Amy Hemmingway, rushing towards the scene. "Amy, you saw that?" she cried.

"I jolly well did," Amy Hemmingway cried indignantly. Her eyes flashed scorn as she twisted upon Pat. "And you," she cried, "are the head girl of this school—the girl who is supposed to set an example to others. Oh, all right, you needn't look so shocked! It was easy to see what happened."

"Yes, very easy," another voice hotly broke in, and there was Grace Campbell of the Fourth, accompanied by Tessa Reeve and Thelma Wayne and half a dozen other juniors. "We jolly well saw that, too, and Alice was just shamming. In any case," Grace went on, "Alice started it. We all saw how she went for Pat."

"Grace, take fifty lines!" Alice snapped.

"I certainly will not!" Grace retorted.

"Take another fifty!"

"Wait a minute!" Pat's face was grim now. "Get up," she said to Alice, "and try, if you can, to be a little less hateful. Thank you, but no more now, there's a good kid, Grace," she added to the Fourth Former, then turned again. "I didn't push you, Alice—and you know it."

"No?" Alice's eyes blazed. "Perhaps you'll tell that to Miss Clifton," she said.

"If you care to mention the matter to Miss Clifton, most certainly I will tell her," Pat icily agreed. "I think"—with a significant glance at the excited Fourth Formers—"I have plenty of witnesses. Grace, you will take twenty lines for defying a prefect. Now, no more. We don't want to prolong this scene, Alice, I shall expect to see you in my study in ten minutes' time."

But she did not see Alice in her study in ten minutes' time. Alice, ignoring the summons, felt she had another case against Pat. Alice, as senior prefect next to Pat, believed in using her powers, and believed, too, in striking while the iron was hot.

Immediately she called a meeting of the prefects in the prefects' room.

"We've got to do something, and we've got to do it at once," she declared. "Pat Summers wants taking down a peg. She's too high and mighty by far. She insulted me. Not content with insulting me, she made an attack on me. It's no good going to Miss Clifton—we'll

know how thick she and Pat are. We've got to bring them both to reason."

"And how?" Enid Farrow questioned.
"Well—" and Alice eyed them. "By going on strike! Yes, going on strike," she repeated vehemently. "Refusing to obey her. Refusing to carry out any orders she gives us until she jolly well resigns the captaincy. We're fed-up. We've stood too much from Pat Summers already, and it's about time we took action ourselves. If she can't get her prefects to hold together, then Miss Clifton will just have to ask her to resign."

The prefects looked startled. But it was plain that Alice was carrying them with her. Amy and Enid, already enlisted on her side, applauded. Leila Horrocks and Vera Dalton, wavering as usual, looked askance. They, of course, little guessed that Alice had more than mere spite behind this wish to see Pat deprived of the captaincy.

Lena Grange was not there. Lena, loyal to Pat, fully aware of Alice Smailes' own ambitions, refused definitely to come to any meeting which was called without Pat's consent.

Meantime, Pat, after shepherding the excited juniors into their own quarters, had gone to her study. She did not fear Alice Smailes—she had, in fact, almost forgotten Alice Smailes when she tripped into her own study, to find on the table a letter awaiting her.

She picked it up, her heart knowing a little leap as she recognised the handwriting of her father. She slit it open.

"This is just to wish you the very best of luck in the race on Wednesday," her father had written. "I cannot tell you, my dear, how I shall be looking forward to hearing the result. You have done so well so far that I am most hopeful for your future, dear, for you know how very much it means to me. . . ."

No farther Pat read. But she stiffened, the letter crumpled in her hand. Something seemed to rise in her throat suddenly.

Dear old daddy! What faith he had in her. He, too, was dependent upon her success as a motor-racing driver. To him as well as to her it could mean a future bright with prosperity.

And she had lost that chance!
Had she? No, no! She couldn't lose it—she mustn't lose it! Joshua Fingleton did not know the truth. Joshua Fingleton must be told. Last night he had been too distressed by Julie's plight to listen. This morning he had stamped off in cold anger. She must go to see him.

In sudden determination Pat went off to see Miss Clifton. Miss Clifton, understanding and kindly, willingly excused her lessons that morning.

From her Pat went to see Willie Prior, her admirer, the gardener's boy, and, borrowing his motor-bike, pushed off straight to the Ivydale track at once. She guessed she would find Joshua Fingleton in his office there.

She did. Rather bad-tempered, fishing through a mass of documents, he glared as he saw her.

"Why, you, Miss Summers?"
"Mr. Fingleton, I—I had to come to see you!" Pat got out. "Will you consider letting me race the Comet again. For my father's sake—he was your great friend—if not for my own—"

His lips set.
"You should have thought of that," he retorted acidly. "I am sorry, Miss Summers, I cannot listen. I made a bargain with you. You failed to carry out your part of it, and that is enough. Thanks to you my daughter is lying in hospital at death's door. In any case, I have definitely given Preedy your job, and Preedy will race for me on Wednesday. Close the door as you go out!"

Pat gazed at him hopelessly.
"But, Mr. Fingleton, you do not know—"
"Close the door!" the millionaire said flintily.

Pat quivered. Oh, what was the use? Down went the millionaire's head to his papers again. Miserably Pat trailed towards the door and went out, making her way along the corridor, with hard face.

She felt weak, ill. Some sort of giddiness was attacking her, making her head spin—which was not surprising after all she had

gone through yesterday and to-day. At the end of the corridor she just had to halt, leaning her head against the wall like a girl in the last stages of exhaustion. It was then that a voice came to her ears.

"And the Comet will win—easily!" It was the voice of Bert Preedy. "The best car in the race, Mr. Sayers."

"But the Comet, you understand, mustn't win!" a purring voice came back. "I look to you, Preedy!"

Pat stood still. Her dizziness suddenly became forgotten. Instinctively she flattened herself against the wall, holding her breath. Bert Preedy and Mr. Sayers—Mr. Sayers, as she knew, was Joshua Fingleton's great rival of the track.

She strained her ears. But, to her chagrin, the voices dropped; she heard only the shuffling of footsteps of the two men as they ambled off down the corridor. Pat knew a pang of disappointment. How she wished that she had heard more.

Was it a plot she had overheard? Was Bert Preedy planning deliberately to lose that race—her race, she thought furiously—so that Sayers' car would win.

Pat shook her head. She did not know. She had not heard enough. She thought for a moment of going back and telling Fingleton what she had heard; and then she shrugged. She had not actually heard Preedy agree to do anything, and, in any case, was it likely that Fingleton, his faith in her already shattered, would believe?

Listlessly she drifted out of the building. Rather thoughtfully she rode back towards Ivydale School, to be met by a crowd of juniors as she came in. A full forty or more were clustered round the gates. There was a shout as she slipped off the motor-bike.

"Pat—Pat!"
"Hallo, hallo!" Pat cried. "Now, what's the matter?"
"Alice—"

"Those mouldy prefects—"
"Wait a minute—one at a time!" Pat cried. "What's happened to the prefects? What's the fuss? Grace," she added, singling out Grace Campbell, "you speak for the rest. What does all this mean?"

Grace flushed a deep and indignant scarlet. A mutinous silence fell as she spoke:
"It means, Pat, that while you've been away Alice Smailes has been at work. She got all

the prefects on her side except Lena Grange, and they've presented a petition to Miss Clifton that you resign. If you don't resign they say they're going on strike!"

JULIE IS SORRY

"OH!" said Pat.
Just that. Nothing more. She was hardly surprised. She was not afraid. For many days now the strife between her and Alice had been bubbling. It was bound to break at last. She even smiled.

"Thanks!" she said. "I'll run along and see Miss Clifton right away."

"But, Pat, you won't let them make you resign?" Tessa Reeve broke out wildly.

"Leave it to me," Pat said. "Tessa, take this bike back to Willie Prior."

There was a cheer. How the Lower School adored its head girl! How they hated the scheming Alice and her cronies—Alice, who, it was plain to everyone, was simply making a hateful dead-set against Pat, who was doing her utmost to rob her of the position which she had so fairly won.

To the juniors it seemed that Pat had nothing but raw deal after raw deal. First that little beast of a Julie, now lying in hospital—she had been the cause of Joshua Fingleton getting up against Pat—then the high-handed action of Joshua Fingleton himself. Now this—

But Pat was confident. She had no fear of Alice Smailes. Straightway she went to Miss Clifton, to find that good lady looking very seriously disturbed. She flushed a little as Pat came in.

"Ah," she said, "Patricia! Ah—sit down, my dear. I—I was just going to send for you. I hate to have to say it, Patricia, but—"

"I know," Pat said quietly. "The prefects want me to resign. On what grounds?"

"Well—" Miss Clifton bit her lip. "On the grounds that you are opposed to them, Patricia. They say that you allow the juniors to have far too much of their own way. That you cancel their punishments, and humiliate them in front of the younger girls. They say that your motor-racing activities are interfering with your school duties to such an extent that you are neglecting them. It is all very distressing—"



Angrily Pat asked the prefects why they had not attended the meeting. "We're not obeying any orders from you, Pat Summers, until you decide to give up the captaincy," Alice said maliciously.

Pat nodded.

"However," Miss Clifton went on, "I have not accepted the—request, Patricia. But I must remind you, my dear, that your motor-racing interests must not be allowed to overshadow your duties as my head girl. I trust, Patricia, that you will be able to make your own peace with the prefects. As far as I am concerned, the whole matter will rest until it is brought up again."

"And have you told the prefects that, Miss Clifton?"

"Yes, I have told them, Patricia!"

Pat nodded, and thanked Miss Clifton. She rose. Well, she'd get this straightened out at once—and straight to the notice-board she went and wrote out a notice, requesting all prefects to attend a special meeting after lessons that afternoon.

In the meantime she went off to the school sanny to see Julie, to learn that there was very little change in her condition, and that most certainly, at the present, she could not be allowed to see visitors.

Lessons came. After lessons, Pat went to the recreation-room for the prefects' meeting. At half-past four Lena came in. But no one else. Five, ten minutes went by. At a quarter to five, Lena spoke.

"Well, Pat, it's obvious they mean to keep their threat. As you called the meeting, they refuse to obey."

Pat, with a grim and angry frown, went in search of Alice Smailes. She found her in her study, having tea with Amy Hemmingway and Enid Farrow. Rather angrily she stood in the doorway.

"I called a meeting," she said.

"Well, we know!" Alice scoffed.

"You didn't attend it!"

"Quite right," Alice nodded maliciously. "We're just carrying out the strike," she said. "We're not obeying any orders from you, Pat Summers, until you decide to give up the captaincy. Excuse us, won't you?"

Pat, her colour high, went out. Alice & Co. chuckled. Back Pat went to her own study, a really worried frown upon her brow now.

To a rather lonely tea she sat herself down, her eyes travelling to the calendar on the wall. The calendar was in the form of a racing-car, presented to her last term by Malcolm Cobb, the president of the Ivydale Racing-Drivers' Club.

Monday—Tuesday—the day after to-morrow the race in which she had hoped to score her third victory. Pat choked a little.

And then—

A knock at the door. It was the matron who appeared. She smiled at Pat.

"Miss Julie is better," she said. "She is no longer delirious. She wants to see you, Miss Summers. Says that she must see you. Will you come?"

Instantly Pat went. Julie, white-faced, very tired-looking, was sitting up in bed. She welcomed Pat with a wan smile, stretching out a white arm.

"Oh, Pat!" she cried.

"Julie!" Pat said.

"Pat, I had to see you!" Julie whispered. "I—I had to thank you! Pat, you saved my life"—she shuddered—"and you saved it after I had been such a hateful little beast to you! Pat, I'm sorry!" she added sincerely. "And I really and truly do mean it this time. When I get better, I'm going to try to make it up to you."

Pat smiled whimsically.

"So you don't hate me any more, Julie?"

"Oh, Pat, I—I simply love you!" Julie whispered. "But—" She paused. "Pat, tell me. Grace Campbell came to see me, and she's been telling me something. I don't understand. About my father—about his having taken the Comet, and appointed another driver. Pat, why did he do that?"

Pat bit her lip.

"Oh, Julie, don't you worry, your silly little head—"

"But Pat—please—yes; I must know!"

"Well, it—it was through you!" Pat smiled mistily, and then, while Julie listened with eyes widened with horror, she told. Julie quivered.

"And he did that because he accused you of neglecting me?" she cried. "Oh, Pat! When all the time it was my fault. When all the time I was doing the wrong things and

wouldn't listen to you. Pat, it was Alice who kidded me to go to Beachcliff woods—it was her all along the line that made me disobey you. She pretended to be my friend, Pat, and I sort of felt proud, and couldn't see that she was just using me to play her mean tricks against you!"

Pat's lips set.

"But now—" And Julie started up. "Oh, my goodness! Pat!" She waved her arm. "Pat, listen to me. We've got to put this right! Dad's blaming you. He doesn't realise all you've done for me. What a real brick you've been, what a little cat I've been. Pat, you're going to ride in that race on Wednesday, and you're going to have the Comet back! I can put the matter right, and I will! Pat, go and fetch my father now, please!"

"Oh, Julie!" Pat choked. "You mean it?"

"Every word," Julie assented. "Pat, please hurry!"

Pat rose. Happiness, joy seemed to flood through her whole frame. Her eyes were shining.

Off Pat sped to see Willie Prior again. Willie, shy with admiration, was only too willing to lend his bike again. Five minutes later Pat was charging along the road, her eyes sparkling, her face flushed, her hair streaming in the wind.

She was almost trembling when at last she reached the stadium again, and ran up the steps and along the corridor to Mr. Fingleton's room. She knocked.

No reply. She knocked again.

"Oh dear, I hope he's not out!" Pat muttered.

She listened. No reply.

Once more she raised her hand to knock, and then turned as footsteps sounded near. The pale blue eyes of Olga, Joshua's secretary, surveyed her. She shook her head.

"If you want Mr. Fingleton," she said, "I'm afraid you're going to be disappointed. He left not more than an hour ago on an urgent business call from the Continent, and won't be back until the week-end."

HE WAS RACING TO LOSE!

HOPES raised, only to be dashed again! With a sense of bitter disappointment, Pat went back to school. She had thought wildly of telephoning or wiring Joshua Fingleton, but even that was not possible, as the millionaire had left no address behind him.

What could she do now? Nothing!

Nothing—no! Pat had to force herself to accept that.

Bad luck—it was dreadfully bad luck! Especially as on Wednesday was one of the races which was to count in the series of six she must take part in before qualifying to race in the Grand Prix.

Still—and she tried to find comfort in that reflection—as soon as Joshua Fingleton came back—

Meantime there was this business of the prefects to attend to. Alice & Co. on strike meant that Pat had to shoulder all their work—reports, lesson-sheets, impositions. Oh, goodness knew what there wasn't to do!

Pat tackled it cheerfully, however, with the aid of Lena, and momentarily, at all events, Alice & Co. had drawn no crumbs of profit from their strike.

Wednesday dawned. Wednesday! Pat awoke with a sense of having missed something. As if to remind her more poignantly, after breakfast Grace, and Evelyn, and Thelma of the Fourth presented themselves.

Pat remembered then that she had promised to take them into the pits for her next race, as Wednesday was a school half-holiday. There would be no race now, but she felt she couldn't possibly disappoint them, and agreed if they would come along with her, that all four of them should watch the race from the pits.

After lunch, off they set, and arriving at the track, Pat made it her business to see Malcolm Cobb at once. He smiled when she made her request.

"In the pits? Why, of course," he said. "But tell the kids to be careful and keep out of the way. It's an honour, you know. You'd

like Jim Macé's pit, wouldn't you? That is where the Comet will pull in for petrol. How's that?"

Pat thanked him. She conveyed the tidings to her three admirers, setting them all scampering with excitement, and feeling really as impatient as all the mechanics and drivers who were now thronging the course.

They arrived at the pit to be greeted with a beaming smile from Jim Walsh, with a cordial handshake from Jimmy Mace. Jimmy looked down his nose.

"A good race," he said. "I'm sorry, Miss Summers, you're not driving the old Comet. It would be just a walk-over for you. It's just the race for you. Begging your pardon, of course, there are no crack drivers in this."

Pat grinned and tried to look cheerful. She felt, somehow, she didn't want to talk about things then. The old racing fever was beginning to creep into her veins. The crowds, the busy mechanics, the cars now lining up at the starting-point; the very smell of petrol and sticky oil was all a thrill to her.

Eagerly, longingly, she was staring at the starting-point, almost on tenterhooks of impatience to see the dear old Comet again.

It came, Bert Preedy, in new overalls, striding jauntily behind it.

Something like a sob escaped Pat's throat. The Comet! The Comet—there it stood, glittering, shining, and almost human thing to Pat. A thing which, in her imagination, even answered the bright, and rather tremulous smile she gave it!

"Look, they're getting in," Grace thrilled. "Oh, Pat, isn't this lovely?"

Pat did not reply. All eyes, all concentration was upon the Comet. For Pat there was no other car in that race. It looked easily the best of the twenty which were now lining up, and in which the drivers were climbing, adjusting their goggles as they took their places at the wheels. If only—

But she wasn't driving, so—well, she wished Preedy luck. She wished the Comet luck!

"They're off!" shrieked Thelma Wayne.

The starting-flag dropped. Pat strained forward, her eyes wide, her face white with excitement now. What a thunderous roar from the crowd; a thunder of belching exhausts, and the whole twenty shot away in single line. Then—

"Oh, Comet, Comet!" called Pat.

There it was leaping ahead on the straight. But there—ah, that was bad! Why didn't Preedy take the bank high up?

Silly! He was losing ground.

"Comet!" shrieked Pat, unconscious to everything around her except the gleaming red car.

No doubt that Preedy lost ground at that bend, but he still had the lead. Now he was racing along the straight. Oh, what a fine, what a superb thing the Comet was! How easily, how gracefully it moved along!

Now the next bend.

"Take it high up!" was Pat's whisper, but again Preedy kept low. More ground lost. Then, on the straight—what was this?

Pat stared. Preedy was allowing himself to be overhauled. Yes, and overhauled by the Alvis.

Up came the Alvis, passing him. What was the matter with the man? The Comet could do better than that—heaps better.

"Preedy's fooling!" said Jimmy Walsh. "He's not handling the car!"

Pat blinked. Next bend. Surely Preedy would make up. But Preedy didn't. Preedy seemed to be going slower than ever.

Jimmy Walsh's eyes narrowed.

"Say, there's nothing wrong with that bus. What's Preedy up to?"

Still the Comet fell behind. It was no race. Preedy was a good lap behind now, with three cars in front of him. He wasn't trying! If the man had been trying to lose he could not have driven more carelessly. And as that thought crossed her mind, Pat jerked upright.

That conversation she had overheard between Preedy and Sayers! Pat's face turned red, then white. She found her hands clenching. For she knew now—yes, she knew.

Preedy was out to lose this race! And Preedy was losing it—deliberately.

Two laps behind, then three!

(Please turn to the back page.)

The Happy-go-Lucky Hikers



THE NEWCOMER

FINISHED!" With a cheer, Wendy Topham pulled a sheet of paper from her typewriter and jumped up from her chair. Her two friends, Fay and Jill, cheered, too.

It was the last task of the morning—and this was Saturday morning.

Work was over for the week! Saturday afternoon and Sunday was theirs, in which to do as they pleased!

And all three—Wendy, Fay, and plump Jill—knew just what they wanted to do.

"Finished!" said Wendy again. "And in less than ten minutes I'll be in full hiking war-paint! You two had better get changed into shorts and blouses."

"I've got some new shorts," said Fay, "and a new blouse, with zip fastening."

"Well, buck up and jump into them, Fay," said Wendy. "You're always last; and we want to get to the top of Slan Peak, remember, and down again before dark."

Wendy looked across at another girl—the only one left in the typing-room, apart from their own little crowd. The girl had looked up suddenly as Wendy mentioned Slan Peak, had stopped typing, and seemed startled.

"Hallo! Do you know it, Millicent?" Wendy asked.

"Know Slan Peak?" said Millicent Wray shyly. "I—I don't think I do, really, but the name seemed familiar, somehow."

Millicent was the new girl of the typing-room, the latest employee on the staff of Messrs. Sternham and Harchley, manufacturers of electrical fittings, and she had rather kept to herself.

But Wendy, ever eager to be friends with everyone, had tried to draw her out, to make her feel at home; and now a sudden idea came. As president of the hiking club, she could ask a guest, if she pleased.

"I say, if you haven't anything to do this afternoon, why not join us?" Wendy said. "We're going hiking, you know."

"It's nice of you to ask me, but I don't think I should like hiking," she said. "It's dangerous, and I—"

She gave a slight shiver.

Wendy was sympathetic at once, but she was quick to assure Millicent that hiking was not dangerous, but wonderfully good fun.

"Do join!" she urged. "We call ourselves a hiking club, and we could do with more members. I want a party of twenty, at least. It would be grand fun. If you join, and like it, then others will join, too."

But Millicent shook her head shyly and said that she hadn't the right clothes. Even when

Fay offered to let her have some—for now, with the new outfit, she had spares—Millicent was not tempted.

Wendy gave it up, for the moment, and went off to change into her own hiking clothes.

When she entered the typing-room again she found Millicent with a spot of unusual colour in her cheeks, and her eyes shining. She was animated, excited, and Wendy stood amazed by the transformation.

"Hallo! What's happened?" she asked.

"Millicent is coming, after all!" said Fay eagerly.

"Hurrah!" said Wendy, in delight. "So you talked her round?"

"No, we just described the scenery near Slan Peak," said Jill, faintly surprised, "and she suddenly decided to come."

"It worked like magic," said Fay.

Wendy was puzzled, for Millicent was really excited and eager. If her mood had been changed by Fay's word-pictures of Slan Peak, then Fay had unsuspected powers of description.

"It struck a chord," said Millicent, flushing slightly, as though she felt guilty.

It was a strange phrase, and Wendy was vaguely puzzled.

"Struck a chord? You mean you think you remember it?" Wendy asked. "You have been there?"

Millicent turned away, reddening. "I should know if I had been there," she said, rather gruffly. "I—I like the sound of it, that's all. I'd rather like to see the place."

Wendy had no intention of prying. If Millicent had a secret reason for wanting to go to the place, or if something lay behind that "struck a chord" phrase, Wendy did not consider it her affair. But she would be glad of Millicent's company.

"Right. Fay will let you have some kit; we'll get a few more things to eat, and then we must start. The train leaves at one-twenty-five, and it'll mean a rush to the station."

Millicent changed, and she was a new girl, not only in clothes, but in spirit, too, after

Gaunt and forbidding, the Spike reared its peak to the thundery sky. What secret did it hold? And why was the new member of the hiking club so desperately anxious to climb it?

THIS WEEK:

THE GIRL WHO IGNORED DANGER

By
ELIZABETH CHESTER

that. Her shyness vanished; she was eager, thrilled, impatient to be started, and no longer seemed wrapped up in herself.

"It calls me," she murmured to herself. "I must go there. I can see it all clearly. Either I have dreamed of it or I have been there before. And I must know!"

She said that half to herself, half-aloud, as she stood with Wendy, Fay, and Jill, waiting for the train and when the train came, she was the first to climb into it!

WELL, here we are! Is it as good as Fay said?" asked Wendy.

They had walked from the station, from the lonely halt of Barvidale, where they had been the only passengers to alight from the train.

Well-loaded rucksacks on their backs, sticks in hand, they had walked, chattering and laughing, over the springing grass towards the high peaks. There had been low stone walls to climb, ditches to negotiate, but it had been all the more fun when their path had not been easy.

"You recognise it?" asked Wendy, pausing for breath half-way up a rise.

"Not yet," said Millicent, frowning, "and yet I feel that it is right. I feel I am on my way—"

She hurried ahead of Wendy, and then, from the top of the mound, gave an excited yell.

"Yes—yes," she cried wildly. "There it is—look!"

Wendy was at her side in a moment, and looked in the direction of Millicent's pointing.

"That's not Slan Peak. That's the Spike!" she exclaimed.

"The Spike!" echoed Millicent shakily. "I know it—we've got to climb it! At the top there is—there is— Oh, if I could only remember! But I must go there! I must climb the Spike!"

Wendy gave a little gasp at that, and then laughed.

"Climb the Spike!" she exclaimed. "It's not possible! At least, it has been climbed. But it's dangerous. Too loose and treacherous. My goodness! And you're the girl who called hiking dangerous! No wonder!"

Jill, panting, arrived on the scene. "How about a stop for tea?" she asked eagerly.

"Stop?" said Millicent, shaking her head. "No, no; we must go on! We must climb the Spike!"

Jill whistled. "What that high peak? It's like a church steeple," she said. "We can't climb that!" "Phew! I should say not," added Fay. "We should slip; and I've got my new shorts on. And you're not to climb it, either, in my old ones, Millicent."

Millicent's manner changed. Her eyes flashed. "Who are you to tell me what I shall do?" she demanded.

Wendy tried to soothe her. "Whoa!" she said, smiling. "No need for argument. I'll take you the nearest way to it, and then you'll see. It just isn't safe, is it, Fay?"

"Of course not," said Fay, quite crossly. "There are heaps of other small peaks to climb."

"I am going to climb the Spike," said Millicent fiercely.

Wendy frowned at her in surprise. Millicent, the weak, shy, withdrawing, was now firm and dominant. She was obstinate; with a peculiar pig-headedness that was likely to cause strife.

"Millicent won't want to climb it when she sees it close to," murmured Wendy. "But, anyway, she can't go climbing it alone."

"No?" said Millicent. "And why not, if I want to?"

Wendy reasoned with her. "Don't you realise that a slip might mean a really bad fall? Suppose you broke a leg, or even only twisted an ankle so that you could not walk? You might lie there for hours—for days, unless someone knew where you were."

Millicent set her chin stubbornly. "I have my reason. I have a very good reason for wanting to go there," she said. "You know I am going, so if I don't return, you can come and see what has happened."

Fay gave a slight sniff. "Thanks!" she said. "And we can carry you home. It would just about ruin our hiking club if we had a nasty accident. My mother would say it was dangerous."

"And so it is," mused Millicent. "But I have a reason. The Spike holds a secret—and only the Spike can tell it."

Millicent did not argue further. She turned, and went hurrying in a beeline towards the Spike, leaving the three other hikers behind.

Wendy looked worriedly at Jill and Fay. "And she shan't climb the Spike—even if we have to take her shoes off, and socks, too. Anyway, come on! Let's keep her in sight," Wendy said grimly; and the other two nodded.

For a moment or two Fay was dispirited, and Jill annoyed by the attitude that Millicent had taken; but they soon cheered up.

Hiking was such good fun; the air was so fresh, and they felt so well that they just couldn't have remained depressed for long.

Soon they were chanting songs as they went along; but Millicent, with set purpose in her mind, strode ahead, and did not take part.

And the nearer they drew to that forbidding, jagged mound rearing up from the earth, the lighter their hearts became. For it seemed pretty certain that not even Millicent's determination could last in face of that terrific obstacle. It was practically unclimbable, and those who had tried—But Wendy had kept to herself the grim fate of those who had tried to climb the Spike and failed. Not one had escaped without serious injury.

"Tea as soon as we stop?" asked Jill eagerly.

"When you've lost a pound," teased Fay; for Jill was supposed to be hiking partly to reduce her weight.

"I've lost two this afternoon already," said Jill. "And look at that nasty green mark on the back of your shorts."

Fay stopped in horror, and looked. She

turned like a dog chasing its tail, until she became quite giddy.

"I can't see it," she said.

Jill giggled and dodged.

"Not on those shorts—on the pair Millicent's wearing," she said.

Fay heaved a sigh of relief, and was, in fact, so relieved that she did not feel the slightest tinge of annoyance at being fooled. Fay would rather have been hurt herself than have her clothes damaged. In fact, she was as obsessed by her clothes as Jill was with her plump figure.

"Whoa, Fay!" said Wendy suddenly. "You're being watched. That shepherd must think you're slightly dotty."

An old shepherd was watching them from a hundred yards away, and, as she saw him, Fay gave a start.

"Golly, I'd better do something frightfully sensible!" she said anxiously.

"Just mimic whatever I do," said Jill solemnly. "Then he'll really think you're all right, Fay. But don't do anything on your own."

Before Fay could make a suitable retort they were all silenced, for the shepherd called to them.

"Better go," said Wendy. "Anyway, he's coming towards us. He may have lost some sheep, or something."

But the old man was thinking of their safety as it happened.

"Where be going?" he asked, when they were a few yards apart.

"To the Spike," said Wendy.

"The Spike!" he exclaimed, his eyes rounding. "You bain't be goin' to climb t' Spike?"

Wendy shook her head and smiled.

"We're not quite so silly," she said.

"Although we have one girl with us who really wants to do that. I wish you could make her understand that it's dangerous."

He looked instantly at Fay.

"Don't you go for to climb t' Spike," he said urgently. "Mind you of poor Elsa MacClean as was never heard of no more. She climbed t' Spike, and t'ould bottomless pool at top knows the rest."

Wendy & Co. stood hushed.

"A girl did climb it, then?" asked Wendy, aghast.

"Ay, and got to top," said the shepherd. "More's pity, and she was never heard of more. For weeks we search all ways. But never a sign of Elsa was seen again; and there's others have broken legs and heads, they have, trying to climb t' Spike. Have a care."

Wendy shivered.

"We'll certainly have a care," she said. "We've no intention of climbing the Spike—no thanks!"

She turned towards the Spike. Millicent was now some way ahead of them, and on her way to the promontory she had vowed to climb! If she were to be prevented from risking her life Wendy had to act quickly.

"And look at t' sky," said the shepherd, turning.

Wendy looked, and saw a black cloud sweeping across with the wind. Rain!

The shepherd hurried up the slope, whistling his dog, and Wendy, Jill, and Fay, in dismay, studied the sky.

A stillness had suddenly marred the afternoon, and before they had been walking another ten minutes the sky became a leaden blue, and the colour of grass and trees was changed to a darker green.

"Thunder in the air," murmured Wendy.

"We'd better look about us for shelter!"

"Thunder—hide everything silver you have!" gasped Fay. "I do hope we shan't be struck by lightning."

"Who doesn't?" asked Jill. "But we shan't be struck unless we're under a tree—"

"Yes—no sheltering under trees, however hard the rain comes down," warned Wendy.

"It's dangerous! But as to shelter, let me think—"

Wendy had been here before, had spent a week in the summer roaming over this lonely, wild country, and she remembered that there was a house not so far away, about half a mile, hidden from their present view, but with a large barn near by where they could be out of the rain.

"It's nearer than the shed at the foot of the Spike," she decided. "And rain isn't far off. Better make for there."

"And have tea there," nodded Jill. "I think it's grand being in shelter, and having tea, when the thunder's roaring and lightning is flashing."

Fay shivered and said nothing. She was afraid of lightning, and always shut the windows in the house and hid the silver and wrapped mirrors up with cloth.

To be on the safe side now, she wrapped her watch in a hanky.

"I'll call Millicent back," said Wendy.

"She's got rather far ahead."

She ran forward; but there came no reply.

"Millicent!" she called. "Coooo-ooooee!"

"I'm making for the Spike!" Millicent cried at last.

Wendy set her lips and turned back. The wind was rising, and just beyond the Spike trailing mist wound to the earth. Rain!

"The obstinate young duffer!" she muttered. "I wonder what there is about the Spike that's so important?"

She turned back to Jill and Fay then, and thought quickly. Wendy was a girl ever ready to take responsibility, and there was no one better suited than she to be the leader.

Many a girl might have shrugged her shoulders and left the obstinate Millicent to do as she pleased. But Wendy could not behave in that way. She could have had no peace of mind leaving a girl to face the perils of the Spike.

"Fay—Jill!" she called. "All right! You two go on. I'll go after Millicent to make her change her mind."

Jill looked at the sky, at the jagged Spike ahead, and shivered.

"If you want me I'll come, too, Wendy," she said.

"No," said Wendy; "you go ahead. I'll deal with Millicent."

She saw the mists of rain drifting nearer; the flashes of lightning become more frequent, more vivid; the thunder's roar was more than ever like the guns of war, and seemed to shiver the ground. Its terrifying sound re-echoed from the hills around, and the whole world became leaden grey between those blinding flashes.

"Come on, Jill, run!" panted Fay.

They ran, pulling on their macintosh capes as they did so. But Wendy ran in the opposite direction, in pursuit of Millicent.

Millicent, as she looked back and saw Wendy running, ran, too. She might never have a chance again to climb the Spike. And she had to climb! Her reason, which she was determined not to divulge, was to Millicent the most urgent and the most important thing in the world.

NOTHING WILL STOP MILLICENT

DOWN came the rain. It came in driving sheets, blinding, fierce, stinging. When it came Millicent was almost at the foot of the Spike, and Wendy but a short distance behind her.

With rain falling so fiercely no girl could climb the Spike; but Wendy did not turn back. For if the rain stopped, then Millicent would make the climb. Sodden with rain, the earth round the Spike would be more perilous, more treacherous than ever.

The hut was only a hundred yards ahead, and, yelling to Millicent, Wendy made for it, ducking her head against the stinging rain, slipping now and then on the grass.

Millicent turned, and, with a nod of agreement, made for the hut, which a flash of lightning showed in vivid clarity.

"Let's wait here," she said. "And then climb—"

Wendy went into the dingy hut where ropes and other rescue tackle were stored, and dragged Millicent with her.

"You are not climbing the Spike," she said. "Look at it now—through this window—"

Millicent stared up at it. It was a steep slope, jagged, rocky, uncertain in form and surface. There was no telling which foothold would be safe and which a mere death-trap. Even trained climbers could hardly have surmounted it save at risk of their lives.

But Millicent's eyes shone, and she passed a

hand across her forehead as though concentrating hard.

"I must climb it; I must solve the mystery of the Spike," she said tensely. "You shall come with me. We can be roped together—"

Wendy looked at the rope. She had no intention of climbing the Spike, nor of allowing Millicent to do so; but mere words would have no power to dissuade the obstinate girl. To imprison Millicent in the hut—perhaps to tie her with the rope—

It was a desperate plan, and Wendy recoiled from it. Yet desperate measures were needed.

"Where are the others?" asked Millicent.

"Gone for shelter—and we'd better go after them. This rain will keep on; it's not the afternoon for climbing," argued Wendy.

"The rain will stop," said Millicent stubbornly. "And for goodness' sake," she added, with sudden anger, "stop trying to bully me. I'm not a kid. I'm as old as you are, and I can do what I want. I haven't even any parents, no relations. I—I'm an orphan, and I can do as I like."

She gulped, and Wendy gave her a quick, startled look.

"No relations! Millicent, I didn't know you were so lonely—"

Millicent drew up proudly.

"I'm not lonely," she said, "and I don't want pity. I can climb the Spike. I've climbed it before. I can tell you what's at the top! You don't know. No one knows—"

Wendy knit her brows, intrigued, puzzled.

"Well, what is on the top?" she asked.

"Find out! Come with me and find out! But you're afraid!"

"Afraid?" retorted Wendy sharply, going pink. "I'm not afraid, but I'm not a complete idiot. Listen to the rain—to the thunder. Is this a day for climbing? And I tell you the Spike is dangerous. A shepherd has just warned us."

Millicent laughed mockingly.

"President of the hiking club, and afraid to climb," she said, in scorn. "That's a joke for the office. You, the leader—scared by a little thing like the Spike!"

Wendy was torn between pride and her sense of duty.

"If I give way and let her taunt me into climbing—I'm a coward," she told herself. "A moral coward. If I don't climb—and she does, then plenty will say I'm just an ordinary coward."

"Well?" said Millicent. "Are you coming with me, or shall I go alone?"

The rain spattered on the shed roof. Now and again the inside was made vivid by the lightning. But the rain was lessening. Soon it would stop completely.

"I'll go outside and see—take a closer look," said Wendy.

With that, she jumped out of the shed, and slammed the door to. The door had a heavy bolt, to keep it shut against the wind, and to prevent animals from straying in and perhaps damaging the tackle.

Wendy slipped the bolt home.

"Let me out, Wendy! You've no right—Let me out, I say!"

Millicent hammered on the panels, but Wendy turned away, and ducking her head to the wind, ran. She knew that Millicent had her tea ration in the rucksack; she would not go hungry. And in a short time she, Fay, and Jill could return to fetch her. The three of them could persuade her not to climb the Spike, persuade her by dragging her from the spot.

But before Wendy was half-way to the lonely house where Fay and Jill had gone, Millicent, with the aid of a stout iron crowbar, had burst open the door. And now, with no one to hinder her, she tackled the treacherous, jagged Spike.

WHEN THE STORM CLEARED

FAY and Jill protected by their macintosh capes, reached the lonely house dry, save for their legs and shoes.

The house was surrounded by a low stone wall, and just a short distance from it was a substantially built barn. Like the house, it was constructed of stone blocks, and seemed likely to be able to weather the roughest storm.

The rain hissed down, and Jill and Fay

splashed to the barn through swampy ground, and then pulled up inside and hurled off their macintoshes.

"Is this good?" asked Fay, her eyes shining, her cheeks pink and rain glistening. "What about some tea, Jill? You go to the house and get some water. I'll light the stove."

"Afraid of the lightning?" asked Jill, with a smile.

She took the canvas bucket from her rucksack, and then, wrapping herself in the macintosh, went towards the house.

The darkness brought by the storm was so intense that lamps had been lighted in the house, and Jill, as she walked through the gateway, saw an old woman tending a lamp on the table.

In a wheel-chair by the fire sat a white-haired man, staring into space.

There was something strange and fixed about his attitude. He did not seem to be reading; he was not asleep, as the restless movement of his hands showed. Yet he sat very stiffly still, as though day-dreaming, or very deep in thought.



"Let him think you are Elsa!" the woman begged Jill. Jill drew back, unwilling to play such a part. But what could be the reason for the strange request?

So intently did Jill stare that she took his attention.

He looked up, craned forward, peering at her, and then suddenly, to her amazement, sprang to his feet. Next he took a step to the window, but stopped short.

Jill, embarrassed, had a mind to turn and run; but before she could make up her mind to do so, the door of the house was opened by the woman.

The woman was old, quite sixty, Jill decided, and the way that she craned her head forward, and fingered her glasses, showed that her sight was poor.

"You—can it be you, Elsa?" she whispered.

Jill moved forward, puzzled and anxious, surprised that her casual visit should have caused so much astonishment.

"It is Elsa, it is!" cried the man's voice from the living-room. "My Elsa—"

"Elsa—" echoed Jill. "Oh, no; I—"

She had reached the doorway, and the old woman stepped forward peered closely, and stiffened.

"Ah, no; you are not Elsa!" she said huskily in a shaky tone. "I feared not. Miracles cannot happen. Elsa is gone for ever—"

"Bring her in—why are you waiting? Bring Elsa in!" called the man.

Jill had quick wit enough to know that she had been mistaken for someone else, and that

the woman at last had realised the error. But the man had not!

"My name is Jill," she said, with a deprecatory smile.

The woman took her arm, and cast a look back into the lonely house.

"For a while pretend—let him think you are his Elsa. The shock will be bad if he finds out suddenly. I will break it gently. His sight is not good."

Jill drew back, unwilling to deceive, and play such a strange part; but now the man was in the hall. He was not nearly as old as she had thought, for his hair had whitened prematurely. In fact, he was little more than fifty years of age.

But he looked a good deal older, his face lined, and sad. With hands outstretched, he approached Jill, and all the care seemed to lift from him, the tired perplexity went from his dim eyes.

"Elsa, I have waited so long. Where have you been?" he cried. "You went in a storm, and the storm has brought you back—"

And then in a flash the name took on new meaning to Jill. She remembered the shepherd, his warning, and the story he had told of the girl lost on the Spike.

"The Spike!" she gasped.

"The Spike—yes, the Spike," he said. "I was going there when the storm broke—to find you, Elsa, and here you are!"

Tears were in his eyes as he stepped forward to embrace her; but, of a sudden, he pulled up, and a spasm crossed his face.

His hand clutched the region of his heart, and at once the old woman went to him. Jill stood back, pale and anxious, not knowing what to do, and wishing that Wendy were there.

"Elsa," said the woman, grimacing meaningfully at Jill, "go up and take off your things. Your father will be waiting by the fire. His heart is bad since he had the shock. The medicine will put him right in a moment."

She persuaded him into the living-room, and he sat down in his chair, pale and gasping. But more Jill did not see, for the door was pushed to.

For a moment she stood there, pale and shaken. Then she turned, and ran from the house.

She ran out, and almost bumped into Wendy who was just arriving, having

THE SCHOOLGIRL SPEED STAR

(Continued from page 20.)

trotted all the way from the Spike, guided by her wonderful sense of direction over the fields.

"Why, great goodness, what's wrong?" said Wendy.

Jill told her everything, and Fay, hearing, gave a squeal.

"And Millicent's gone to climb the Spike!" she said in horror.

"But what am I to do?" asked Jill wretchedly. "He thinks I'm Elsa, and when he finds out I'm not— You see, his heart is bad. It would be a fearful shock. But how can I pretend to be Elsa when I'm not?"

Wendy was silent, thinking, anxious, and perplexed.

"There's some fascination about that Spike," she said. "Millicent is crazy about climbing it. She says she's seen it in dreams; has climbed it before—"

"This Elsa climbed it—got right to the top," shivered Jill. "She must have been a tough climber—"

"But Millicent isn't Elsa," remarked Fay. "She couldn't do it."

Wendy gave a sudden start; she stiffened, and went quite pale. Then suddenly, for no reason that they could understand, she rushed from the barn.

"Where on earth has she gone?" quavered Fay.

"She's gone to the house," said Jill, amazed.

Wendy was already at the door of the house. As it was open she walked boldly in, and called out.

"Hallo, there!" she called.

The old woman opened the door, peered closely, and then more closely in surprise.

"You are not Jill?" she exclaimed.

"I am her friend," Wendy said quickly.

"I've heard about Elsa, and an idea has struck me—a startling idea. Have you a picture of Elsa?"

The woman returned to the living-room, and a moment later reappeared with a large framed photograph in her hand.

Wendy took it, trembling with excitement.

For the face portrayed in this photograph of the missing Elsa was Millicent's.

HEEDLESS of the driving rain, oblivious as they could be of the flashing lightning and the shattering thunder, Wendy, Jill and Fay pushed towards the Spike.

The rain had stopped and started again; now once more it eased, and they could see clearly ahead.

The Spike, gaunt and sinister, rose from the ground a mighty tower of rock and earth, as though it were the spire of some buried age-old church, with a bump of earth behind that might well have been the nave.

"Suppose she has climbed it again," said Jill in awe.

"She's in the shed," Wendy insisted.

She hurried ahead, reached the shed, and then pulled up short as she saw the door wide open, and the bolt broken. There was no need to look inside.

At the same moment Fay called out in horror, and pointed upwards at the Spike.

"There she is!"

"Millicent—Elsa!" cried Wendy, cupping her hands to form a megaphone. "For goodness' sake! Steady! Elsa—"

But the climber did not look back. She was only half-way up, and found that the secret path was not so safe. Earth came showering down as she tried to gain a foothold. If she slipped nothing could save her.

That Millicent and Elsa were one and the same girl Wendy, Jill, and Fay could not for a moment doubt. Millicent's strange "chords of memory" were explained. Mention of the Spike had struck a chord; the sight of the place had fired her with desire to climb it.

And now Wendy knew why.

"She's climbing to find the past—to find out what she forgot when she had an accident there two years ago—her memory," she said huskily.

"She knows that that is as far back as she can remember—the Spike," nodded Jill.

Wendy rushed forward suddenly.

"Get the rope and tackle from the shed," she called. "I'm going up there!"

Jill and Fay hesitated only a moment, and then, anxious, fully aware of the danger though they were, they rallied round. With ropes and stout grappling-hooks and sticks they went after Wendy.

Suddenly Millicent gave a wild scream, slipped, and fell. She rolled, clutched wildly, and then, hanging half across a ledge, remained poised, motionless.

Wendy looked up, then, pale-faced and grim, fixed the rope about herself, and, using the climbing-irons, went cautiously up the face of the dread Spike.

Wendy's heart was in her mouth; but her nerves were calm, her movements deliberate. A cool head was needed above all in this daring climb, and Wendy, who loved climbing, did not panic just because of the danger.

The rain stopped. The storm passed over before they were even half-way to Elsa, and when at last, at risk of their lives, they reached her they found that she was quite unconscious, a large bruise on her forehead.

Wendy had put her bottle of smelling-salts in a handy pocket of her belt, and now set about reviving the injured girl.

"Elsa—Elsa!" she said.

The girl gave a start and blinked her eyes.

The shock of hearing herself called by that name seemed to act as a spur to her brain.

"Elsa—Elsa!" She clasped her forehead and sat up. "I am Elsa—I—"

"Steady, Millicent—you are really Elsa," said Wendy softly. "Your father is waiting for you. Can you help yourself on the way down if we rope you to us?"

Elsa looked at Wendy wide-eyed.

"The Spike saved me," she whispered. "I knew I should find the past again if I climbed it, but until you mentioned it in the office I had forgotten its name—I thought it was only a place I dreamed about. Fay described it, and I knew it really. I came here to remember—and now I know. I am Elsa MacClean, I remember. And I remember the safe path—the way up and down. I couldn't find it before, but now—"

And by that safe path they went down, slowly, with difficulty, and yet with only half the difficulty that had attended the upward climb.

IT was a happy party that was held in the once-lonely house. Elsa was rejoined to her father. The three chums learned that he was only staying at this cottage—as he had been ever since the day when, on holiday together, Elsa had gone climbing, but had failed to return.

How she had wandered off she did not herself remember, but eventually she had found herself in the Midland town where the hikers lived and worked. In some odd way she was convinced that her name was Millicent Wray, that she was an orphan, and had lived in Canada. Now, with returning memory, she realised that Millicent Wray was a character in a story she had read just before the accident on the Spike had cost her her memory!

And she had believed herself to be that person, had obtained work as a typist, and lived in digs alone—yet obsessed with the idea that there was some odd mystery about her past and haunted by the dream of the Spike.

Her father became a younger man again, gay, happy, and it proved that he had a flourishing business in an East Coast town—which he had neglected since the tragedy, although his son, Elsa's brother, had successfully managed it.

"Stay the night," he urged the hikers. "There is room enough here and food enough, and on the morrow we will all go for a tramp. I know every inch of this country—but no peak-climbing!"

"No peak-climbing!" they promised. But there was no need for it. On the morrow, one of the sunniest, fairest days of the year, they hiked over the moors with happy Elsa and her even happier father, picnicked in lovely but lonely places, fished, and were as far from the cares of office life as if they had been in mid Africa!

There will be another delightful story featuring Wendy & Co. in next Friday's **GIRLS' CRYSTAL**. Don't miss it.

Pat clenched her teeth. If she were there—if only she were there! Preedy went by, waving a signal that he would stop on the next lap. No need for that, thought Pat; the Comet must have plenty of petrol yet.

"Jim?" Pat said suddenly. "What's the matter with the Comet?"

"Nothing," Jim said. "Just nothing. I looked her over just before the race. Can't make out," he muttered, "why she should wait more juice."

Pat had no more doubts. It was all clear to her now. Bert Preedy did mean to lose this race—he was deliberately driving slowly—deliberately wasting as much time as he could.

Indignation swelled in Pat's heart. How dare he behave so unsportingly! To lose a race was one thing—but to do it on purpose, and in a car which had a grand reputation to live up to—that was despicable.

Oh, if only she were driving the Comet herself.

Pat's eyes flickered. There and then she made up her mind. Not if she knew it should that race be lost.

She turned to Grace.

"Grace," she said quickly.

"Yes, Pat?"

"When the driver of that car comes in to the pits, I want you to talk to him. Take his mind off the car somehow."

"Yes, Pat, but—"

"Never mind," Pat said tensely.

She braced herself. She wished now she had her overalls and not her schoolgirl uniform on. Still, never mind.

She caught a sidelong glance from Jim Walsh, who had overheard that conversation—a curious, admiring look—as though Jim guessed the intention in her mind and thoroughly applauded it.

She was holding her breath when finally Preedy came round again, grinning from the cockpit of the car. In the most leisurely way he climbed out.

"More juice," he said, and looked at Pat, scowled, and then grinned. "Hallo, what's this?" he asked, as he saw the three Fourth Formers. "A Sunday-school treat?"

Grace, with a glance at Pat, rose to the occasion, eager to carry out Pat's wishes.

"Oh, no, we've been watching the Comet!" she said with an admiring smile. "We think you're a wonderful driver, Mr. Preedy, and—"

Grace paused—"I wonder," she said, "have you time? I've got my autograph album here, and I'd love you to sign it."

She winked at Pat as she said that. Pat clenched her hands.

Preedy, who wanted nothing better than to waste time, moved over towards Grace, while Jim Walsh filled up the Comet. Very leisurely Preedy took the pencil, leisurely began to write.

A quick look passed from Jim to Pat.

"O.K., Miss Summers," Jim said.

It was enough. One glance Pat gave the loitering Preedy, then, with a bound, dressed all in her Ivydale uniform as she was, she leaped forward. One lithe vault took her into the cockpit. In a flash her hand went on the wheel, her feet on the pedals.

Too late, Preedy turned.

"Hi! Hi!" he shouted. "Hi, Pat Summers, come out of that—"

But Pat did not hear. The Comet was in gear then. She turned. She saw Preedy, white-faced, waving his arms, leap on to the track. Then—swoosh—she was away, thundering down the straight, desperate in the knowledge that she had over three laps to make up.

Could she do it? Could she?

Can Pat possibly make up the tremendous distance that the Comet has lost through Preedy? Even if Pat does—what will be the result? Don't miss the next enthralling chapters of this splendid school and motor-racing serial.