

The Schoolgirl Speed Star - DON'T MISS THIS FINE STORY INSIDE

GIRLS' CRYSTAL

WEEKLY

No. 99. Vol. 4.

EVERY FRIDAY.

Week Ending September 11th, 1937.

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**"LOOK, REMUS—THOSE
EYES MOVED!"**

*A dramatic incident from the enthralling
serial "Kennel-Maid at Phantom Abbey"
—inside.*

Penelope's Page

Penelope is devoting part of her page this week to the Knitting Competition that appears in this number. Are you going to try for one of the fine prizes?

HALLO, EVERYBODY!—Don't you love writing letters on holiday? I do.

Here I am, perched on the old sea wall in North Devon, and enjoying myself thoroughly—just writing to you.

Although I'm having a latish holiday this year, I'm having a grand time.

In North Devon, the sea is the Atlantic Ocean itself, you know—and golly, can it be cold?

I've decided, though, that the water is warmer in September than at any other time during the year. Mind you, it's not like stepping into a hot bath, by any means. But it's bracingly, without being biting, cold.

My friend Nora and I are staying at a ripping little cottage just by the sea.

There's no electric light—not that we've missed it, for the evenings are so fine—and we go to bed by candle.

Going to bed, by the way, is a real adventure. I've never slept on a feather bed before. The first night I sank so deeply into its softness that I thought I was going right through the bed and would land up on the floor!

We also have a darling little sitting-room of our own, where we have all our meals.

NORA'S RIDDLE

My friend Nora loves making up riddles. I've often tried to do this, but I've never succeeded, somehow.

On our way from Minthead by motor coach, she suddenly turned to me.

"Penelope, what is it that begins where it leaves off?" she said.

Very baffling!

I tried several bright retorts, but they weren't right.

"Give it up, Nora," I said at last.

"The speed limit sign!" she chuckled.

I confess I had to think about this a moment or two. Then I saw it.

You know those speed-limit posts. They have the no-limit sign on one side and the 30 miles an hour on the other. So whichever way you're going along the road, and you come to one of these signs, the speed limit does begin where the no-speed limit leaves off.

You ask your father or big brother that one. I think they'll appreciate it.

We've done quite a lot of walking already, too. Our first trip was to the famous Watersmeet. We hadn't gone more than a mile before we met a man who told us we were going the wrong way.

"But there's the sign," I protested, and pointed to the notice which said the way we were going was the right one.

"Ah, but it's easier going over the other side of the river," the man insisted. "Cross the bridge here, and you'll see."

"Anything to oblige," mumbled Nora, and obediently we crossed the river and walked along the other bank.

We arrived at the Watersmeet, one of the beauty spots of Devon, and had tea in the gardens there.

Then we walked back to the cottage.

I told our nice landlady how we had enjoyed the walk, and also mentioned the man.

Do you know, there are two places which both claim to be the Watersmeet?

So the man who had persuaded us to cross the bridge was the rival of the people who had put up the board on the path we had been following!



Contest! I know how you love knitting.

You can select any article you like to knit—something useful for yourself, or something for another member of the family—providing it is a design from a BESTWAY book.

Begin right away, and when it is finished enter it—by October 30th—for this grand competition and a splendid money prize may be yours.

KNIT WHAT YOU LIKE

After reading the leaflet carefully, I expect you'll rush out and buy a BESTWAY Knitting Book in order to select what you will knit. (Remember that only designs from these books may be entered for the competition.)

While you are at your newsagents, it would be a good idea to ask him to save the GIRLS' CRYSTAL for you every week. Then, when you come to send in your knitting entry, you can state that you are a REGULAR READER of the GIRLS' CRYSTAL.

In addition to the splendid money prizes, there will be a consolation prize awarded to every entrant who is a REGULAR reader of the GIRLS' CRYSTAL.

Now I feel we ought to go and see the other Watersmeet!

I had a horrid blister on my heel after this walk, for it is quite hard going in parts. So kind Nora pricked it for me with a needle—you know how difficult it is to prick a blister on your own heel! And then I placed a piece of lint there and stuck this in position with adhesive tape.

It was very comfy after that. But for the future, I've made a resolve. I shall certainly not go walking with bare legs again, unless I wear little ankle socks.

I've always rather liked the look of bare legs and just shoes, but now I shall consider my comfort a little more.

Bare legs and sandshoes are all very well for the beach, and for pottering around the garden; but for walking in earnest, on uneven country, over-socks are almost a necessity, I've realised.

If you smear a bar of soap over the sole of the sock—the inside of it—this is wonderfully soothing.

Cheers till next week.

PENELOPE

Are You Entering for The "BESTWAY" £70 KNITTING COMPETITION?

Wonderful Prizes to be won! And a special consolation prize to every REGULAR reader of The GIRLS' CRYSTAL.

OF course, if you're going to enter for the BESTWAY Knitting

READ THE RULES CAREFULLY

I think you would be wise to save the leaflet given in this number. Keep it safely by you until your knitting entry for the competition is completed, and then read the rules again very carefully.

You must write your name and the name of your town on a piece of tape and sew this on to the knitted article itself.

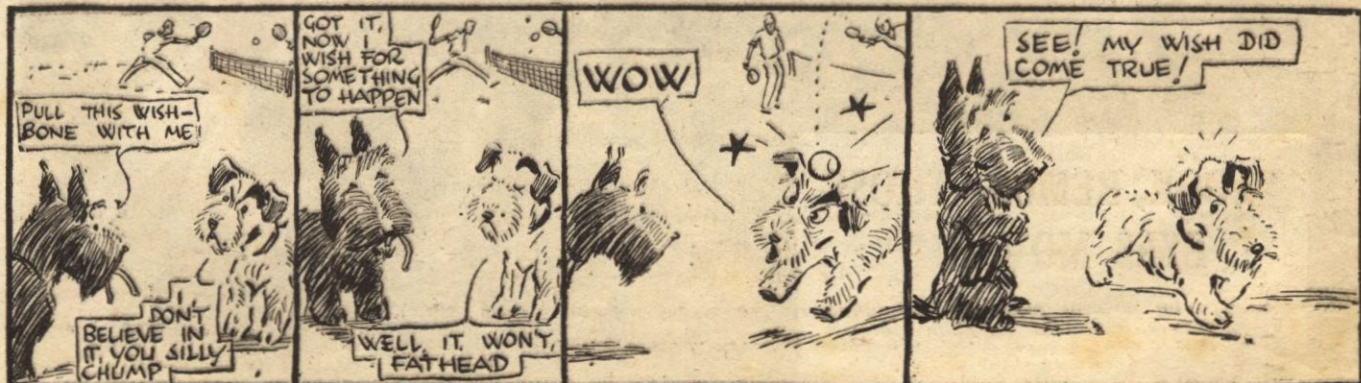
Then, on a separate card, write your full name and full address. Give your age, and also the Class for which you are entering. (The Young Knitters Class is Class 3.) Then write the number of the BESTWAY book from which you have taken your design, also be careful to state whether you are a regular reader of the GIRLS' CRYSTAL.

Address a label to yourself and attach sufficient stamps to cover the cost of return postage. Off it goes, then, into the post—and the judging begins.

Do note that, even if you should not win a money prize (which I hope you will) there is a special SURPRISE PRIZE FOR EVERY ENTRANT WHO IS A REGULAR READER OF THIS PAPER—AND WHO SAYS SO IN HER ENTRY.

So, if entering, be sure to write on the card accompanying your entry that you are a regular reader of the GIRLS' CRYSTAL, and then you will be sure of at least a Consolation Prize!

SCAMP, THE SCOTTIE





The Happy-go-Lucky Hikers

By
ELIZABETH CHESTER

TWO DISAPPEARANCES

"HURRAH! There's the ruined castle!" Wendy Topham gave that shout and pointed with her walking-stick into the distance. Through tangled undergrowth she had climbed ahead of her two friends, and so was the first to see the ruined castle of Harden.

Wendy, breathing hard from exertion, the wind ruffling her hair, stood with hands on hips. It had been hard going over uneven ground, uphill most of the way, but to Wendy the hardest going was always the best.

There was no greater joy to Wendy than setting herself some difficult task and accomplishing it; and the more snags she found on the way, the more fun there was, naturally, in overcoming them.

"Buck up, Fay," she called.

Fay and plump Jill were still struggling through the undergrowth, Fay picking her way with care so that she did not scratch herself, or spoil her new shoes; Jill puffing for breath, but glad to think that she was losing weight.

"Will it make a good snap?" asked Fay eagerly.

"Wonderful," said Wendy. "Cut to the left of that bush," she advised. "And it'll be easier."

Fay took the advice, and a moment later she and Jill were at Wendy's side.

The ruined castle was certainly worth photographing. It stood there, majestic, even in ruins. Much of it remained, and some had said that the banqueting hall and several of the rooms and dungeons were still in good order. But no one lived there now.

In fact there was not another house for miles around save a little tumbledown cottage close to a weed-grown stream.

"They say that there is still a deep moat round it," mused Wendy. "See that stream over there—"

She pointed to the narrow weed-grown stream. The weeds, pale green, gave it an attractive appearance, their sinister aspect obscured by the distance. It was no more now than a streak of paler green amongst the dark.

"That stream leads right up to the moat according to the map," said Wendy. "So our best course is to keep as close to it as we can. If we're in luck, we might find a souvenir, an old helmet, battle-axe—"

"Fun," said Fay eagerly. "We're getting quite a collection for the museum already."

Wendy, Fay, and Jill, typists in a busy Midlands office, were hikers in their spare time, and all England was theirs to roam in. Bus or train took them to a lonely, lovely

part of the country, and with packs on their backs they set off on foot, exploring.

On their journeying they had collected many strange things, odd stones, flint axe-heads, queer flowers, pieces of pottery, a bracelet hundreds of years old—all manner of intriguing souvenirs of their wandering. And to-day there was every chance of their collecting something else interesting.

Wendy had set her mind on exploring the castle, despite the fact that only a few professors had visited it in the last few hundred years.

"There will be dungeons—perhaps a draw-bridge, armour, and the things one sees in the Tower of London," mused Wendy. "Come on—we're all alone in the world. No one else about at all!"

She spoke too soon. For Fay, catching her arm, tugged her and pointed to the east.

"Wrong," she said. "There's a boy on a bicycle."

Wendy, turning, saw the boy and grimaced.

"An errand boy, too," she said. "Then the book's wrong. People must be living somewhere here. Perhaps the castle isn't just an old ruin—"

The boy had seen them, and Wendy waved to him.

"Which is the quickest way to the castle?" she called. "Along the stream bank?"

The boy was cycling along a path hidden from them by a mound, which allowed only the upper part of his machine and himself to be seen. As Wendy called, he dismounted and wheeled his cycle up the mound. It was a tradesman's machine, the carrier, at the moment, empty.

"Castle?" he said. "You're not going to the haunted castle are you, miss?"

"Haunted?" said Fay with a shiver.

"Haunted!" said the boy. "You wouldn't get me going there—or any people in these parts either. That castle is haunted. Of course, I don't say you'll see the wolf, mind—"

Jill gave a little gasp and drew nearer to Wendy, but Wendy was smiling. She did not believe this yarn.

What a romantic old place the ruined castle looked! Wendy & Co. were thrilled at the thought of exploring it. Even the extraordinary warning they received of the castle's dangers, did not daunt the Happy-Go-Lucky Hikers!

"There aren't any wolves here," she said. "No, not real wolves. This is a ghost," said the boy. "Roams at night and howls at the moon. All white. He glows in a ghostly way. But they say he's still there in day-time, only he can't be seen."

"Have you just been taking the wolf his rations?" Wendy asked with a smile.

"No, I haven't," said the boy, flushing slightly. "I've been trying to get the money for groceries, that's what I've been doing. The old man and his daughter at the cottage over there must think we're a sort of charitable institution, that's what my boss-says. They're out, and the place is locked up. But I know they're around all right. And no money—no more food!"

"Oh!" said Wendy gravely. "They're hard-up, are they? How awful. What ever makes them live in this lonely spot?"

"Because they live there practically free I suppose," said the boy with sarcasm. "Anyway, a nice row I shall get into from the boss for not getting the money!"

He mounted his machine and rode off, leaving them looking towards the small cottage, the roof of which could just be seen through the trees.

"Well?" smiled Wendy. "Scared of the ghost?"

"Not likely," said Fay. "He made up that silly story. But I say! How awful for that girl to have to live right out here—and be really poor."

The same thought was in Wendy's mind, and Jill's, too. The country here was splendid, wild, bracing. But to-day was sunny, and they, when they had explored it, could go home to warmth, to good friends. Living here every day would be quite different, especially when there was little money for food, when bills could not be paid.

"Come on," said Wendy. "Let's get down to the stream."

But Fay stood still, staring intently.

"What's wrong?" asked Jill.

"I—I—it's awfully funny," murmured Fay.

"But—but I think I saw the wolf."

"The wolf!"

Wendy was startled for a moment, and then laughed merrily. She knew Fay! Fay's imagination could work wonders. If there had been a ghostly snake, then she would have seen a snake instead of a wolf!

"Wolf! Where?" she asked.

"There—I saw it for just a moment," said Fay anxiously.

Wendy and Jill stared, but saw nothing. Then Jill gave a gasp.

"She's right. I saw something—an animal, slinking—"

That settled it, as far as Wendy was concerned. She hurried down the slope to the spot where the "wolf" had been seen.

"Wolf nothing," she said. "But there must be something, and we'll soon find out just what it is."

There was long grass at the foot of the mound, and Wendy pushed her way through it warily, with Fay and Jill just behind.

A slight movement in the grass ahead made her pause. The grass was waving, and soon she saw an avenue behind made in it by some creature hurrying along.

"Ghosts don't do that," she commented.

She hurried on to that spot, and then halted where the grass had been beaten down. She was about to follow the beaten track when Fay gave a piercing scream.

"The wolf—there it is!"

She turned and ran; but Wendy stood still, on tiptoe, staring.

"My goodness!" she exclaimed. "You're right!"

A large white animal went leaping away through the grass. For a moment only she saw it; then it disappeared from view.

"A dog!" she said, recovering from the momentary shock. "That's all."

Wendy rushed to find the animal, calling to it coaxingly, but without receiving so much as a bark in response. She followed it to the end of the trail in the grass, and then stopped.

For, at the end of the grass was moorland, without shelter of any kind. It sloped away, and then ran level for several hundred yards, but Wendy, hurrying to the top of the slope, saw no sign at all of the dog.

"It's vanished!" she called to Jill, who came hurrying after her.

"Must have turned off in this grass," decided Jill.

"It couldn't have run out of sight in this time—not possibly. And the ground couldn't have swallowed it up—"

"Not this ground," agreed Wendy, tapping it with her stick. "It's rock underneath—or stone—"

"Part of an old wall of some kind," murmured Jill.

They turned back to Fay, who had been delayed preparing her camera to take a snap of the "ghost," but they had walked only a few steps when they heard a shy voice behind them.

Amazed, Wendy wheeled round.

Walking up the slope beyond the edge of the grass was a girl, slightly younger than they, shabbily dressed, and seemingly shy.

"The girl from the cottage!" exclaimed Jill.

The girl walked towards them, and stopped when a few yards away.

She looked at them under her lashes, studying their attire, their shorts, and thick shoes, socks, their shirts, and the walking-sticks.

"Hikers?" she murmured.

"Yes, hikers," smiled Wendy.

"From a city?" asked the girl.

"Yes. A bigish city," admitted Wendy, frowning, puzzled by the girl's strange manner.

"With a cinema?"

"Four, to be precise—yes."

The girl's eyes shone, and she drew up, lifting her head. For the first time she looked directly at them, and Wendy saw that she was pretty—made prettier, too, by the excitement in her eyes.

"Oh, take me!" she begged. "Take me with you—away from here! I don't care where it is. Take me with you, please—please! And never let me come back to this awful place!"

"Take you away?" Wendy exclaimed. "Oh, but, of course, you're joking."

The girl shook her head and puckered her forehead.

"No, I am not joking; I am serious. You are the first girls I have seen for months."

Fay's warm heart was touched.

"Oh, how lonely for you!" she murmured.

"Are you the girl from the cottage?"

"Yes, from the cottage—the little cottage," said the girl. "I am the last of the Cas—"

No," she interrupted herself quickly. "I must not say that."

Wendy Topham looked sideways at Jill. She liked the look of this girl, and the eager, excited appeal had gone to her heart. If she could help her, she would, and Jill, understanding the look Wendy gave, nodded.

"If you're lonely," she said, "why not come with us this afternoon?"

"Rather—do!" urged Fay. "We're going to explore the old castle."

The girl's expression changed. Fear came to her eyes in place of the joy.

"No, no. You must not," she said, almost frantically.

"Not—why not?" asked Wendy, amused.

"You don't believe it is haunted? We've just seen the dog. In fact, I dare say you saw him, too. A large, white dog. The errand-boy said there was a ghostly wolf here; but it's that dog, of course."

The girl looked solemn and shook her head.

"No, I did not see the dog," she said. "I have never seen a dog here. But a minute ago I saw the phantom wolf!"

Fay uttered a gasp, and went a little white, but Wendy laughed.

"You're pulling our legs," said Wendy cheerfully. "That was a real dog. See how he's brushed down the grass. Anyhow, ghost or not," she went on, "I'm going to explore the castle. We're going to have tea on the ramparts, or whatever they're called. And we've some ginger cakes—"

The strange girl drew up, her tone changed.

"Very well. I have warned you," she said. "You will be sorry. Aha! Look there—"

She cried, pointing through the grass.

They turned and looked in the direction indicated, but saw nothing.

"Well?" asked Wendy.

She looked where the girl had been; but the girl was gone. With a sharp exclamation Wendy hurried back to the edge of the long grass.

But the girl had disappeared—vanished as completely as the dog.

MORE MYSTERY

"GONE!" exclaimed Wendy sharply.

"But where?"

Jill and Fay hunted with her for a moment, turned in all directions, beating amongst the grass, even hurrying down the slope. But the girl had vanished.

Fay stood quaking a moment, badly shaken.

"I don't like it!" she admitted. "It's queer—uncanny! Where can she have gone? It's just an open space, and anyone moving through this grass must beat it down and leave some trace."

Wendy searched the ground for a minute or two, and then turned towards the castle.

"There's a lot more in this," she decided, "than we guess. She tricked us so that she could dodge back. But she couldn't have run out of sight in the time."

"She just vanished," said Fay uneasily.

"After all, where did she come from?"

Wendy started.

"I don't know," she admitted. "She wasn't there one moment, and the next there she was. There must be a hiding-place, that's all. People don't just vanish. There's a grass-covered cave here or something of that sort. Anyway, we shall see her again."

"When?" asked Fay, looking about her in uneasy perplexity.

"At the castle," said Wendy. "She tried to scare us from going there, and she certainly lied about the dog."

"How do you know?" asked Jill.

"Because," said Wendy, "I looked her over carefully, and there were white hairs on her frock and a muddy imprint on her left shoe—the imprint of a dog's foot. The dog is hers, and she's pretending it's a ghost. Why? To keep people away from the castle."

Wendy turned, head in air, and in determined manner went her way towards the castle.

"WELL, and here we are."

Wendy halted at the castle moat. The towering stone wall was twenty feet away across the water, and the gateway, devoid of portcullis or drawbridge, was open. Once they were across the moat, they had but to climb the mound to enter the gateway.

It had been a magnificent walk across the fields, and they had enjoyed every minute of it. Fay had forgotten the ghost dog, and was

in cheery mood, eager to be photographed in the castle.

But the sight of the moat gave them pause. Dogged though Wendy was, and not lightly to be put aside from her set course, she was taken aback by the moat.

It was green—weed green and still. Not for a fortune would she have plunged into it, for it might easily prove a death-trap.

"Well?" said Fay.

"Not so well," mused Wendy. "But let's see if there's a boat anywhere here. Yes, there is," she ended.

It was a black punt, in none too sound condition; but, none the less, it floated. Unfortunately, it was moored to the far side of the moat.

"Oh," said Jill, frowning, "that's no help!"

"No help," agreed Wendy, "but very odd. How did it get to the far side?"

"I suppose someone used it to get across with once," said Jill.

"Then why didn't they come back with it?" asked Wendy shrewdly. "Whoever went over in that punt is still there."

"Golly, someone there now?" asked Jill.

It seemed the only possible solution, for the punt was tied up securely, and had not merely drifted.

"The girl, perhaps," said Fay. "If she's trying to frighten us, she might have come here ahead—taken a short cut."

Wendy nodded. It seemed likely enough.

"Then we'll teach her a lesson," she said.

"There's bound to be some other way over, and if there is we'll jolly well find it."

Wendy found the way only a minute or so later. Her perseverance had won its reward. Growing by the moat side here and there were trees, and there was one which leaned over the water's edge, with a long branch that trailed down.

"That's the way over," said Wendy.

"What, along the branch?" gasped Fay.

"Oh, no, Wendy! It's not safe."

"Not for me," said Jill. "I'm too fat. And suppose you fell, Wendy?"

"I shan't do anything so silly," said Wendy. "We have some rope, haven't we? If we haven't, it's the first time we've ever come hiking without it."

Jill unfastened Wendy's pack from the back for her, and took out the coil of strong rope.

"Let's have tea first," she said.

"No tea until we cross the moat!" insisted Wendy. "That's what we said, you know."

Wendy made a rough calculation of the distance, fixed the rope round her, and then climbed the tree. The branch creaked a little, but it took her weight.

Jill and Fay held the other end of the rope and hauled as in a tug-of-war, while Wendy lowered herself until her feet were just clear of the water.

The slime-covered water seemed less inviting than ever when she looked down at it, and moats, she knew, were deep. There would not be a chance of standing up if she did fall in.

But Wendy kept her head, and started to swing gently to and fro.

Presently her feet touched the far bank. With a crash, she landed, sprawling, clawing at the grass for a hold.

"She's there!" cried Jill. "Hurrah!"

"All right?" called Jill.

"Yes," Wendy answered, delighted by success. "I'll get the punt."

It was tricky going even then, for the bank was steeply sloped, and there was very little ledge on which she could get any kind of foothold.

Picking her way, she crawled along until now the punt came into view.

But at sight of it Wendy stopped crawling, and stared in wonder.

"The punt! Look!" she cried.

Jill and Fay had been watching her efforts, but now they turned and stared at the black punt. In the centre of it was a large boulder, and the punt was almost awash.

As they stood staring another boulder crashed down. It landed with a thump in the punt, and they could hear water gurgling.

Another large stone followed, and now water rushed into the punt, and it settled down below the level of the weeds.

Someone, to prevent their entering the castle, had sunk the punt!

Wendy was marooned! If she wanted to

return across the moat, she would have to swim. But Wendy did not intend returning yet, and she meant to explore the castle.

THE CASTLE'S SECRET

WENDY TOPHAM, on tiptoe, awed, walked in the ruined castle. She had thrown back the cord to her friends, made her way to the gateway to the castle, and then, surprised, had been able to walk right in without further hindrance.

She was amazed, however, by more than that. For once in the courtyard of the castle, she knew that it was not as ruined as the guide-book had led her to think; nor was it deserted.

There was a small garden in the courtyard, and pretty flowers grew in profusion; and here and there were signs that someone kept the place tidy. Moreover, there were glazed windows, through which she saw curtains, and other furnishing.

Peeping in at the doorway, Wendy saw red carpeting, and heard a grandfather clock ticking in sombre, stately manner.

"Someone's home!" she breathed. "My goodness, who'd have guessed it?"

Wendy had no wish to pry into anyone's home, and she hesitated on the threshold.

But just as she made up her mind to go, a voice called. It was a man's voice—a little petulant and shaky, calling a name:

"Wendy!"

Wendy stood like a statue. A dozen thoughts jostled in her mind. Who knew her name here? Had someone been listening and heard Jill or Fay call her? Could it be someone who knew her?

But there was something most uncanny in hearing her own name called, and she could not move in response. Again the name was called, this time imperatively, and she stepped forward into the lofty room.

"Yes," she said huskily, almost inaudibly.

In front of the fire, back towards her, was the only armchair in the room, a high-backed, wooden affair, stiff and uncomfortable to look at.

"Give me the book from the table, will you, my dear?"

The voice came from the armchair, and Wendy, catching her breath, stepped forward, and picked up the book from the table.

It was only as she stepped forward that she guessed that she was not known—that there was someone else in this castle named Wendy.

But she gave the book from behind the chair and a lean hand took it. For a moment she had a glimpse of a pale, scholarly face; but she had only a side view of it, for the man in the chair did not glance at her.

"I hope you have not been in the fields again," said the man. "You must learn to have patience, my dear child—patience! It will not be long before we are rich, I tell you. Then we shall live here—unashamed. Ah, then you will be proud to live here! The Casterbys will come into their own again."

Wendy stiffened. She remembered suddenly how the girl they had met when hunting for the dog had said that she was the last of the Cas— And then stopped in mid-sentence.

"I—" began Wendy falteringly.

"Perhaps you think we shall never find the gold. But you are wrong—quite wrong! We have a clue. And soon we shall be rich. Be a good girl, and ask Holmes to come here."

He had not turned, and Wendy drew back. She felt guilty and ashamed. She had solved the riddle of the castle, but she was not proud of herself. She felt now that she had pried into someone's secret.

This strange old man—the last of the Casterbys—lived in this castle, ill-furnished though even the habitable part of it was, and with most of the remainder in tumbled ruins.

And he dreamed of riches, of gold, hidden, as Wendy guessed, in the castle.

"Poor man," was her thought; for she did not believe that the gold was still hidden, even though he did not lose hope.

"Tell Holmes I have a more exact clue. You will find him in the east long corridor," came the girl's uncle's voice, as Wendy backed.

She knew that if she had drawn attention to herself, she would have scared him. The best thing to do was to find the man Holmes, and in some way without letting herself be seen, let him know that he was wanted.

Wendy, clear of the hall, breathed more freely, and, looking about her, tackled the problem of the east corridor. In such a vast place as this there were many corridors, and "east" was little enough direction.

But when Wendy moved eastward, she heard a sound that echoed in the stonework—metallic sounds.

Guided by them, she hurried on, and with every step she took she heard them more loudly, and more distinctly. She went swiftly, yet quietly, and suddenly the noise was loud and very near—just round the corner a few yards ahead the source seemed to be.

"For the chest—ah, can you bear the shock?—it is empty! There is no gold!"

Wendy, hardly breathing, heard that lying answer, and stood rigid.

"No gold? Someone has been there before us!" was the horrified cry of Holmes' master.

"It would seem so, my lord."

And Wendy, furious, indignant, was about to rush into the opening and tell the truth, when she heard the other girl's voice:

"Uncle—uncle, there are some girls trying to cross the moat! It is not my fault! I came back by the secret tunnel! They don't know you're here—I'm certain! Why, uncle, what's wrong? You look so pale!"

Wendy stepped out from hiding. She saw the girl running to her uncle, who had covered his face with his hands.

But Holmes had turned back.

Face to face, he and Wendy met.

"A spy!" he gasped.

The girl turned; her uncle looked up.

"Yes; a spy," said Wendy, head and chin



"Oh, take me with you—away from here!" the strange girl begged. Wendy & Co. were dumbfounded. They had never heard such an amazing request in their lives.

Wendy tiptoed forward, and, cautiously peering round the corner, she saw an old man on his knees. In front of him was a gaping square where a large paving stone, which now rested against one wall, had fitted.

But what held her interest was the rusted old chest into which the man was plunging his hands. The chink of coins came, and Wendy saw their yellowish glint.

Fascinated, she watched, and saw the old man scooping them into a large sack beside him.

But she remained there only a moment, and then stepped back. Drawing her breath, she called out in as close a semblance to the other girl's voice as she could manage.

"Holmes! Uncle wants you!"

The man sprang back, startled, desperately scooped more coins into the sack; then, muttering to himself, turned and answered: "Coming—coming—"

Wendy hurried back to the hall; but, before she could dodge to the entrance, she heard Holmes' steps behind her. Quickly she turned aside through a doorway opposite.

"Holmes—Holmes!" the girl's voice was calling.

"Here I am, my lord—here I am! And I have found the chest!"

"You have found it! Then we are rich! Rich at last!"

"No, my lord," was the heavy response.

up. "And I have spied to some purpose. There is gold—or there was in that chest. It's in a sack now. And that rascal"—she ended pointing to Holmes—"knows just where it is!"

Holmes fell back.

"It's a lie. The chest is empty. It was empty when I found it. Would I lie to my master?"

The uncle stared at Wendy in anger.

"What are you doing here? What do you know of the hidden gold? Perhaps it was you who stole it?"

"Yes—that's likely," said Holmes, recovering his composure. "But if she says I have it—then where is it—eh? Where could I have hidden it?"

Wendy turned and ran for the spot where she had seen the chest, and the mystery girl ran after her. Almost together they reached the spot. And there was the old chest, just as Wendy had seen it, save only that it was empty!

Wendy stared about her, looked in all directions.

"Hidden—it must be hidden!" she exclaimed. "But my goodness, he was quick about it!"

The uncle was on the scene now, and stood with stricken face looking into the empty chest, while Holmes, arms akimbo, sneered at Wendy.

"Holmes—put that girl into the dungeon!" cried the uncle angrily. "She knows where the gold is; and she shall tell! The wickedness of trying to blame you!"

Wendy saw Holmes move, and, like a flash, she dodged back and ran. She pelted down the corridor as fast as she could go, with the other girl in pursuit.

"Stop—stop!"

Wendy did not stop until once again she was on the bank of the moat.

"FAY—Jill!"

Wendy called desperately; for she knew that Holmes, the girl, and her uncle were not far behind. And when they caught her she would be made a prisoner. Against the three of them she could not hope to resist successfully; and Holmes would see to it that she was in the dungeon long enough to give him a chance to secure the stolen gold.

"Wendy!"

Wendy heaved a mighty sigh of relief as she saw Fay running full tilt on the opposite side.

"The rope!" called Wendy. "I'll have to swim. There's no other way!"

"What happened?" panted Fay.

"Wendy—thank goodness it's you!" breathed Jill, as she came into sight. "When we saw that sack, we thought—at least, Fay thought you—"

"I didn't—you did!"

"Don't argue!" implored Wendy.

She scrambled along the bank now; for the girl, her uncle, and Holmes had reached the gateway.

"As long as it wasn't you in that sack, it doesn't matter," said Fay. "But the awful moment when it went splash into the moat and—"

Holmes suddenly sprang back as he heard those words, and Wendy, forgetting her own danger, stared at her friends.

"What's that? A sack in the moat?" she exclaimed.

"A heavy sack—yes," said Fay. "Landed with a terrible splash. There was a rope tied to it, too!"

Wendy drew a breath and her eyes lit up with excitement.

"The gold!" she cried. "Of course. The moat is his hiding-place!" She turned to the girl who was following her along the bank.

"Follow Holmes if you want the gold. It is in a sack in the moat—but there's a rope tied to it. He can pull it out!"

Then, directed by Fay and Jill, she worked her way along the bank towards the spot where the sack had been thrown in. She reached it, and saw the rope trailing down from an iron bar in one of the castle windows.

Looking up, she saw Holmes lean out and grasp the rope.

Wendy shouted to Jill who threw their own rope, retaining one end herself. Wendy scrambled along the bank, and then, with a jump, reached Holmes' rope trailing over the castle wall. He was pulling it up, but, even so, she managed to put a knot round it.

"Pull!" she called to Jill.

Jill and Fay hauled, and slowly from the water came the sack, bulging, heavy—heavy with old gold coins!

But now the girl and her uncle had launched a small boat kept inside the castle wall, and in it they rowed to the scene.

"There's your gold," said Wendy. "And if you want proof of the thief's identity—look up there!"

At the window was Holmes, hauling desperately and in vain at the rope. Now, knowing failure, he hacked it with a knife.

The rope snapped, coiled in the air, and fell, but Wendy held the lower end tightly, and Jill and Fay, on the opposite bank, had a good grip on their rope. The sack was saved.

A few minutes later, by combined effort, it was dragged into the boat, and the girl and her uncle opened it.

"Gold—more than I thought! Gold beyond even my dreams!" he cried. "We are saved—we are rich!"

The girl could not speak for joy and excitement; her hands were clasped and tears shone in her eyes.

"Uncle, we are rich—we are free! No more living in secret, and—and now I can afford

pretty frocks. I can have a holiday—see a big town—"

"Now you can have all you can ever reasonably want," he said.

The girl looked at Wendy.

"But for you, we should have been robbed by that old rascal, that horrid tyrant uncle trusted and I always feared! Oh, thank you, thank you a million times! And to think I did all I could to keep you away—"

But Wendy, Jill, and Fay were every bit as delighted as the girl by her good fortune; and the money might have been their own, so eagerly and excitedly did they count it some minutes later in the great hall, when by means of the small boat they were safely across the moat.

Holmes did not wait to be caught. While they were busy with the gold he crossed the moat, and escaped. But he was not pursued. He had failed in his cruel plot, and that was all that mattered.

In the best of high spirits, Wendy, Fay, Jill, the girl, and her uncle had a picnic tea, and after it the castle was explored, the secret tunnel by means of which the girl and the dog had disappeared—and, of course, the dog came in for rather more petting than was good for him.

He thoroughly enjoyed the fuss, too, for as his young mistress explained, her pet had had rather a lonely time, too.

That reminded Wendy of his strange disappearance.

"I suppose there was a secret tunnel on the moor that comes right under the moat here," she asked.

The girl nodded.

"Yes. It's quite a simple one, really, but is completely concealed by the bracken and long grass. I distracted your attention and disappeared that way myself, you know. And that's how Jupiter vanished, too."

On hearing his name, the white dog looked up expectantly for more cake. And there was nothing spectral about his bark of thanks when he received it.

He was a ghost dog no longer; for Mr. Casterby proved his title to the castle, to the gold, and in due course became Lord Casterby.

"And if we hadn't explored the old castle," mused Wendy some weeks later, "those two might still have been living secretly and in poverty there."

It was reward enough that they had brought happiness, and in so doing had had the thrill of adventure and new experience that they had come to regard as their right as hikers.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

Another splendid story of Wendy, Jill, and Fay in a hiking adventure next week, girls. Don't miss it.

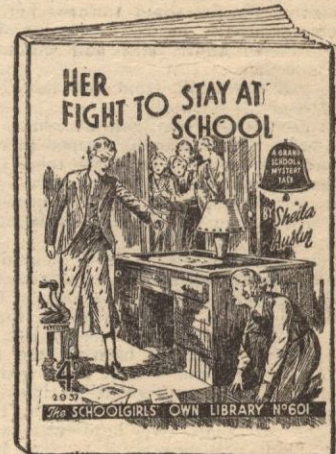
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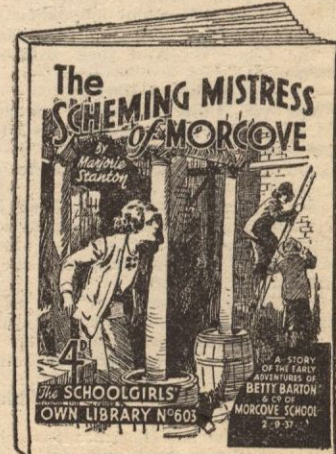
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No. 602



No. 603

Kennel-Maid at Phantom Abbey



By
GAIL
WESTERN

THE PORTRAIT'S SECRET

EVER since she had left school, Kitty Graham had wanted to establish her own kennels, and when she inherited the ancient abbey at Lorne Fen she was able to realise her dreams.

Together with Bridget, a cheery Irish girl, Kitty took up her residence in the one wing of the abbey that was not in ruins. The place was supposed to be haunted by a phantom monk, and one night Kitty saw the dreaded Green Friar for herself.

She tried to make friends with Remus, a homeless black retriever, who seemed to have some mysterious interest in the abbey, but the dog was nervous and always ran away.

Judith Bligh, the daughter of Kitty's neighbour, also ran a kennels, and she was furious at a rival establishment being set up.

Mrs. Fergusson, a dog lover, put Kitty in charge of her comical little Scottie named Pogo. Providing she was satisfied with the care Pogo received, Mrs. Fergusson promised to let Kitty have her other four dogs.

But one night Kitty saw the Phantom Monk kidnapping the Scottie. She found him in a pit next morning through the help of Remus, the retriever; but Mrs. Fergusson, after hearing Judith Bligh's malicious tale, took Pogo away and sent him to the rival kennels, refusing to listen to Kitty.

Remus allowed Kitty to look after him, and she found, hidden in his collar, some pages of writing. As she was about to read these, Kitty saw the eyes of her grandfather's portrait moving, and Remus sprang straight at the painting.

KITTY stared in amazement as Remus crashed against the oil painting that was fastened to the wall.

Dropping back to the floor, the dog glared at the picture as though it were his deadly enemy. His fangs bared; angry snarls rumbled in his throat.

Never had a dog been so transformed. His ferocity was startling. He snarled and clawed at the picture, jumping up and down as though determined to tear it to pieces.

But for a moment Kitty was oblivious of Remus' extraordinary behaviour. Petrified, she stood there, still clutching the sheet of

faded paper she had drawn from the secret pocket in the retriever's collar.

Her gaze was riveted on the portrait's eyes. Though it seemed incredible, she was certain that they had moved.

Compelling and magnetic they were, painted with masterly skill. But had they been painted? She caught in her breath. A staggering suspicion had occurred to her.

"Remus!" she gasped. Quivering, his brown eyes ablaze, the retriever turned at the sound of her voice. He whined piteously; then, sinking back on his haunches, he gave a thunderous bark.

Kitty took a step forward, looked at her grandfather's portrait again, then her voice rose in a shriek.

"Remus! The eyes have moved again! There's someone hidden behind that picture!" The big retriever gave another furious bark, and again he hurled himself against the painting, scratching and biting.

Crash! Suddenly the painted canvas tore, and the frenzied dog's head and shoulders disappeared from view.

At that moment, Bridget, attracted by the noise, came running from the kitchen. Pulling up in the sitting-room doorway, she gaped blankly.

"Bejabbers, what's going on here?" she gasped. "What—"

She stopped, staring in amazement at the ruined picture and the barking retriever, who was wriggling half in and half out of the jagged hole he had made.

Kitty, her face white, her heart palpitating, rushed across to the Irish girl and clutched at her arm.

"There must be a secret room behind there!" she cried. "And someone was in it—spying. I saw his eyes move. Oh, Bridget, suppose it was the Green Friar!"

With her beloved dogs to care for, and the cheerful Bridget to help her—how contented Kitty was in her Abbey home. The Phantom Monk was the only shadow over her happiness.

Bridget's usually cheery face took on a scowl.

"What? That spalpeen again!" she cried. "Bejabbers, but 'tis myself who knows how to deal with him!"

Brandishing the broom she clutched in one hand, she dashed forward, just as Remus, with a triumphant bark, completely vanished from sight.

Peering through the hole, the Irish girl saw that the portrait was not glued to the panelling as they had thought. The canvas masked the entrance to a square, stone-walled chamber.

"Seize him, Remus!" Bridget urged. "Hang on to the spalpeen until I can give him a taste of my broom!"

And boldly she clambered through the wrecked painting. Kitty, following, saw the retriever excitedly snuffing around, but of the intruder who had so startled them there was no sign.

"Begorrah! Where's he got to?" demanded Bridget.

Kitty shook her head in bewilderment; then she gave a gasp, for as she examined the back of the canvas the secret of the moving eyes was explained.

The painted eyes were on a separate strip of cloth that could be rolled back. It would be easy for anyone to peer out through the slit thus made.

But who had it been who had spied on her? Kitty did not need to ask herself the question twice.

"It was the Green Friar—it must have been!" she muttered, and a shiver ran down her spine.

It was not pleasant to know that the Phantom Monk could come and go at will. Possibly the ancient abbey was riddled with secret passages. This musty hiding-place might not be the only one in the house.

But what was the Green Friar's motive in trying to scare them? What interest could he have in the abbey?

Kitty thought of the faded documents secreted in Remus' collar, and her eyes beamed excitedly. Were they connected in some way with the Phantom Monk's strange behaviour? Was Remus, the stray she had adopted, also connected with the mystery?

She turned to tell Bridget about her recent discovery, but at that moment there came a triumphant bark from the black retriever. He was sniffing at something that projected from the floor of the secret room.

"What is it?" asked Kitty eagerly. "What have you found?"

Remus gave another excited bark and pawed at the ancient floor. Bending down, Kitty saw that there was a rusty iron ring let in one of the square slabs of stone.

"A trapdoor!" she exclaimed.

"Bejabbers, and so that's how the spalpeen escaped!" snorted Bridget.

Between them they managed to raise the heavy slab. A short flight of crumbling steps was revealed. They seemed to give access to a dark, clammy tunnel.

Remus, the instant the trapdoor was raised, charged down the stairs. Anxious for his safety, Kitty tried to call him back, but the

dog did not obey. His barks echoing eerily, he went plunging along the tunnel.

"Come on!" urged Bridget, brandishing her broom. "Mebbe we'll be able to catch the spalpeen yet!"

She followed the dog, and Kitty stumbled after her. The tunnel was quite short. It led into what had once been the abbey's wine-cellar. Another flight of steps gave access to the completely dilapidated wing of the ruins.

As they emerged once more into the open, the two girls looked around eagerly, while Remus scampered to and fro, sniffing and whining. But there was no sign of the Green Friar. He had disappeared.

Bridget gave a sigh of disappointment.

"He's beaten us this time," she said. "But let him wait! If he dares show his nose here again I'll get him. I'll fix up a nice booby-trap for the spalpeen. And if he enters these ruins again—" She paused, looking across at the still agitated retriever. "Bedad, but I wish you could talk, me boy!" she exclaimed. "'Tis a fine tale you could tell, for 'tis yourself, I'm certain, knows what all this mystery's about."

Kitty nodded, her eyes gleaming as she held up the faded sheet of paper that all this time she had instinctively been clutching.

"You're right there, Bridget," she agreed. "Remus could clear up this mystery if only he could talk. And even as it is he can help us. The paper may give us the clue we want."

"Paper? An' where did that come from, me darlint?"

"Why, from Remus' collar, of course!"

And then, remembering that the Irish girl knew nothing of her discovery, Kitty quickly explained. Bridget's eyes opened wide.

"Let's see what it says, Miss Kitty!" she urged excitedly. "Bedad, but I'm all of a flutter! This puzzle is more thrilling than a ride on the white pig of Killarney!"

Eagerly she peered over Kitty's shoulder as that girl smoothed out the yellow paper. The spidery writing had faded, but, after an effort, they managed to decipher it. Kitty felt her pulses race as she read the strange message. There was a flush on her cheeks, a sparkle in her eyes.

"Listen, Bridget!" said Kitty.

"Where the Phantom Monk walks, there riches can be found. Remus alone can help you. But first the Lorne Abbey Cup must be won."

"Riches!" whooped Bridget. "Bejabbers, but it must be treasure it means! Mebbe the old monks hid it here years ago!"

But Kitty shook her head.

"I don't think so," she said. "It was granddad who wrote this, not some ancient monk. But what's this reference to a cup mean? What is the Lorne Abbey Cup? And how can it be won?" She shook her head in puzzlement, and then, as she remembered the other papers hidden in Remus' collar, she gave an excited cry. "Perhaps they'll help us. Come on, Bridget! Let's see what they say!"

With Remus scampering at her side, she led the way back to the habitable part of the abbey. On reaching the sitting-room, she darted across to where she had left the big leather collar.

To her surprise, it was not there. On the floor lay the bath of water, the towels and brushes she had used to groom the black retriever. But there was no trace of the collar.

"That's funny!" she exclaimed. "I'm certain I put it down there."

Frowning, she looked around. Bridget helped her to search. But all their efforts were in vain. Unmistakably the collar had gone. But who could have taken it?

Kitty's face went white.

"The Green Friar!" she gulped.

Bridget looked across at her in amazement. "You mean, you think that spalpeen's stolen it?" she cried. "But 'tis impossible, me darlint! We chased him through that old tunnel. He couldn't have got back here without us seeing him."

"Then where is it?" demanded Kitty. "The collar can't have walked off on its own. He's taken it, I tell you. For some reason he doesn't mean us to discover the truth. So he's

taken the collar—stolen the papers it contained!"

IN DEFENCE OF POGO

"BEDAD, I believe you're right, after all, me darlint!"

Slowly Bridget nodded agreement, and for a moment the two girls stood there, looking at each other in dismay.

Bridget was the first to stir. The smell of burning from the kitchen brought her wandering thoughts back to earth with a bump. She sniffed, then gave an agitated cry.

"The bacon! Bejabbers, but 'twill be burnt to a cinder!"

And off she dashed. Left alone, Kitty shook her head and sighed, then she bent as she felt a warm tongue licking her hand. Remus was sitting there beside her, his soft brown eyes watching her fondly. Dropping to one knee, she kissed him and put a arm round his soft neck.

"You'll help us to outwit that horrid ghost, won't you?" she whispered.

Remus barked and nuzzled her cheek. She smiled, all her fears of the Phantom Monk vanishing. Remus would make a good watchdog. With him on guard, the Green Friar would not dare venture here again.

Nevertheless, during their delayed breakfast Bridget stuck to her intention of fixing up a trap in the exit from the secret tunnel.

"That reminds me," Kitty said, turning and frowning at the ruined picture. "We'll have to do something about that. It looks shockingly untidy. Tell you what, Bridget—we'll run up a curtain to screen the hole. I'll go through into Harborough this afternoon. I want to go in to put an advertisement in the local paper, anyway."

"An advertisement, Miss Kitty?"

"Yes, to advertise the kennels. I haven't much money, you know, and now that I've lost Mrs. Fergusson's patronage, I'll have to hustle round and find some more clients."

Her eyes clouded as she spoke. It was a bitter disappointment losing Pogo. And not only the little Scottie. But for Judith Bligh's malice, she would also have been entrusted with Mrs. Fergusson's other dogs. As it was, the girl next door would no doubt get them.

Kitty frowned as she thought of the rival kennel-maid.

Then suddenly Kitty jumped to her feet as from outside came a shrill yapping.

"Why, Pogo!" she cried.

For there at the french windows, pawing plaintively to be let in, was Mrs. Fergusson's little Scottie.

"He's soon got fed-up with his new home!" commented Bridget. "Shure, and 'tis not to be wondered at! No one would want to stay with Judith Bligh!"

Crossing to the french windows, Kitty opened them. With a bark of delight, Pogo simply hurled himself at her. But as she gathered him up, from the boundary fence at the bottom of the garden came an irate voice!

"Pogo! Where are you, you wretch? Come here at once!"

Kitty gave a grimace as she saw Judith standing there, scowling and shouting.

"I'm afraid you'll have to go back, old chap," she said. "You can't stay here, you know."

As though realising her intentions, the Scottie whined protestingly, but Kitty, forcing herself to steel her heart, carried him across to the fence. Judith gave an angry gasp.

"So there you are!" she exclaimed. "You ungrateful little wretch, you deserve a thrashing for this! I'll teach you to run away!"

For the dog's sake Kitty forced herself to be pleasant.

"Don't be too cross with him," she said. "He didn't mean to run away, I'm sure. He'll be very good as soon as he's settled down."

Judith's red lips curled sneeringly.

"When I want your advice I'll ask for it," she snapped, and made a snatch at Pogo.

The Scottie whined and wriggled as he felt himself heaved back over the fence. Appealingly he looked at Kitty, and she sighed as Judith went striding away with the little dog. She had grown fond of him.

"The poor chap's unhappy," she murmured. "I do hope, for his sake, that Judith calms down."

But she was helpless to interfere, so she turned away. She helped Bridget to wash up the breakfast things, then she walked into the village to catch the bus for Harborough.

There she called in the local newspaper office and drew up a notice advertising the Abbey Kennels. Then she went to do her shopping. Included amongst it was a new collar for Remus. It was lunch-time when she clambered off the returning bus, laden down with parcels.

As she set off up the road she saw a taxi, followed by a closed van, chugging its way laboriously up the steep hill. Seated in the taxi was the formidable figure of Mrs. Fergusson, while from the accompanying van came a medley of barks and yaps.

Kitty's lips tightened. She guessed that Pogo's owner was on her way to the Towers, to hand over the rest of her dogs to Judith.

"I expect Judith is chuckling with glee," she told herself.

But that was just what the rival kennel-maid wasn't doing. Her haughty face furious, she was striding through the wood that bordered the two gardens, slashing viciously at the undergrowth with a stick.

"The stubborn little wretch!" she was muttering. "I'll half-kill him when I lay hands on him!"

For once again Pogo had run away. Indeed, at this very moment he was stealing the dinner that Bridget had put out for Remus. The big retriever was squatting good-naturedly by, making no effort to interfere. But he turned away with a growl as he heard Judith striding towards the fence. She shook her stick furiously, not at him, but at the little Scottie.

"Come here, you beast!" she shouted. "D'you hear? Come here!"

Guiltily Pogo looked round, but he made no attempt to obey. Judith glared harder than ever, and with sudden decision she climbed over the fence.

"I'll show you who's master!" she hissed, and came running across the lawn.

Pogo cowered back, but he was too frightened to try to escape. Apprehensively he gazed at the stick Judith flourished. She laughed as she realised his terror.

"Scared, eh?" she jeered. "Well, you've reason to be! I mean to teach you!"

And she raised the stick for a cruel blow. Pogo lay as though petrified, but from the big retriever came a warning growl. "Don't you dare!" his brown eyes seemed to say. But Judith was too angry to pay any attention to him.

"I'll teach you to run away!" she snapped; and down came the stick.

But the cruel weapon never struck the little Scottie, for with another deep growl Remus launched himself through the air. Taken by surprise, Judith had no chance to dodge. The retriever's out-thrust front paws struck her in the chest, and with a howl of dismay she went toppling, sitting down with a hard bump.

It was just at this moment that Kitty arrived on the scene. She pulled up in alarm, staring in surprise from the barking Remus to the furious girl on the grass.

"Remus!" she gasped in horror.

Obediently the retriever came running across to her, but she ignored him. Fearing that Judith might be hurt, she rushed to that girl's assistance.

"What's happened?" she asked. "Oh, I am sorry! I hope Remus hasn't hurt you? But why did he go for you like that?"

Judith glared as she picked up her fallen stick and scrambled to her feet.

"The brute ought to be shot!" she panted.

"He's wild, and I'm not the first person he's attacked! But never mind him. This is the little beast I've come for." She scowled down at the whining Scottie. "Now to give you your lesson!" she hissed, and struck viciously at the helpless dog before Kitty had even realised her intention.

Pogo gave a howl of pain, Remus growled, and made as though to intervene, but Kitty, understanding at last the true position, gave a gasp of indignation.

"Stop it!" she ordered. "You can't beat him like that, no matter what he's done."

"Can't I?" Judith laughed harshly.

Up went the stick again; but it never descended. Before it could strike the terrified Scottie Kitty had snatched him up. Her face was pale, but determined.

"You shan't—I won't let you!" she gulped. Judith glared.

"Well, of all the cheek! Here, put that dog down at once! He was left in my charge, not yours! Put him down, I tell you!"

It looked as if the angry girl would brutally use the stick again, but a threatening bark from Remus made her quickly lower it. She didn't want to provoke the big retriever a second time. For a moment she stood there, nonplussed; then she treated Kitty to another furious glare.

"Give him to me!" she ordered.

"Not unless you promise not to beat him." "I'll promise nothing. How dare you interfere?"

"I won't!" Kitty did not budge. The piteous look in Pogo's eyes was more than enough to decide her. "You shan't have him!" she declared recklessly. "I don't care what you say—what anyone says—he shan't go back to be ill-treated! A girl like you isn't fit to be trusted with dumb animals!"

"Well spoken, my dear!"

The unexpected interruption came from the Towers side of the fence. Judith looked round, then her face went white.

"Mrs. Fergusson!" she gulped.

HAPPY DAYS AT THE KENNELS

POGO'S owner it was. On inquiring at the big house for the kennelmaid, she had been told that Judith was out in the grounds, exercising her pet, so she had come in search of her.

That she had witnessed the quarrel was obvious, and her grim, scandalised face showed plainly enough what she thought of Judith.

"I thought I made a mistake when I entrusted Pogo to you," she told Kitty; "but it was nothing to the mistake I made when I listened to that girl's tale-telling."

The look she gave Judith was one of contempt, but not one word did she speak to that girl; instead, she held out her hands for Pogo. Kitty handed him over, and the little Scottie nestled in his mistress' arms with a squeak of delight.

Petting him, Mrs. Fergusson turned her back on the sullen Judith and walked back to where the taxi and vanload of dogs stood waiting. When she had gone Samuel Bligh's daughter looked across at Kitty, her dark eyes smouldering with hate.

"You wait!" she hissed. "You shall pay for this!"

Kitty met her furious look with level eyes.

"Meanwhile, may I remind you that you're trespassing?" she said quietly. "And we don't like intruders any more than you do. Do we, Remus?"

The black retriever, squatting at her side, gave a bark of agreement; and, with another scowl, Judith strode back to the fence and clambered over; but once on her own property she paused, glowering at Remus.

"And that brute of a dog had better look out, too!" she hissed. "He ought to be destroyed; he's a danger to the countryside. But he won't be for long, I'll see to that; I'll report him to the authorities."

With that threat she swung round and went walking off. For a moment Kitty looked serious. Though the police were not likely to listen to Judith's complaint, still she didn't want Remus to get an unjust reputation for fierceness.

"You're as harmless as a kitten, aren't you?" she asked, bending to pat him.

The retriever barked, licked her hand, and wagged his tail; then together they returned to the house. On the way they encountered Bridget. The plump Irish girl was staggering under the weight of a huge tin bath filled with water. Kitty stared at her in surprise.

"What ever do you think you're doing?" she asked.

Bridget looked serious.

"This is my trap to catch the ghost, Miss Kitty."

And the Irish girl staggered on, disappearing amongst the ruins. Kitty was thoughtful as she passed on. Would Bridget's plan help to solve the mystery in which the abbey was shrouded?

Next moment she had something else to think

about; for there came the honking of a motor horn, followed by the crunch of heavy wheels on the gravel drive.

First into view rattled the village taxi, then Mrs. Fergusson's closed van swung round the bend. Kitty gave an excited gasp.

"Surely she's not going to let me look after her pets, after all?" she cried.

But that was just what Pogo's owner intended doing. Her feelings regarding Judith had changed as a result of what she had overheard.

"It was fine the way you stood up for Pogo," she told Kitty, as she came clambering out of the taxi, the little Scottie clutched in her arms. "I can see that I misjudged you. You evidently love dogs."

"Oh, I do!" exclaimed Kitty enthusiastically, and she stretched out her hands for Pogo; for the comical little dog, yapping with delight, was wriggling and squirming in an effort to get to her.

Mrs. Fergusson nodded approvingly as she saw the affectionate way Kitty fondled the Scottie.

herself exhibiting the two Pekes; could see herself parading round the ring before critical dog experts.

What fun it would be to train the greyhounds to race and to jump hurdles!

Almost speechless with happiness, Kitty surveyed her new charges, while Remus squatted on the edge of the lawn, long tongue lolling out, a look of good-humoured amusement on his friendly face.

"I'm sure they'll all be happy here!" Kitty cried. "And I promise you I'll look after them properly. Oh, I'm so grateful, Mrs. Fergusson, to you for giving me another chance! I won't let you down again, and—and—"

Flushed and grateful, she stopped; and Mrs. Fergusson gave her a friendly pat on the shoulder.

"I'm sure you'll do your best," she said. "But we mustn't stop gossiping here. Let us go indoors and fix up the business arrangements."

That did not take long, for she had written out full details as to the kind of diet and treatment she liked her dogs to have. She



"You shan't beat Pogo!" cried Kitty. Although the little Scottie was no longer in her charge, Kitty was not going to let Judith ill-treat him.

"I'm sure my pet will be safe with you," she said. "But come and be introduced to the others. I propose entrusting them all to your care. I'm going abroad the day after tomorrow, and I shall be away a month or more."

As she spoke she led the way round to the back of the van. The driver had already unfastened the door; and there, straining at their leashes and barking excitedly, were four of the loveliest dogs Kitty had ever seen.

Two were young greyhounds with slender brown bodies and big soft eyes. So appealing did they look that Kitty rushed forward impulsively.

"Oh, what darlings!" she cried.

Mrs. Fergusson smiled.

"They are rather sweet. Nippy is the one with the black patch over his eye; the other is called Bob. I want you to train them. They'll go racing later on, of course. The other two are Pekes. Gerald! Augustus!"

She called sharply, and two magnificently groomed Pekinese strolled from the back of the van, their aristocratic heads held high, their fluffy tails arched.

Kitty's eyes sparkled; her heart thumped with delight. Oh, how she would love looking after such beauties as these! And what an honour it would be! With such fine dogs as these the Abbey Kennels would soon become famous.

Already in imagination Kitty could see

had also tabulated the different shows Gerald and Augustus were to be exhibited in; and as regards payment, she proved breath-takingly generous. Not only that, she insisted on paying in advance.

"As you've only just opened up here, I expect you can do with the money, my dear," she said, getting out her cheque book. "Besides, I shall be away some time. I will send you on my new address. But now I must fly; I've simply oceans of packing to do."

She handed over the cheque, took a hurried farewell of her dogs; then the taxi and the now empty van went rattling back down the carriage drive.

During the rest of the day Kitty had not a moment to herself. She had to arrange accommodation for her new charges; there was food to get in—a hundred-and-one jobs to see to.

But never had she spent a happier day. And happy, too, were the days that followed.

All five dogs quickly settled down in their new home, and, to Kitty's relief, they got on well with Remus. Not that they saw much of the black retriever, for Remus seemed to delight in wandering off on his own. Sometimes Kitty would find him snuffling about amongst the ruins; other times she would hear him exploring in the wood at the bottom of the garden.

(Continued on page 24.)

STELLA and the SHEIK of MYSTERY



By RENEE FRAZER

WHERE IS OMAR?

STELLA CONWAY came to Egypt to act as companion to Joyce Barrington, the daughter of the 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 mysterious sheik was not her friend, later she turned against him.

While crossing the desert to search for Mr. Conway, Stella and Joyce were captured by Omar and taken to his desert palace. Joyce escaped and went to seek help, but Stella remained behind. Princess Yasmin, Omar's sister, made Al Raschid think Stella was her attendant.

Then Stella discovered that her father was a prisoner. When the rescue-party arrived the Arabs fled, taking with them Stella's father. But Omar, protecting Stella in the confusion, was shot and wounded by one of his own men.

Professor Barrington, who led the rescuers, was going to send back the sheik to Cairo, a prisoner; but when Stella entered his tent at night in order to try to discover the truth, Omar had vanished.

OMAR had gone—escaped!

For a moment Stella gazed in utter stupefaction at the dummy on the young sheik's couch. Then the full realisation of the disaster burst on her with pitiless clarity.

He had gone without revealing the secret connected with her missing father. Her last hopes had been dashed to the ground!

As she crouched there, staring dazedly at the vacant couch, the frail hope came to her that he might have left a message—a scribbled line—anything.

Feverishly she commenced to turn over the pile of clothes; but no welcome scrap of paper rewarded her search.

Her hands clenched, she rose unsteadily to her feet; and just then the mutter of voices she had dimly heard outside the tent came nearer. She recognised Professor Barrington's deep tones as he spoke to the guard.

Impulsively, hardly pausing to think, Stella raced from the tent to break the news. That her presence there might appear strange did not occur to her; the professor had left strict orders that no one but himself was to visit the prisoner—but Stella, in her agitation, overlooked the fact.

Darting through the opening, she almost ran into the professor's arms.

A startled ejaculation escaped his lips as he caught her by the shoulder, staring in amazement into her pale, agitated features.

"Miss Conway!" he exclaimed sharply. "What are you doing here, at this hour of night? How did you pass the guard?"

Stella gulped, her sensational news momentarily frozen on her lips.

With a sinking heart she realised how suspicious her presence in the tent must appear; realised the difficulty of explaining—in view of what had happened.

"I—I came—to speak to the prisoner!" she gasped, desperately encountering the professor's sternly questioning glance; "but he's gone!"

Her words sounded lame, unnatural; she heard Professor Barrington's startled intake of breath.

"Gone?" he echoed incredulously.

He brushed her aside, stepping into the tent; for a moment he stood glaring at the vacant couch, like a man turned to stone. Then, suddenly galvanised into action, he spun on his heel, pouncing on the unfortunate guard, and rapping out orders in Arabic.

The man scuttled away to raise the alarm; the professor's hand fell on Stella's shoulder.

"I should like a word with you, young lady," he said gruffly, "in my tent."

A few minutes later Stella, white to the lips, was confronting Joyce and the professor in the latter's tent. Joyce looked upset and bewildered; the professor's expression was ominous.

"I await your explanation, Miss Conway," he said. "From what I have learnt, it appears that you flagrantly disobeyed my strict orders, and paid a visit to the prisoner earlier this evening. Is that so?"

Stella nodded.

"After that," went on Professor Barrington sternly, "you sought me out and begged me to release the young sheik—or words to that effect; naturally, I refused, and for very good reasons—realising that there was peril for all of us so long as young Ben Istar had his freedom.

"But, not content with that, it seems that

you deliberately flouted my decision—and went to the length of tricking the guard, and conniving at the young scoundrel's escape!"

A broken cry escaped Stella's lips as, her eyes wide with horror, she faced her accuser.

"That—that's not true!" she gasped. "I know nothing about his escape. I admit I tricked the sentry, and went to the tent to speak to Omar—to plead with him to tell me the truth about my father. But—but I found the tent empty—on my honour! Joyce—you believe me—don't you?"

Her voice broke as she turned to her chum, holding out her hands pleadingly.

But Joyce made no move as she stood by her father's side, her grey eyes troubled as she avoided Stella's gaze.

It was obvious that she, too, believed that Stella knew more than she would say about the prisoner's escape.

Stella bit back a choking sob.

"I—I don't care what you think!" she burst out. "I've told you the truth—the whole truth! I didn't want you to send Omar back to Cairo, because I believed he could tell me something about my father. But I never had any thought of helping him to escape. I know nothing about that. You must believe me!"

Professor Barrington bit his lip.

"Miss Conway, please calm yourself," he urged. "What has been done cannot be undone; I do not entirely blame you. No doubt you were deceived by the young scoundrel's plausible tale—and you thought you were acting for the best. For your own sake, I must protect you against the consequences of your folly. I have not yet decided what to do; a lot will depend on whether the young man is recaptured. Meanwhile, I suggest that you return to your tent."

Her eyes blinded with smarting tears, Stella groped her way out into the open.

She had been unjustly accused; but, even in the midst of her burning resentment, she was fair-minded enough to realise that Professor Barrington could hardly be blamed for his conclusion.

The young sheik had escaped under mysterious circumstances; and she, Stella, had been the last person to visit him. Worse still, she had deliberately tricked the sentry in order to enter the tent—and her plea that the prisoner should be given another chance must appear doubly suspicious under the circumstances.

But she was hurt to the quick to think that Joyce did not believe her—Joyce, her chum, with whom she had shared so many adventures and perils.

At that moment Stella felt as though she had lost everything that made life worth while. Her father had been snatched from her by ruthless enemies; the young sheik in whom she

Although Stella's friends told her the young sheik was an enemy, desperately Stella tried to believe in him. For only Sheik Omar could help her to find her missing father!

had trusted had vanished without a word; and now her only friends had turned on her!

With a little sob, Stella crumpled up on the couch in her tent, trying desperately to think.

And as she crouched there an hour later, broken-hearted, her mind in a whirl, she felt a pair of arms slide round her shoulders, and heard her chum's voice.

"Stella, forgive me! I do believe you, dear!"

Stella turned, and the next moment she and Joyce were in each other's arms.

Joyce's eyes were filled with tears.

"I—I didn't know what to think at first," she admitted unsteadily. "It all happened so suddenly. But after you'd gone I realised how horrid we'd been not to believe you. I tried to persuade dad to change his mind about sending you away, but—"

She broke off, biting her lip, as though realising she had said too much.

Stella drew back; her face had turned suddenly pale.

"About—sending me away?" she faltered.

"Joyce, what do you mean?"

Joyce gulped, flushing a little.

"I—I oughtn't to have told you. Dad wasn't going to say anything till all the arrangements had been made. He—he's decided to send you back to England—for your own safety—"

A broken cry escaped Stella's lips as she sprang to her feet.

"Back to England!" she gasped. "But, Joyce, he can't do that! I must stay here till I've found my father—I must!"

Almost frantically she caught at her chum's arm.

"Joyce, I'm not going back!" she declared. "Let me speak to him—persuade him that it's impossible. Let me go to him now—"

But Joyce shook her head; her grey eyes filled with pity.

"Dad's set out with a party to search for the young sheik; he doesn't expect to get back till the morning. Please try not to upset yourself, dear! I'm sure he'll decide for the best. Besides," she added comfortingly, "it'll take some days for all arrangements to be made, and anything might happen before then."

Stella made no reply. She was staring unseeingly through the opening in the tent towards the distant palm-trees limned against the night sky.

It was in that direction she had last seen her father being carried away—a helpless prisoner.

And now—now they wanted to send her back to England without him!

For a long time after Joyce had left her Stella stood motionless at the entrance of the tent, staring out into the night.

To be sent back to England without her father was too unthinkable to contemplate. Professor Barrington couldn't do it; it would be cruel!

But supposing she failed to persuade him to alter his mind?

Stella's heart turned cold at the thought. Who was there left to—appeal to for aid?

One name alone sprang into her thoughts—in spite of her efforts to thrust it aside.

Omar, the young sheik!

Yet Omar had proved himself her enemy—treacherous and undependable. Or—had he? Might it not all have been forced on him—his seeming hardness, his mysterious actions?

Looking back now, Stella remembered countless little ways in which he had proved himself her friend—even when she had believed that he was working against her.

That scene in the palace courtyard, when she had been so nearly exposed. It had been Omar who had come to her rescue, though, at the time, she had supposed that he had been deceived by her disguise.

If he was her enemy, why had he not handed her over to his unscrupulous uncle, the scheming chieftain, Al Raschid? Why had she been treated with every consideration and courtesy while she was apparently a prisoner in his desert palace?

Might it not be that he had detained her to protect her against a worse fate?

The more Stella thought about it, the more convinced she became that she had misunderstood the young sheik's actions. There was a mystery underlying them—a mystery he might have explained; but now—now it was too late.

She was to be sent back to England. She might never see him again—the one person in all the world who could have helped her to find her father!

Stella clenched her hands, gripped by a cold, reckless decision.

At all costs she must find the young sheik before they sent her away; she must find him—plead with him to break his mysterious silence before it was too late.

But where could she find him? He might be miles away by now; he might even have joined his uncle's caravan.

Yet, somehow, Stella did not think that it was likely. Had he wished to join his uncle, he could have done so right away. Instead, he had lingered behind at the palace—at the risk of capture—in order to protect her.

He had saved her life; she could never forget that. And even as the treacherous bullet had struck him he had been about to tell her something about her father.

Stella caught in her breath sharply, struck by a sudden thought.

The palace! It was strange that no one else had thought about it. True, it was empty now—deserted by its late occupants, and closed up by the professor's orders.

But what was to prevent the young sheik from taking refuge there? It was his palace; no doubt he would know some secret means of entry. He could hide there in safety for as long as he wished.

It was just a wild surmise on her part, but Stella was feverishly determined to follow it up.

How could she slip away from the camp without being seen by the guards? After what had occurred, they would be doubly watchful.

But Stella had no intention of being deterred from her purpose.

The night was dark and moonless. Taking advantage of the fact, Stella slipped on a dark silk robe—one which had belonged to the Princess Yasmin, and which she had been wearing when she escaped. With a dark scarf flung over her head, she was almost indistinguishable in the gloom.

Cautiously she crept from the tent, keeping in the shadows as she made her way across the clearing.

Then abruptly she halted, her heart in her mouth. A few paces distant she saw an Arab sentry leaning against a tree, a cigarette glowing between his lips.

In the professor's absence it was obvious that discipline had been relaxed. The fact aroused Stella's hopes. She watched the man intently from behind a flowering bush.

At length the sentry tossed aside the stump

of his cigarette, and, laying aside his rifle, commenced to fumble at his belt for a fresh supply.

It was Stella's chance, and she seized it. The man's back was partly turned towards her as he scraped a match. While its flickering glare was still in his eyes, Stella started noiselessly past him, plunging into the shadow of the palm-trees beyond.

There she halted, breathing deeply, awaiting the shout that would announce she had been seen.

But nothing happened, and she gave a little sigh of relief.

For a few hours, at least, she was safe, free to pursue her quest. Joyce was fast asleep in her tent, and the professor was not expected back till the morning. Before she returned she might have found the young sheik and learnt the whole truth.

Through the deserted palace gardens she made her way, halting at length in the courtyard of the palace itself.

Everything was strangely silent and forlorn. It no longer appeared romantic, but merely desolate and strangely eerie.

The fountain was no longer playing; the marble pavement was littered with refuse—signs of the feverish retreat.

Across the courtyard she picked her way, approaching the great entrance door that had been secured by the professor's orders.

And as she reached it Stella's heart missed a beat, for the massive oak door stood ajar.

For a moment she stared at it, with conflicting feelings—half-fear, half-excitement.

The open door could only mean one thing—the young sheik was hiding here!

Timidly she pushed it open; it creaked eerily on its hinges. Holding her breath, Stella entered, her footsteps sounding hollow on the marble floor.

"Omar!" she called breathlessly. "Omar!"

Her own voice echoed back to her, but there was no other reply.

Fearfully Stella crept towards the marble stairs, down which she and Joyce had fled so desperately—was it days or weeks ago? It seemed like an eternity.

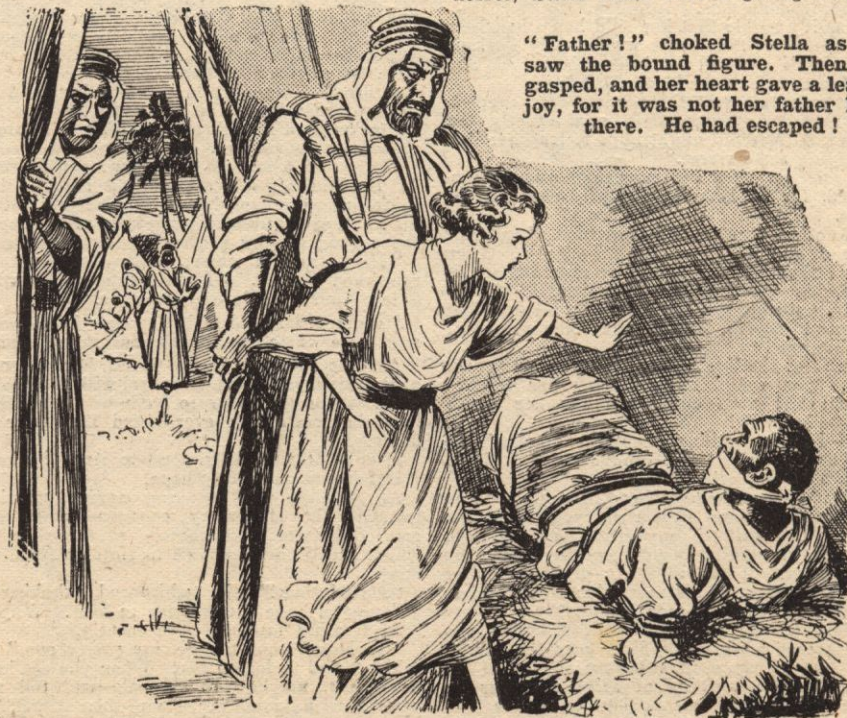
"Omar!" she called again. "It's I—Stella!"

And this time she heard a movement. A tall, white-robed figure appeared in the shadows, beckoning her.

Only for a moment Stella hesitated, and then, plucking up her courage, she darted towards it.

"Omar," she gasped, "is it you?"

A cruel hand closed like a vice on her shoulder; a scarred and bearded face was thrust close to hers. With a cold thrill of horror, Stella found herself gazing into the



"Father!" choked Stella as she saw the bound figure. Then she gasped, and her heart gave a leap of joy, for it was not her father lying there. He had escaped!



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If you can knit—and who can't in these days?—here is an opportunity for you to win a handsome cash prize by making up a design from one of the famous BESTWAY BOOKS. These splendid books contain the most attractive and practical styles for which very clear instructions are given. There are no difficult restrictions and NO ENTRANCE FEES in this competition. You can enter any type of garment providing the design was selected from a BESTWAY BOOK. See the list of latest titles on the back of this leaflet and make up your mind NOW to win the BESTWAY.

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KNITTING CONTEST

For Mothers, Elder Sisters and Aunts there are two more classes in this competition with prizes from 10s. to £50. Send for leaflet giving full particulars of adult classes to: G.P.O. Box No. 184a, Cobb's Court, Broadway, London, E.C.4.

CLASS 3

RULES:

1. Any number of articles may be submitted. Designs **MUST** be taken from a BESTWAY Book; these are obtainable through any bookstall, newsagent, or woolshop, price 6d. each. (If you have any difficulty in obtaining the title you want, send 7d. in stamps to BESTWAY, Bear Alley, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.)

2. All entries must be the competitors' own work. All articles must be new and unused. Colours and sizes may be varied according to requirements. It is not essential to use the wool mentioned for any particular design, but naturally the best results are obtained if that wool is used.

3. HOW TO SEND IN.—Garments may be sent for one or more classes, and packed separately or together, but each must have firmly sewn to it a piece of tape bearing sender's surname and town in block letters. Also each entry **MUST** have pinned to it:—

(a) A card giving full name and address of sender, number of class entered, and number of BESTWAY Book from which the design has been taken.

(b) An addressed label and sufficient stamps for the return of the garments.

Pack the complete entry securely and post to:—

BESTWAY Knitting Contest, No. 3,
1, Tallis House, John Carpenter Street,
London, E.C.4 (Comp.).

4. The Closing Date is October 30th, 1937. The entries will be judged by the Editress of the well-known magazine, "GOOD NEEDLEWORK & KNITTING." The names of the prize winners will be circulated to all competitors. The winning garments will be on view at Messrs. D. H. Evans, 290, Oxford Street, London, W.1.

5. All entries will be carefully handled, but no responsibility will be accepted for loss or damage in transit or otherwise. Proof of posting will not be accepted as proof of delivery. The decision of the Editress of the BESTWAY Books will be final and legally binding throughout. Employees of the proprietors of the BESTWAY Books are ineligible to compete; also we regret that on account of Customs difficulties, entries cannot be accepted from outside England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, and the Channel Islands.

6. Designs can also be taken from any BESTWAY Book not mentioned on this leaflet—many titles which are out of print at the publishers' being still on sale at newsagents and bookstalls.

Don't forget to state on your entry your age and if you are a regular reader of *GIRLS' CRYSTAL WEEKLY*, *SCHOOLGIRL*, or *SCHOOLGIRLS' WEEKLY*.

FOR YOUNG KNITTERS

For any article taken from BESTWAY Books and worked unaided by a girl or boy who has not yet reached 17 years of age. (Age must be stated on entry, also if a reader of *GIRLS' CRYSTAL WEEKLY*, *SCHOOLGIRL*, or *SCHOOLGIRLS' WEEKLY*.)

£3 FIRST PRIZE - £2 SECOND PRIZE
40 Prizes of £1 - 50 Prizes of 10/-

and special consolation prize to every schoolgirl knitter who enters the competition and is a regular reader of either **GIRLS' CRYSTAL WEEKLY - SCHOOLGIRL** or **SCHOOLGIRLS' WEEKLY**

Knit your entry from a design in one of these BESTWAY Books:

- No. 533 BEDROOM WEAR IN KNITTING AND CROCHET
- 558 BABIES' KNITTED WOOLLIES
- 563 TINY TOTS' WOOLLIES
- 578 KNITWEAR FOR GIRLS IN THEIR TEENS
- 580 KNITWEAR FOR BOYS IN THEIR TEENS
- 587 EASIKNIT WOOLLIES FOR BABY
- 589 COSY WEAR FOR CHILDREN
- 595 OUTDOOR COSY WEAR FOR CHILDREN
- 597 BABIES' SECOND WOOLLIES
- 598 JUVENILE JUMPERS
- 601 MOTHERCRAFT
- 603 MATRON'S KNITWEAR
- 608 LITTLE COATS IN KNITTING
- 613 MEN'S KNITTED SPORTS WEAR
- 621 KNITFAST WOOLLIES
- 626 BABIES' FIRST WOOLLIES
- 628 EXCLUSIVE JUMPERS
- 631 CHARMING JUMPERS AND CARDIGANS
- 635 BABIES' SECOND WOOLLIES
- 637 COSYWEAR FOR OLDER FOLK
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- 6 BABYTHINGS IN KNITTING AND MATERIAL
- 7 HOLLYWOOD JUMPERS
- 8 TODDLERS' WOOLLIES
- 9 DAINTY JUMPERS
- 10 EASY TO KNIT, EASY TO WEAR JUMPERS

(Also see Rule 6.)

Remember

YOUR DESIGN MUST BE SELECTED FROM A BESTWAY BOOK

The PHOTOGRAPH THAT ASKED for HELP

By
**PETER
LANGLEY**



THE MISSING PORTRAIT

"A—a letter for you, sir!" Parker, Noel Raymond's efficient valet, made the announcement as he entered with the young detective's afternoon tea.

On the edge of the tray was balanced a soiled-looking envelope, bearing sundry postmarks, some pencilled markings in the corner, and an almost illegible address.

Noel smiled, as he held out his hand for the missive.

"M'ph!" he commented. "Addressed by someone in a tearin' hurry—or very agitated; re-addressed by kindly post office officials, after being sent to three wrong districts. It looks interesting, Parker!"

Slitting open the flap, he extracted the contents of the envelope. Then he whistled softly, and Parker, who was standing behind him pouring out tea, clattered the milk-jug noisily against a cup.

"Well—I'll be dashed!" remarked Noel expressively.

He was holding in his hand a postcard portrait of a very charming girl—a girl with short bobbed hair, wide, expressive eyes, and faintly smiling lips.

And on the photo, in the same handwriting as that on the envelope—were scrawled words as mystifying as the portrait itself:

"Help! Please come quickly!"

Noel stiffened, his eyes narrowing.

"Parker," he jerked, "kindly pack me a small case—and include a revolver. I shall be leaving immediately."

"Very good, sir!" The valet's expression betrayed no hint of surprise. "You have—er—decided on the destination, sir?"

Noel stabbed his finger at the postmark.

"The first postmark—dated yesterday morning—a place named Clinford; it's a little village in Sussex, I believe. The letter should have reached me by last night's post; if the matter was urgent, then it's more urgent now! You might look me up the trains for Clinford."

"Very good, sir!"

Five minutes later, the young detective was ready.

An hour later, Noel stepped out of the train at the sleepy little wayside halt of Clinford-cum-Barton, in Sussex.

During the journey, he had thought over the difficulties of his strange errand. To start with, he had no inkling of the name of the girl, or where she lived.

The fact that the letter had been posted at Clinford was no proof that the girl resided there, though it was certainly a reasonable supposition.

The possibility of the whole thing being a practical joke, Noel dismissed. A practical joker, intent on bringing him on a fool's errand, would have made the message itself more explicit.

Noel had decided on his line of action. The village post office was the obvious place to commence inquiries. Possibly the postmaster, or postmistress, would know the girl by sight; at any rate, it would be a chance worth taking.

On the train Noel had carefully studied the portrait, memorising the girl's attractive features. He took a final glance at it now, as he strolled towards the barrier.

His train of thoughts was suddenly interrupted by an elderly lady at the barrier, who, in her search for her missing ticket, dropped a number of parcels on to the platform at his feet.

Immediately the young detective bent to retrieve them—to be thanked effusively for his pains.

"It's so kind of you—these stupid regulations—I knew I had my ticket somewhere. Ah, here it is, all the time! Thank you so much, young man. Really, I'm quite flustered. Is there such a thing as a taxi to be had? If you would be so kind—"

Noel, smiling good-humouredly, found himself encumbered with the elderly lady's luggage as he escorted her to a taxi. As the cab swung away with its fussy occupant, the young detective noticed a muddy and torn visiting-card lying on the road.

"The Grange—Clinford," he read; then, flicking it to one side with his stick, he stepped out briskly towards the village, his mind fully occupied with his strange errand.

Five minutes later, he entered a quaint, low-

ceilinged shop, where candles, soap, and fire-lighters were sold, side by side with sweets and post office requisites.

The shopkeeper, who was also the village postmaster, appeared from dim regions behind the counter. He was a benevolent, bespectacled little man, with a rubicund face, and an untidy mop of greying hair.

Noel purchased a postal order and some stamps, and opened up a casual conversation about the weather. He found the postmaster garrulous, and only too willing to talk.

"You're a stranger round these parts, sir? Don't remember seeing you before."

Noel shrugged as he lit a cigarette.

"Matter of fact, I came to meet a certain young lady—in answer to an advertisement," he explained. "I'm in the theatrical business, and I'm looking for someone to take part in a new play of mine. Unfortunately I've mislaid this young lady's name and address; it's very awkward."

The postmaster nodded sympathetically, his curiosity aroused.

"Very awkward, sir," he agreed. "Perhaps you could describe her, like? I know most folk living around Clinford."

"I can do better than that," rejoined Noel, smiling. "I've got her photograph here—"

He slipped a hand into his pocket; then a startled ejaculation escaped his lips. Hastily he went through his other pockets, turning out a wallet, a cigarette-case, and several oddments.

But the mystery girl's photo had vanished!

"Well, I'll be bothered!" ejaculated Noel, under his breath.

"You've lost it, sir?" inquired the postmaster, even more sympathetically.

Noel barely heard the question; he was thinking swiftly, his blue eyes narrowed.

The photograph could not have disappeared of its own accord; his pocket must have been picked—and by a particularly skilled thief, at that! It had been in his pocket at the time he left the station—

Noel drew in his breath sharply.

"The old lady at the barrier!" he muttered.

"Surely she couldn't have—"

"Did you speak, sir?" inquired the postmaster, regarding him strangely.

"I was saying I must have dropped it in the train," remarked Noel carelessly. "By the way"—he suddenly remembered the muddy visiting-card; it was a frail possibility, but worth following up—"who lives at the Grange?" he asked.

The postmaster shook his head, grimacing slightly.

"No young ladies there, sir; it's owned by a Miss Forrester—an elderly spinster, and a bit cranky—though it wouldn't do for it to get round I said so."

"Any maids?" inquired Noel. "Young ones?"

"No, sir," replied the postman emphatically. "Just an old housekeeper, an' a chauffeur-gardener—at least, there was before she gave

Noel could not resist the appeal for aid that was written on the photograph. His only clue to the writer's identity was the picture there. But when Noel found her, she refused his aid.

him the sack last week! 'Fraid you'd be wasting your time looking there, sir."

Noel nodded, a thoughtful frown between his eyes. He seemed to have drawn blank. Yet of one thing he was convinced.

The disappearance of the photograph banished his last lingering doubts about the genuineness of that strange appeal for help. Someone was trying to prevent his tracing the original of the picture. The girl of the portrait was in some desperate danger!

"Thanks," said Noel carelessly. "It looks as though I've come on a wild-goose chase. Do you know if there's a good train back to town?"

"There's a fast train at six o'clock, sir," replied the postmaster, consulting a time-table on the wall. "You'll just about make it, if you hurry."

Noel departed, walking briskly down the lane. On turning the corner, he halted, a grim smile on his lips. He could rely on the garrulous postmaster to spread the news of his arrival—and apparent departure; but he had no intentions of leaving by the six o'clock—or by any other train—until he had found the mystery girl of the photo!

The Grange was obviously his next line of investigation; he wished to confirm—or disprove—his suspicion concerning the elderly lady at the barrier.

A casual inquiry from a passing labourer directed him to the Grange—a large, old-fashioned house, standing in spacious grounds, and approached by a drive.

Noel strolled up to the house and knocked boldly on the door, framing some excuse to explain his call.

But though he knocked and rang several times, there was no reply.

Stepping back, he observed that all the windows were shut—as though the occupants were away.

"Queer," murmured Noel.

There was something vaguely sinister about the closed, silent house that aroused the young detective's suspicions. He stared round him. Over a low hedge he caught a glimpse of the adjoining property—a pleasant, thatched cottage standing in a pretty garden.

A girl was at work in the garden, her back towards him. She wore a dainty overall, and a drooping straw hat that shaded her face from the slanting rays of the sun.

She made an attractive picture as she bent at her task, and Noel strolled across to the hedge, intending to make some guarded inquiries.

Just then the girl looked round—and Noel caught in his breath.

"Well, I'll be hanged!" he breathed.

He found himself face-to-face with the mystery girl of the photo!

Rarely had Noel been more taken aback in his life. He had come post-haste from town on a presumably desperate mission; everything that had happened since his arrival in the village had seemed to confirm the possibility of danger.

Yet here was the original of the photograph—unharmful and smilingly composed, regarding him over the hedge with an expression of half-humorous inquiry.

"Good-afternoon," remarked the girl pleasantly, as she approached the hedge, trowel in hand. "Can I help you?"

Noel's lips tightened. The possibility of a practical-joke once more occurred to him; then he remembered the stolen photograph—and with sudden decision he pushed his way through a gap in the hedge, confronting the surprised girl.

"My name's Noel Raymond," he began briefly. "I rather fancy you sent for me?"

The girl's smile faded; she stared at him in bewilderment.

"Noel Raymond—the detective?" she breathed. "But I don't understand. Why should I send for you? There—there must be some mistake! My name's Gaynor—Elsie Gaynor," she added.

Noel regarded her keenly, suspecting that she might be acting a part; but her expression of bewilderment seemed completely genuine.

Noel regarded her narrowly, hardly knowing what to think. If the girl had sent him that message—why deny it?

"As a matter of fact," he said, watching

her closely, "I rather wanted to see your neighbour—to ask her to return your photograph, which she took from me at the station, half an hour ago!"

It was a shot at random; the girl's look of amazement deepened.

"Are—are you quite mad?" she gasped. "Or is this your idea of a joke? I don't think much of it! Miss Forrester's my best friend; she was called away suddenly last night, to visit a relative who's seriously ill. How dare you say things like that about her? Please leave my garden at once!" And turning away, the girl commenced to chop at a flower-bed with a hoe, ignoring Noel's existence.

The young detective let himself out of the little wicket-gate, and strolled a few yards down the lane. His eyes were puzzled; his forehead was puckered in thought.

Was it possible that he had made some stupid blunder?

Yet that face was unmistakable; he would have known it anywhere. It was a queer coincidence, too, that she should be living next door to the Grange—the house that had already excited his suspicions.

If she had not sent that photograph, then who—

Noel's train of thoughts were interrupted in a startling manner. Cutting through the drowsy silence came the sound of shattering glass—and a girl's terrified scream for help!

The young detective spun on his heel, his face paling; for a moment he imagined the cry had come from the garden he had just left. Then, as it was repeated—more faintly—he realised that it came from the deserted house next door.

Whipping out his revolver, he thrust his way through the high hedge, and pelted across the grounds.

The house, as he approached it from the rear, appeared very much as when he had last seen it—creeper-covered, shuttered, and silent.

For a moment he wondered if he could have imagined that terrified cry; then abruptly he stiffened as his sharp eyes detected the glister of broken glass on the weed-grown path.

He stepped back into the bushes, staring up at the house. Then a stifled, incredulous ejaculation escaped his lips.

Pressed against a narrow, barred window on the first floor was a white, terrified face—the face of the girl in the portrait—the girl whom he had taken leave of only a few minutes ago!

The next instant, with a cry, the girl vanished from sight.

THE SHADOW ON THE DOOR

NOEL was galvanised into frenzied action. There was no time, at the moment, to attempt to solve the baffling mystery of how the girl came to be in the house.

That she was in some peril was only too apparent—and the young detective lost no time. Using the butt of his revolver, he smashed one of the downstairs windows, and leaped into the room beyond. A locked door barred his way; but Noel fired into the lock, shattering it to smithereens.

The door burst open as he flung himself against it, staggering into a narrow passage.

A flight of stairs confronted him—apparently the servants' staircase. Noel mounted them two at a time, kicking open a door at the top.

He found himself in a small room, lit by a single-barred window. It was furnished as a bed-sitting-room, but was in a state of wild disorder. Noel examined it carefully, then left it.

But there was no trace of anyone on that floor, nor on the floor above. Baffled and worried, Noel made his way to the ground floor, to find both front and back doors securely bolted—on the inside!

Yet that white, terrified face at the barred window had been no illusion; his acquaintance of a quarter of an hour ago—the mysterious girl who had denied any knowledge of her own photograph—had been in this house—must be here still—

With growing uneasiness he retraced his steps upstairs, making a more thorough search.

And this time he solved part of the mystery. Adjoining one of the upstairs rooms was a small balcony, and as Noel stepped on to it his sharp eyes detected two deep indentations in the white-painted balustrade.

"A rope-ladder!" he snapped. "But what's it mean?"

There was no time for surmise. Noel climbed over the balustrade, vaulting to the ground.

Here, after a brief search, he found the traces he was seeking—footprints! The footprints of a man's rubber-soled shoes—more faintly marked than the other.

"Fellow with a limp!" commented Noel, his eyes glinting. "That may be useful. But what about the girl? Either he was carrying her, or—"

Noel did not pursue the train of thoughts. He followed the trail of footprints as far as the gravel path, and then lost sight of them.

But close to the border of the path he saw something glistening in the fading light. Pouncing on it, he found that it was a link from a girl's chain-bracelet—unusually carved.

"A clue!" breathed Noel softly. "We're gettin' on. But if only I'd kept my eye on the girl, this wouldn't have happened."

He blamed himself bitterly for allowing the mystery girl out of sight. But Elsie Gaynor had been so emphatic in her denials, so obviously annoyed, that he'd not been given much option.

Besides, he'd barely left her garden for more than a minute or two before he heard the scream.

"That's what I can't make out," muttered Noel, as he prowled round the house, seeking further clues. "How the deuce did she get into the house so quickly? If she'd run there at top speed immediately I was out of sight, she could scarcely have managed it—"

He decided to try out the distance for himself. Vaulting the low hedge that divided the two properties, he made his way quickly across the pretty cottage garden, to the thatched house itself.

"Three minutes," he muttered. "She couldn't have done it in less. She must have been in a desperate hurry; and her attacker was obviously waiting there, concealed in the house—"

He broke with a start as he reached the cottage porch; the door had opened suddenly. A slim figure stood on the threshold, a coat flung hastily over her overalls, a felt hat crammed on her hair.

Catching sight of Noel, she drew back with a startled gasp.

Noel's ejaculation was more emphatic than polite as he leaped into the porch, grabbing the girl by the arm—the girl he had set out to rescue!

But this time there was fear in her eyes; and in her hand she clutched a crumpled letter.

"What—what do you want?" she gasped. "Why have you come back?"

Noel breathed deeply, his eyes hardening. "Miss Gaynor," he snapped, "will you kindly inform me what you were doing in the house next door, and why you screamed for help?"

The girl's eyes were dilated.

"I—I don't know what you mean!" she gasped. "Please—please let me go!"

But Noel did not release his grip.

"Were you, or were you not, in that house?" he demanded sternly. "Was it you who screamed for help? Did you drop—this?"

As he spoke he held out the link of the chain bracelet.

A startling change took place in the girl's face. She turned ghastly pale, and caught at Noel's arm for support.

"Then—then it's true!" she moaned. "Oh, goodness, it's true!"

The young detective caught her as she collapsed in a dead swoon in his arms.

"THIS," breathed Noel softly, "Is the limit!"

There was a baffled expression in his eyes as he lifted the fainting girl into the cottage, and laid her gently on a couch.

There could be no mistaking the terror that had brought about her swoon. It had been as real as her previous smiling unconcern.

But what strange sequence of events had brought about this change? What was the sinister mystery surrounding the house next door, the face at the window, the scream?

And how were they linked up with the photograph that had been sent to him by post?

Noel was determined at all costs to fathom the mystery.

He bent over the fainting girl to make quite certain that her swoon was genuine. His glance fell on her wrist, and a faint frown crept into his eyes.

He had expected to find some faint mark left by the chain bracelet, but there was no mark there.

Then he noticed the letter crushed in her hand, and very gently he extracted it.

It was charred, as though the girl had tried to burn it; only a few words were visible:

"If you value your . . . life . . . at once to . . . ill . . . silence . . ."

"What's the missing word before 'life'?" he muttered. "The letter's a threat, of course. Better not let her know I've seen it."

He slipped the note back into the unconscious girl's hand.

Then he fetched water from a tap in the scullery, and after a few minutes brought the fainting girl to her senses.

For a moment she stared at him in wonderment; then an involuntary shudder passed over her.

"Feeling better, Miss Gaynor?" Noel inquired gently. "Like to tell me what the trouble is? Y'know, I'm here as your friend."

"No," she whispered, "I—I can't—I daren't!"

"Daren't?" echoed Noel swiftly. "You're afraid of someone? That's why you sent me your photograph in the first place?"

The girl looked up suddenly, her lips trembling.

"I—I didn't send it!" she breathed. "It's not—oh, you don't understand! Please—please don't ask me any more! Please go!"

"Not on your life!" rejoined Noel cheerfully. "After what's happened, Miss Gaynor, I'm not letting you out of my sight—not unless you tell me the truth about this affair, and let me have a shot at putting things right."

The girl rose slowly to her feet, her face pale but determined.

"Mr. Raymond, you must go!" she said unsteadily. "It's a matter of—of life and death. Every moment you stay in this house makes things worse. Please—please go! I must be alone—to think."

The young detective rose at the same time, moved by the earnest appeal in her voice.

His face was inscrutable.

"Very well," he said quietly, "I'll go. But I don't intend to leave this house unguarded. I'll keep watch outside. If you want me I'll be in the porch."

With a grave bow he departed, letting himself out of the cottage, and slamming the front door behind him.

The girl stood uncertainly in the hall, watching Noel's shadow silhouetted against the frosted glass of the door panels. The young detective obviously intended to remain on guard.

Biting her lip, she retreated into the inner room, closing the door and snatching up the telephone. Swiftly she dialed a number.

"Cliford Garage?" she asked breathlessly.

"I want a taxi, please—at once. Oh, tell the man to drive to the back entrance of the Grange, and pull up there. I'll be waiting for him."

She rang off; then, cautiously opening the door, she glanced towards the porch.

Noel's shadow was still silhouetted against the frosted glass of the front door. He had barely moved from his first position.

Noiselessly the girl retreated, and, opening the french windows, crept out on to the terrace, running swiftly across the garden to the narrow lane at the rear of the house.

And in her wake, noiseless as a shadow, crept Noel, while the hat and coat remained hanging in a life-like fashion on the knocker in the porch!

ALL at once Noel heard the wheezy sound of an ancient car approaching from the distance. He saw the girl quicken her pace, and his eyes narrowed.

The next moment he had taken a short cut across the grounds to vault the fence bordering the lane.

An ancient taxi swung round the corner even as the young detective reached the lane. Noel stepped in front of it, holding out his hand imperatively.

The somnolent taxi-driver peered at him in surprise.

Noel sprang on to the footboard.

"I represent the police!" he snapped tersely, producing his card and a pound note. "I'm going to borrow your taxi for half an hour or so."

He gave the surprised man no time to protest. Relieving him of his cap, he bundled him out into the road, minus his peaked cap, and thrust the note into his hand.

A few minutes later, at the wheel of the taxi, the peaked cap pulled well over his eyes, Noel pulled up at the back entrance of the Grange.

He blessed the fading light that made even close objects blurred and indistinct.

girl was simply taking precautions to make certain her errand remained a secret.

Noel's lips tightened; his anxiety deepened. He had lost his quarry, and he was more than ever convinced that she was running into some deadly danger.

AT THE MILL

REMOVING the ignition-key of the taxi, Noel commenced to retrace his steps hurriedly back along the dark lane, flashing his torch on the long grass at the roadside.

But he found no trace of the missing girl.

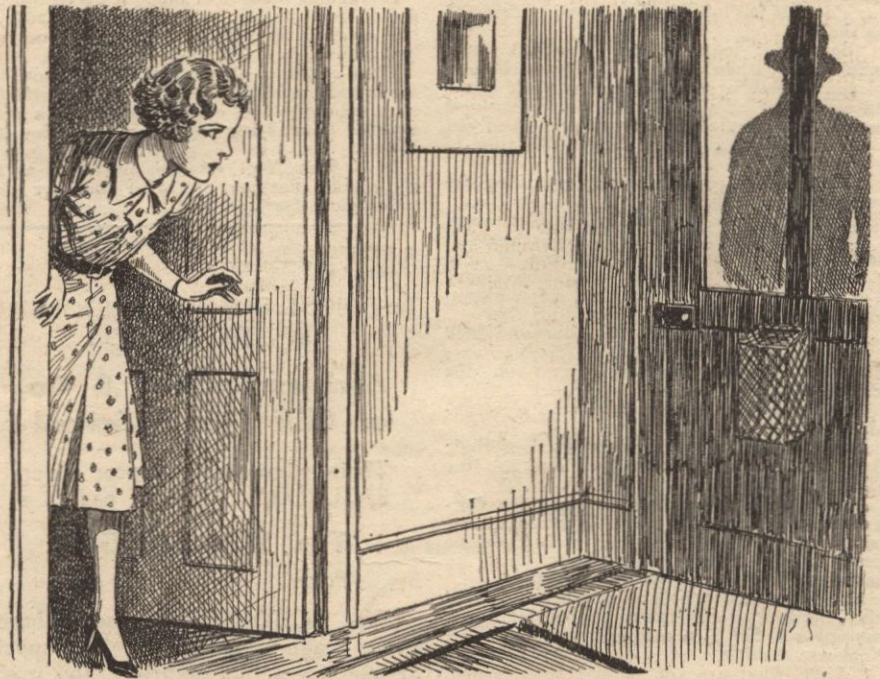
Noel halted, his hands clenched at his sides. To his ears came the faint whisper of the wind in the trees—and another sound—the sound of rippling water.

Suddenly the young detective stiffened, dragging the charred note out of his pocket and scrutinising it by the light of his torch.

"If you value you . . . life . . . at once to . . . ill—"

"'Ill'!" muttered Noel, staring hard at the word. "There's a letter missing in front of that. My hat, I must have been blind! It's 'Mill'! That explains the sound of running water!"

A moment later he was scaling a rough stone wall, to peer over the top. A soft hiss of satisfaction escaped his lips as he saw the dim outlines of an old water-mill, the stream



Cautiously Elsie opened the door and glanced towards the porch. Noel's shadow was still silhouetted there. Now was her chance to escape by the back way, the girl decided. She thought she had completely tricked the young detective.

The girl was standing by the roadside—pale and tense.

"Where to, miss?" demanded Noel gruffly, as he held open the door.

But the girl hesitated.

"Drive straight on and take the first turning on the right," she breathed. "I'll—I'll tell you when to stop."

Noel shrugged and climbed into the driving-seat, implicitly following the girl's instructions. He had been driving for about a quarter of an hour when she rapped at the window.

The young detective pulled up promptly, and, climbing out, threw open the door.

Then a startled ejaculation escaped his lips. The taxi was empty, and the door on the far side was standing wide open.

On the seat lay half-a-crown, for the fare.

In a flash Noel realised how she had tricked him. She must have sprung from the taxi immediately he commenced to slow down.

Had she seen through his imposture? It was hardly likely. More probably the mysterious

gurgling under a narrow plank bridge and between the rusted iron flanges of the motionless wheel.

And even as he clung to the wall, his gaze raking the dark background, a gruff voice hailed him from the road.

"Hi!" it said. "What are you a-doing of up there, mister?"

Noel turned, half-expecting to see a policeman, but, instead, he made out a stocky, familiar figure pushing a bicycle.

It was his late acquaintance, the village postmaster.

Noel's eyes narrowed as he slid to the ground. The man might be useful.

"Why, it's the gent from London!" exclaimed the postmaster, in surprise. "Thought you said you was going back on the six o'clock—"

"I changed my mind," said Noel coolly. "I'm interested in old villages, and I thought I'd do a bit of exploring."

With a friendly nod to the postmaster, Noel pushed open a rickety gate and made his way

along a narrow path grown thickly with nettles. It was obvious from the trampled nettles that someone had passed this way recently.

His gaze fixed on the plank bridge across the stream, he did not notice a light flashing behind him—three times in quick succession. If he had, he might have connected it with the postmaster's bicycle-lamp.

A moment later he was approaching the seemingly deserted millhouse.

The boarded windows were like masked eyes gaping at him unseeingly. The place seemed empty, desolate.

Then Noel observed a glimmer of light streaming beneath the crevice of a door. Swiftly he approached the door and kicked it open.

A slim, fair-haired young man stood in a bare, dismal room, smoking a cigarette. He turned as Noel entered, raising his eyebrows inquiringly.

"What on earth—" he began.

Noel stared sharply round the room.

"I believe a young lady came here just now!" he snapped. "I've called to take her home."

The other smiled incredulously.

"A young lady—here?" he demanded. "My dear fellow, are you mad? Perhaps you'd like to search the place?"

"Thanks, I will!"

Keeping a wary eye on the man, Noel crossed the room, pushing open a door on the far side. It led into another room, as deserted as the first.

"Satisfied?" inquired the fair-haired young man, a shade mockingly. "No secret hiding-places, I assure you. I'd be glad if you'd explain what all this—theatrical business means"—he pointed to the revolver—"and just what you're doing in my mill at this time of night."

"Your mill?" repeated Noel, regarding the young man sharply.

The other's pale eyes held a hint of menace.

"My mill," he repeated. "I purchased it recently, with the idea of turning it into a novel kind of tea-house. Any objections? I came here to-night to work out a few alterations. Perhaps you'd like to go now?"

He stepped forward as he spoke and held open the door mockingly. Noel's eyes narrowed suddenly as he paused on the threshold.

The fair-haired man walked with a noticeable limp.

For a moment the young detective hesitated; then, with a shrug, he stepped out into the night.

As the door closed behind him, the fair-haired man crossed the room. Shifting a loose board in the wall, he flashed a torch—three times in quick succession. There came an answering flash from among the bushes.

At the same instant a door opened behind him—the door of a concealed cupboard. A girl stepped out, her face pale and tense—the girl Noel was seeking.

"What—what are you doing?" she gasped, starting towards the man.

The other spun on his heel.

"Quiet!" he hissed. "I've warned you what'll happen if you try to double-cross me! You were wise to remain silent just now!"

The girl's hands were clenched; there was a desperate gleam in her eyes.

"I've been mad to listen to you!" she said chokingly. "I demand to know what you've done with Jean! One word to Noel Raymond, and your game will be up!"

The man smiled unpleasantly.

"On the contrary, Miss Gaynor. That fool detective's meddled for the last time! I've warned you I stick at nothing! To save further trouble to someone dear to you, I suggest you sign this little document without delay."

He drew a folded paper from his pocket.

The girl shrank away from him, her eyes wide with horror.

"I—I won't!" she gasped. "You daren't do what you say—you daren't! I'll scream for help!"

She darted for the door, but in one stride the man overtook her, clapping a hand over her mouth, and forcing her back into a chair.

"You'll sign," he snarled, "or I'll carry out my threat!"

NOEL halted on the bank of the mill-race, flashing his torch on the ground.

Abruptly he stiffened, staring hard at the muddy bank. There was a sign of a struggle; the ground had been trodden. There were marks of a girl's high-heeled shoes.

As the young detective bent forward to scrutinise them more closely, his sharp ear detected a barely audible movement in the bushes behind him.

He remained motionless, staring down at the surface of the water. He saw a squat, shadowy figure creep up behind him, its arm raised to strike, something gleaming dully in its hand.

In a flash the young detective ducked and swung round, his bunched fist encountering his would-be assailant's jaw, bringing the man crashing to the ground.

Grimly he stared down into the dazed, scowling features of the village postmaster!

"So my beauty!" remarked Noel, flashing his torch into the other's face. "I rather fancied you were mixed up in this! You were just a bit too anxious for me to catch that six o'clock train back to town—and your presence here this evening was a trifle too opportune."

He bent, seizing the other by the shoulder. "Now you'll talk!" he snapped. "What have you done with the girl?"

The postmaster's head lolled, and suddenly the greying hair moved, revealing a close-cropped head of fair hair beneath.

It did not take Noel long to make the disguised man talk. A few minutes later he had entered the mill by a back entrance and had climbed a ladder there.

Then a stifled ejaculation escaped his lips. He found himself in a dark loft, hung thickly with cobwebs—and empty except for a girl's huddled figure lying on a heap of sacking in a corner.

In a flash Noel was on his knees at the girl's side, flashing his torch into her pale, unconscious features.

MEET——

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"Miss Gaynor!" he exclaimed huskily.

Then his expression changed; he bent nearer. There was something subtly different about the girl's face; it seemed more fine-drawn, fragile. Those dark hollows beneath her eyes could not have been acquired suddenly, and there was a faint mark on her slim wrist as though she had worn a chain bracelet.

"Ye gods!" breathed Noel, as startled enlightenment flashed into his eyes. "It's the other girl—the girl I saw at the window of the Grange! They're two of 'em—sisters; and it's this girl who sent me the photo, not the other!"

Feverishly he set to work to rouse the unconscious girl, and after a little while his efforts were rewarded.

"I WON'T sign!" whispered Elsie Gaynor, her eyes wide with horror. "I won't! It's not true—it's a hateful lie—"

"I'll give you three minutes more!" snarled the fair-haired man. "Either you sign—or

you'll never see your sister again! I don't threaten vainly. I've a man outside who'll stick at nothing; he's already settled with your precious detective—"

As he spoke the door burst open, to admit the dripping figure of the village postmaster, his face swathed in a rough bandage.

"He—he got away, guv'nor!" exclaimed the man hoarsely. "Nearly knocked me out. And he's found the girl; I heard 'em talkin'. The tec fellow's comin' along here now—"

The fair-haired man sprang to his feet.

"You fool!" he snarled. "I might have guessed you'd bungle it! Here, stand behind the door, and shoot as he comes in; I'll keep the girl quiet."

He clapped a hand over Elsie's mouth, stifling her scream. With a grim smile, the other man took his stand behind the door, revolver in hand.

There came the sound of footsteps approaching the door; Elsie's eyes dilated as she struggled furiously, trying to call out a desperate warning.

The door-handle turned.

"Now!" hissed the fair-haired man.

With an unexpected movement his confederate swung round, whipping off his grey wig and covering him with his revolver.

"The game's up, Crawford!" snapped Noel grimly. "Stick up your hands! Constable"—he addressed the burly figure who entered through the door—"arrest that man for kidnapping and attempted fraud. You'll find his assistant trussed up by the millrace—our friend the postmaster, but without his wig!"

"THANKS to your sister's plucky action, Miss Gaynor, you escaped being placed in a very nasty predicament," remarked Noel, smiling. "From what she's told me, I gather that she chose a stage career—while you preferred to remain quietly in the country, with your painting and sketching.

"It was while she was touring with a certain company that she encountered this young man Crawford—who happened to be a scapegrace nephew of your wealthy friend and neighbour, Miss Forrester.

"He was in his aunt's bad books, and he had discovered that, unknown to you, the old lady had left you everything in her will.

"He was in desperate straits financially, and had borrowed money heavily on the strength of his expectations.

"He decided that, if he could trick you into marrying him, he might come into the fortune that he believed was his right.

"Unfortunately for his plans, he mistook your sister for you—and proposed. Too late he discovered his mistake—after she had tumbled to his plot.

"Realising your danger, she wrote to warn you; but, as it happened, the village postmaster was a shady character—an ex-crook who was lying low to evade the police. He was a master of disguise, too, as I know from my experience at the railway station.

"Warned by Crawford, he opened your sister's letter—and discovered that she was paying a visit to Clinford to put old Miss Forrester on her guard.

"Between them they concocted a plan to kidnap your sister—after first deceiving Miss Forrester away by means of a fake telegram. Using her as a weapon, they intended to force you to sign that document, relinquishing all benefits under the old lady's will in favour of 'your fiance,' Ralph Crawford.

"Your sister got wind of the plot, and, on the train, she commenced to scribble a hurried message to me on the back of one of her stage photos.

"But what with her agitation and the jolting of the train she did not complete the message. Changing at the junction, she dropped it on the platform, and it was probably picked up and posted by a station official.

"The rest," said Noel, smiling, "I think you know. Jean is none the worse for her adventure, though, if I were you, I'd persuade her to settle down quietly in the country with you for a time. She's really earned a rest!"

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

"The Shadow Over the Holiday Camp." Don't miss the exciting detective story that appears in next Friday's **GIRLS' CRYSTAL**. Order yours to-day.



SUSIE'S

Surprise Shampoo

By
ELISE
PROBYN



A SHOCK FOR MISS WICKENS!

ANY more for a shampoo? Don't push, girls—I'll do you all in turn!" It was close on bed-time, and Susie Bowling had finished machining frocks for the day at Spollard's, the London gown manufacturers.

Wearing an apron and towels round her, Susie stood in the staff dormitory, giving Nellie Baker a hearty shampooing over the washstand. Her own hair already gleamed luxuriantly from the same treatment, and so did that of lots of other girls who clustered in gleeful groups at the mirror.

The rest were queuing up eagerly to await their turn; and it was easy to see—by the results and the general delight—that Susie had discovered an extra-good shampoo.

"It's got such a lovely tingle to it!" rejoined Nellie.

"And gives such a lovely gloss!" enthused others.

"So glad you like it, troops—because I told you it's my cousin's own preparation; she invented it!" chattered Susie, sprinkling a little more of the lotion on Nellie's raven locks, and working it into a silky foam. "It's everything that a shampoo ought to be, and it's absolutely pure and harmless. Cousin Phyl can't afford to advertise it, of course—otherwise I'll bet it would sell like hot muffins!"

"But she's got her own shop now where we can buy it—you said, Susie?"

"Yes! Phyl's started a little beauty-shop of her own in Camberwell," rattled on Susie. "She sent me this sample shampoo for us all to try, so if you like it, ducks, I do hope you'll all do her a good turn, and give her your custom."

"I shall, for one—that's a promise, Susie!" vowed Mabel Barge, whose own hair usually resembled the bristles of a garden-broom, but was now looking a treat. "I can't believe it's me in the mirror! You can order me a bottle from your cousin as quick as you like!"

"And me!" chorused a dozen others.

Delighted for her cousin's sake, Susie went on shampooing them one by one. The bottle was getting low when Lizzie Brown, the staff

kitchenmaid, came in to collect the hot-water jugs for next morning.

"Hallo, Lizzie, you look tired, ducks!" Susie said sympathetically.

Lizzie gave a wondering glance at the

glossy heads she saw, and just nodded wearily.

"It's Miss Wickens, the forewoman—she gives me work enough for ten!" said Lizzie. "She's going to that swell dinner party she keeps bragging about, and it isn't until Saturday night, and she made me stay in again and do hours of washing and ironing for her, and she knew it was my evening off!"

There was no limit to Miss Wickens' selfishness, Susie knew. Whenever Miss Wickens was going out on pleasure, other people had to slave and run about for her, and all they got was bullying by way of thanks.

"Never mind, Lizzie, my love!" comforted Susie. "You sit down in this chair, and I'll give you a jolly old shampoo. It'll freshen you up!"

In five minutes, Lizzie was all smiles, and her very nice hair was sparkling gloriously. Susie had just begun to dry it for her, when a cantankerous voice sounded in the passage.

"Where's that wretched girl—where's Lizzie?"

The door snapped open, and Miss Wickens pushed her head impatiently into the dormitory.

She was wearing a brightly flowered kimono, and her dignity was a little marred by the fact that her plump face was liberally daubed with cream, which streaked her cheeks like dabs of butter. She had obviously been spending much money and care over her own hair. It was more brilliantly gold than usual, Susie

noticed, and its sleeky waves were encased in a close-fitting netcap.

"Oh, there you are, Lizzie!" she exclaimed, and then stopped. "Good gracious!"

Miss Wickens was staring at Lizzie's newly shampooed hair. Her brows lifted disdainfully. She was about to snigger, when she saw, to her astonishment, that Susie's hair was equally spruce—likewise that of the rest of the girls.

"What's going on here, Bowling? What have you all been doing to yourselves?" she demanded.

"Trying out a new shampoo, ma'am! D'you like it?" Susie said brightly.

"It seems rather wasted on you girls, if you ask me!" scoffed Miss Wickens.

But her eyes were gleaming like boot-buttons. She gazed first at one girl, and then another, and the silky sheen of their hair moved her to envy. Even Mabel Barge looked presentable for once.

"It doesn't suit any of you a bit!" Miss Wickens said, and added swiftly: "What stuff did you use, Bowling? Where did you buy it?"

Susie was explaining that it was her cousin's preparation, but Miss Wickens interrupted her; she had seen the bottle now, and there was still a little left in it.

"You've finished with this, haven't you, Bowling?"

"Well, ma'am—"

"And you'd like me to try it myself and give an opinion?" Miss Wickens said, smiling ingratiatingly, and picking up the bottle.

"May I take it all, Susie? There's not more than one application here, is there?"

"Just about, ma'am; you're welcome!" Susie agreed good-naturedly.

Away went Miss Wickens, taking the bottle with her, and the other girls looked at each other, and asked if they could beat that for cool greediness.

"Never mind, we've all tried it now!" said Susie. "Hands up, everyone who wants to order some!"

There was an immediate show of hands.

Susie finished drying Lizzie's hair, and then got out her writing-pad from the locker behind her bed. She made a list of all the orders for her Cousin Phyl's shampoo.

"Phyl's going to love you for this, ducks!" rejoiced Susie. "I don't mind telling you that she's finding things a bit of a struggle at first, in the little shop. It's all she can do to pay her way, what with the rent and the lighting and everything. But she had five years' experience in a West End beauty parlour, before she started up on her own, and she knows the business from A to Z."

All the girls at the hostel were delighted with the new shampoo Susie introduced to them. But results were startling when Miss Wickens used it on her own hair!

The list grew longer; Susie wrote a covering note to her cousin, and was about to seal it up for the post when she remembered Miss Wickens.

"Well, I don't see why old Wicky shouldn't buy some; she pinched the last of it, and she's got ten times as much money as we have!"

Leaving the note, Susie hurried out of the dormitory. She was almost at Miss Wickens' room when a shrill scream came from inside.

Susie stopped dead.

The door burst open, and Miss Wickens rushed screeching into the passage. The cream was trickling in beads down her face. Her netcap was removed. But her hair—

Her hair had gone SEA GREEN!

Susie took one look at her, then gave a shriek of helpless laughter. She had to hold on to the wall to support herself.

The noise brought the other girls streaking out of the dormitory. They nearly went into hysterics. Their laughter raised the roof.

Miss Wickens' hair, which had been a brassy gold, was now hanging in tresses of startling seaweed green. She was dancing up and down in a frenzy of rage.

"You can laugh, Bowling! You'll be sorry for this to your dying day!" she howled.

"Me?" gasped Susie.

"I'll give you practical jokes! I'll teach you to fool me with your shampoo! I'll—"

"I—I don't know what you mean, ma'am!"

What was Miss Wickens saying? Accusing her of a practical joke? Blaming the shampoo for this startling change to her hair?

"I wasn't playing any joke on you, ma'am—there was nothing wrong about that shampoo!" Susie gasped out. "What have you done?"

"What have I done?" screamed Miss Wickens.

She pounced on Susie with her hair waving like a flowing aspidistra, and the sight sent the others off into convulsions—but not Susie.

"Honest, ma'am, I wouldn't do such a thing—I wouldn't be so mean!" she gasped. "Let's get into your room—let's see what's wrong. It's nothing to do with the shampoo. I've used it, and everybody's used it!"

In concern, she shepherd Miss Wickens into her room, and at sight of herself in the mirror, Miss Wickens sank moaning into a chair, swaying from side to side.

"What else did you use on your hair, ma'am?" coaxed Susie.

"Don't try to get out of it in that way, you brazen hussy!" accused Miss Wickens, and she pointed passionately to the washbowl. "That's all I used—that poison muck that you foisted on to me!"

Susie stared in amazement. Sure enough there was nothing in the washbowl except water and the lathery remains of the shampoo, taken from the empty bottle beside it.

"Were you out of the room for a minute, and could anyone have dodged in and played a trick?" Susie said.

"No, they couldn't, because I wasn't out of the room, and because you're the only wretch who played this trick, and you'll suffer for it, Bowling!" raved Miss Wickens. "I spent a guinea to have my hair done in the West End this evening. You've ruined it! You've done it permanent ruin! But I warn you, Bowling—you've chosen a bad time for your funny joke!"

Susie wasn't listening. She was emptying the bowl and filling it with fresh water, hoping that a thorough washing would restore Miss Wickens' hair to its normal hue.

From the distant dormitory came another burst of laughter.

Miss Wickens knocked the bowl flying out of Susie's hand.

"A very bad time you've chosen, Bowling!" she raged, her hair waving like green grass in the breeze. "I'm dining out on Saturday night at the Trade Conference. I am to accompany Mr. Spollard as his lady representative. Do you imagine I can go like this? Do you understand you will be responsible to Mr. Spollard if I am kept away? Get out of this room, Bowling! This is the worst night's work you have ever done!"

THE WORK-ROOM INSPECTION

SUSIE was sorry for Miss Wickens, but she couldn't blame herself for that inexplicable disaster.

The work-room presented an immaculate sight next morning.

At the machines there was one long row of silky heads, blondes and brunettes alike, all groomed as smartly as you would see in a picture. The effect was quite striking. It was a splendid advertisement for Cousin Phyl's shampoo.

"Anyone seen Wicky this morning?" Susie asked.

"No; she had her breakfast up in her room," someone said. "I don't think she's come on duty yet."

A loud and threatening cough came from inside Miss Wickens' office. Susie & Co. exchanged warning glances. Miss Wickens was in there all the time!

Work went on silently after that. Susie whisked the cut-out frocks through her machine, hemming, stitching, labelling, while the pile of finished garments grew steadily higher on the bench beside her.

No one heard Mr. Spollard come into the work-room; but all at once his voice rang out with hearty approval.

"Well, girls, I must say you look very smart this morning! What's happened? Have you started a hairdressing club?"

Susie beamed round, and saw the boss standing in the middle of the room.

"No, sir; we've been using a new shampoo, that's all. Do you like it?"

"Immensely!" declared Mr. Spollard.

Susie saw a chance of getting further custom for her cousin.

"If I could interest you and your lady folks in the shampoo, sir—" she began.

But Mr. Spollard had an eye to his own business.

"This gives me an idea!" he went on, rubbing his hands together eagerly. "The members of the Trade Conference are visiting me to-day. Americans, French, Swiss—all the delegates from abroad. I was only going to show them the mannequin parade; but, upon my word, I'll bring them here and let them see what a smart crowd are Spollard's workgirls! Where's Miss Wickens?"

He stepped towards the forewoman's office.

"It will be an eye-opener to them!" he said. "You girls are putting a feather in Spollard's cap, because you have realised the importance of a nice appearance—a beautiful head of tresses—" With a gasp, Mr. Spollard broke off. "Heavens alive!"

He had opened the door of the office.

Seated there at her desk was Miss Wickens, her face scarlet, and her hair standing on end in bristles of streaky pink!

"Bless my soul! What have you been doing to your hair, ma'am?" gasped the boss.

"So far as it concerns you, Mr. Spollard—nothing!" rasped Miss Wickens, looking as if she would bite him.

The boss reddened.

"It does concern me, madam! I consider it an insult for you to appear on duty in my establishment in that unrepresentable state!"

Susie was still trying to grasp the fact that Miss Wickens' hair had changed from green to pink. But she could sympathise with Miss Wickens' feelings, and she didn't want to see her blunder into a row with the boss; so Susie jumped up and ran to the rescue.

"Excuse me, sir, Miss Wickens didn't tell you that she has been having special hair treatment," Susie said tactfully, "so that she'll look nice for Saturday night!"

She affected to find complaints here and there with some of the girls, saying that their hair was untidy, and she gave orders right and left.

"It's close in here, Bowling; switch on the electric fan over the door!" she said imperiously to Susie.

Susie obeyed her, and Miss Wickens passed on down the bench, leading the delegates with conscious magnificence.

"Don't block the doorway, Bowling—the ladies and gentlemen want to get out!" she snapped at the end, giving Susie a spiteful dig with her elbow.

Smiling farewell to the visitors, Miss Wickens took up her position by the door.

"And I mean that something will have to be done about it, and I want to help you. I can help you!" Susie said, closing the door hastily to drown the laughter of her work-mates. "I've got a cousin who runs a little beauty shop of her own. She would understand exactly what's wrong. She specialises in hair treatment. She made that shampoo—"

"She made what?" screeched Miss Wickens.

"She knows the business all ends up, ma'am, and I tell you honestly there was nothing wrong with the shampoo. How could there be?" Susie hurried on. "Look at my hair—look at everybody's; we all used the same stuff! I haven't played any joke, ma'am, and what I want you to do is to go along to my cousin and get her to treat your hair, and she'll do it at trade price for you. Here's her address!"

She pressed one of her cousin's cards into Miss Wickens' hand; but Miss Wickens pitched it to the other end of the office.

"I can see your cunning, Bowling! It was all a trick to make me give my custom to your wretched relation!" she flared.

Susie shrugged, but she knew that Miss Wickens didn't believe anything of the sort and that she must realise by now that her accusations were all unfounded.

"Well, there's my advice!" Susie said cheerfully. "Meantime, there's no need to go about like that if it embarrasses you, ma'am. I wouldn't!"

"And what would you do?" snorted Miss Wickens.

"That's easy!" said Susie.

She skipped up to the dormitory, where a basket of theatrical props were kept for the staff dramatic society. There was an excellent gold wig amongst them—made of real hair and made by a master. Susie took a comb, brush, and pins from the dressing-table and hurried back to the forewoman's office, carefully closing the door after her.

"What good's that—" began Miss Wickens pessimistically.

"You leave it to me!" said Susie.

She sat Miss Wickens in front of the mirror, and with consummate skill she adjusted the wig so that every strand of her own hair was tucked beneath it. Then Susie dug diligently to work with brush and comb and pins. She imitated Miss Wickens' style of hairdressing exactly; but, instead of its usual brassy colour, Miss Wickens now appeared to have hair of the silkiest natural gold.

The effect improved her astoundingly. Miss Wickens gazed at herself in the mirror with smug admiration.

"Yes, it's a poor copy of Nature," she sniffed—"but it will do for a makeshift!"

Susie didn't give the game away, and Miss Wickens went airing herself all round the departments, reaping rich compensation for what she had suffered by the envious looks which the other women now cast upon her.

When the afternoon came Miss Wickens was more than ready for Mr. Spollard and the party of visiting delegates. She took command as head of the work-room.

"Allow me, Mr. Spollard; I will show the ladies and gentlemen round!" she said, treating him with queenly scorn.

Susie could have sworn that Mr. Spollard shrank in size as he looked at Miss Wickens in her new blonde glory.

French ladies and gentlemen, Swiss and Germans and Americans—all passed along the row of machinists, and all paid glowing tribute to the chic appearance of these English workgirls.

"What would you expect when I am in charge?" smirked Miss Wickens.

She affected to find complaints here and there with some of the girls, saying that their hair was untidy, and she gave orders right and left.

"It's close in here, Bowling; switch on the electric fan over the door!" she said imperiously to Susie.

Susie obeyed her, and Miss Wickens passed on down the bench, leading the delegates with conscious magnificence.

"Don't block the doorway, Bowling—the ladies and gentlemen want to get out!" she snapped at the end, giving Susie a spiteful dig with her elbow.

Smiling farewell to the visitors, Miss Wickens took up her position by the door.

But she stood right under the electric fan!
"Good-bye, ladies and gentlemen, and I shall look forward to dining with you on Saturday night. I am sure it will be a very breezy—Wow!"

Miss Wickens screamed—but the breeze from the fan was too quick for her.

Her wig lifted from her head and wafted like a balloon up to the ceiling.

Beneath it her hair flapped in a shade of bright inky blue!

The delegates scrambled out with suspicious haste. Susie dived under a bench to rescue the wig, and Susie was the only one whom Miss Wickens didn't actually catch in the act of laughing. Yet, in the injustice of her nature, Miss Wickens blamed Susie with unspeaking but deadly hate—and Susie knew it by the baleful gleam in her eyes.

Anyone else might have lost all sympathy for Miss Wickens, but Susie didn't.

Three hours later, directly after tea, she took a bus out to Camberwell.

Her cousin's shop was a tiny place next door to a newsagents', with one single window attractively dressed with beauty lotions, creams, hair switches, and a richly coiffured lady in wax. Over the window was the name:

"Senorita Phyllissa."

Susie chuckled and stepped inside. From behind the curtains partitioning the saloon appeared a merry-eyed girl, three years older than Susie, and strikingly like her.

"Hallo, Phyl, my senorita!"

"Susie, my love!"

They hugged each other boisterously, and their voices could have been heard two doors away, which was always the case when members of the Bowling family met.

"I've got some orders for your shampoo, ducks," said Susie, greetings over. "I was going to post them on to you—all the girls were ever so keen—only something happened which stopped me!"

"What was that?" inquired Phyl.

Starting at the beginning, Susie explained the baffling disaster which had befallen Miss Wickens. Her cousin listened in blank amazement.

"You're pulling my leg, Susie!" she exclaimed at the end.

"I'm not, ducks! As if I would! Wicky's hair has changed to every colour in the rainbow, and the last time I saw it, it had gone sky blue!"

Phyl's eyes widened with wonder, but she said exactly what Susie knew.

"It had nothing to do with my shampoo, dear. There isn't a spot of colouring-matter in it, and no chemicals, either!"

"Of course not—it was jolly good stuff," said Susie. "But I've come to ask you if you can solve the giddy mystery, Phyl, and put old Wicky's hair right for her?"

"I might if I were to see it!"

"That's what I told her—but she won't come to you!"

"Well?"

Phyl asked for a few more details, but with a shake of the head she gave it up.

"I could badly do with a few clients like her!" she sighed.

"Business bad?" Susie asked anxiously.

"There's not enough of it—that's the trouble, Sue! Every customer I've had has been satisfied, but they aren't coming in fast enough!"

The shop-bell tinkled, and Susie nudged her cousin eagerly.

"Here's a customer, Phyl—" she began, then stared.

Into the shop walked a woman whose face and head were heavily veiled, but who was unmistakably Miss Wickens. Following her came a parchment-faced man wearing a black felt hat.

"Are you the person calling herself Phyllissa—the maker of this preparation?" demanded Miss Wickens, holding up an empty shampoo bottle in front of Phyl.

"Yes, ma'am!" Phyl answered.

Miss Wickens stiffened ominously.

"I"—she said—"am Miss Maud Wickens; and this gentleman is my solicitor—Mr. Stottle. You will be hearing from him, miss. I have instructed him to take proceedings against you, claiming heavy damages for injury to my hair caused by this obnoxious concoction of yours!"

Susie started back. She saw her cousin's face go white.

"I shall demand the heaviest damages the law can inflict, and I don't care if I have to sell you up, lock, stock, and barrel!" Miss Wickens said venomously.

The solicitor made a sign to her.

"Will madam please lift her hat for a moment? That is all, that is enough, thank you!"

For one instant Miss Wickens' hair gleamed a bilious blue, then her hat and veil covered it again.

Mr. Stottle curtly handed his card to Susie's cousin.

"You will please put me in touch with your solicitor!" he said. "My client holds you liable for this injury, and we will fight you to the last penny in a court of law!"

The door closed, and both were gone. Susie stood aghast. Miss Wickens was holding her cousin liable, and it was wickedly unjust—but her cousin hadn't the money to fight! This meant her ruin!

trade? Who's the leading beauty specialist, Phyl?" Susie asked suddenly. "Who's the poshest in London?"

"Madame Maribel, of Bond Street, I suppose," Phyl muttered, staring. "Why?"

"Pretty expensive?" mused Susie.

"Costs a goldmine each visit! Even the appointments with her are only by special introduction!"

Susie nodded thoughtfully. She was thinking very hard. She had a little talk with Phyl, and then they both went into the newsagents' next door, where there was a telephone.

Even at this late hour, Madame Maribel's was still open, owing to the demand made upon them by Society debutantes.

Susie rang them up, and her Cousin Phyl spoke on the line. "Being a member of the trade, Phyl was able to gain a small favour from Maribel's, including a special appointment next day for one of her 'clients.'"

Then back they went into the little beauty shop, where Phyl wrote a message across one of her cards at Susie's dictation.



Skilfully Susie set to work adjusting the wig over Miss Wickens' hair. She little guessed how the forewoman would show her gratitude for the trouble she was taking.

AT MADAME MARIBEL'S

IT wasn't the way of the Bowlings to sit down and weep in the face of adversity.

Phyl led off at the deep end, stating what she thought of Miss Wickens. Susie embellished it at the top of her voice.

Having let off steam, both felt better for it—but quite helpless.

"I've got twenty witnesses to prove your shampoo's O.K., Phyl," argued Susie.

"Yes, but I haven't got the money to pay a solicitor and go to court!" groaned Phyl.

"If you won, old Wickens would have to pay costs, but—"

"But I'd have to sell up the shop first—before I could win—and that would be my living gone! It's no good, Susie!" Phyl said desperately. "I'm finished and done for if that woman means what she says. I'll lose every customer I've got when people get wind of it!"

Susie gritted her teeth. Miss Wickens meant it all right; she didn't deceive herself about that. Miss Wickens would give herself the satisfaction of ruining Cousin Phil, even if she got no other satisfaction out of the case.

"What about your old place, where you used to work? Would they help you through, Phyl?" Susie asked.

"Not they! I've had some of their customers coming to me, and they're fed-up about it!"

"But you know lots of other people in the

"That's fine!" breathed Susie, pocketing the card. "Now you send off that bottle of shampoo to Maribel's, Phyl, and leave the rest to me!"

MISS WICKENS sat in her office next morning, with the golden wig on her head and a satisfied smirk on her face.

There came a tap at the door, and Susie Bowling came meekly in.

"If you please, ma'am, I have a message for you from my cousin!" said Susie.

"What is it, Bowling?"

"My cousin realises how serious the matter is, ma'am, and she has arranged for you to see an expert!" Susie said glumly.

She handed Miss Wickens an envelope, and, with a thrill, Miss Wickens saw that it was addressed to the most fashionable beauty specialist in London:

"Madame Maribel, Bond Street, W."

Inside was Phyl's card, with a written message on it:

"Introducing Miss Wickens for special appointment as arranged at 1 p.m. to-day.

"(Signed) SENORITA PHYLISSA."

Miss Wickens' eyes positively glistened. "Ah! This is an admission of liability, Bowling, you understand that?" she gloated.

"Yes, ma'am!"

"Your cousin would not pay Maribel's enormous fee unless she held herself liable!"

"No, ma'am!"

"I shall attend, of course, and insist upon the most expensive treatment that Maribel's can give me!" declared Miss Wickens. "I shall then proceed to sue for extra heavy damages, responsibility having been admitted. Will your cousin be present to-day?"

"Yes, ma'am; and she wants me to go as witness," said Susie.

"Good!" smirked Miss Wickens. "We must have all the parties present. I'll phone my solicitor to come along!"

Well before one o'clock Miss Wickens was ready, and she even allowed Susie to share her taxi with her. She had removed her wig, and now she seemed to take a fascinated pleasure in the changing hues of her hair.

An immaculate commissionaire ushered them into Madame Maribel's.

In the posh waiting-room sat Mr. Stottle, and he bowed to Miss Wickens, exchanging a greedy smirk with her as she passed into the salon with Susie.

What a salon, too! Chairs like thrones. Duchesses had sat in them. But Madame Maribel and an assistant were in attendance, and Phyl was quietly waiting there with them.

"Here we are, Phyl! Here's the victim—ahem—here's Miss Wickens!" Susie greeted her. "Good-morning, madam!"

Madame Maribel was helping remove Miss Wickens' hat, and now she gave a little refined cry of horror.

"Good gracious, madam! Your hair is in a pitiful state!"

"Terrible! All the gold in the world cannot compensate me!" Miss Wickens said tragically.

She sat down in the luxurious chair, and Susie could almost hear her purring as madame and the assistant conferred over her.

"This stain! Why, it is chemical poisoning!" exclaimed madame.

"I knew it—I knew it!" cried Miss Wickens, flashing a look of merciless triumph at Susie and her cousin. "Make that statement in writing before I go, will you, please, Madame Maribel? You are an expert—your word is good enough for any court of law!"

"What chemicals were they, madame?" Susie asked.

"The cheapest and crudest that could have been used!" came the answer.

"There!" cried Miss Wickens. "And I am one who has always had the best and most expensive treatment for my hair, until this muck was foisted on to me! Why, only that very day I spent a guinea having it dressed in the West End!"

"Do you think anything can be done for it, Madame Maribel?" asked Susie.

"Oh, yes; fortunately it has been taken in time!" said madame. "But it requires elaborate treatment!"

She reached for an electric spraying gadget, like an inverted bowl, and adjusted it above Miss Wickens' head. The assistant produced all manner of posh bottles with gold stoppers.

"Spare no expense!" urged Miss Wickens. "I demand the finest treatment that can be paid for—and that is only the first demand I shall make!"

The electric gadget got to work, and Susie sat watching with keen interest. As the spray whirled, Miss Wickens' hair stood solemnly on end, and the tips gradually took on a lighter hue. Inch by inch her tresses grew from an inky blue to a pale eggshell blue.

Susie nudged Phyl, and Phyl went into silent hysterics.

"Spare no expense!" Miss Wickens kept on parroting. "I think fools should be made to pay for their mistakes—don't you, Madame Maribel?"

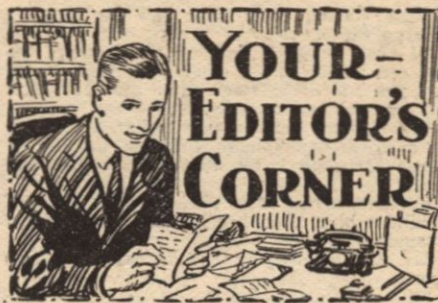
"Certainly!" said madame, and she reached promptly for a bottle that was gold all over.

The new lotion got busy, and slowly the blue faded out of Miss Wickens' hair, leaving it a dingy straw colour.

"Ah, it is now its natural shade!" approved madame.

"What?" snapped Miss Wickens.

"We shall not leave it like this, of course!"



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

MY DEAR READERS.—Isn't the grand KNITTING CONTEST exciting? I know you're all keen to go in for it—especially as there is a separate class for young girls.

As a mere man, I'm not supposed to know a great deal about knitting, I suppose. But not being quite blind, I can see that it is more fashionable these days than ever it has been. No craze seems to have caught on—and held its attraction—like knitting.

When I come along in the train in the morning, I see the most wonderful garments being knitted with deft skill. (Some I recognise, and some I don't!) But they all look very clever—and the knitters seem to do them so easily, too!

PRIZES FOR ALL

Even young kiddies love to knit "reins," don't they? I don't know what you will choose to knit for this competition. It can be anything you like, remember—providing the design comes from a BEST-WAY knitting book.

You will see on reading the leaflet that, in addition to the splendid money prizes, there is a SPECIAL CONSOLATION PRIZE TO BE AWARDED TO EVERY REGULAR READER OF THE "GIRLS' CRYSTAL" WHO ENTERS THIS COMPETITION. So place an order with your newsagent at once for the "GIRLS' CRYSTAL" to be delivered to you regularly.

And now I wish you luck.

What with all this excitement over the KNITTING CONTEST, I mustn't forget to tell you about the story-treats that will appear next week, must I?

I expect lots of you have been to a holiday camp. Even if you haven't, you have heard about them. They're grand fun!

So you can imagine how you're going to enjoy the Noel Raymond story that appears next Friday.

"THE SHADOW OVER THE HOLIDAY CAMP," it is called. Don't miss it, whatever you do, for it combines all the joy of holiday-camp life, with an engrossing mystery.

"SUSIE'S TANDEM ADVENTURE" is the title of the story featuring our lovable Susie Molwing. When Susie went to see the tandem that was offered for sale, she little thought of the thrills she was going to have on it!

Wendy & Co. certainly do have some exciting times on their hikes, don't they? Next week the Happy-Go-Lucky Hikers have a thrilling cave adventure that you'll love to read about.

Our three serials will be as enthralling as ever, too, so you must certainly order your GIRLS' CRYSTAL in advance, to make sure of the feast of reading that is in store.

Your sincere friend,

YOUR EDITOR

P.S.—I hope to give you the results of our recent Voting Competition next week.

madame said, coughing hastily. "What I meant to say is that the poison is now extracted. You would like your hair dressed in a bright golden lustre, madam?"

"Yes; will you do it with Desert Glory?" Miss Wickens said eagerly. "That's what I had last Wednesday in the West End!"

There came a tap at the door. Susie opened it and an assistant in a white smock handed a bottle and a slip of paper to Madame Maribel. The bottle, Susie noticed, was one of her cousin's shampoo bottles.

"There is the analysis that was required, madame," said the assistant, and departed.

Madame Maribel took only one short look at the paper. Her eyes raised and she gazed curiously at Miss Wickens.

"What did you say was put on your hair last Wednesday?" she asked.

"Desert Glory!" Miss Wickens said brightly. "I had it done at Bonzola's, in the West End, and I paid a guinea for the treatment, and my hair looked really lovely after it! Then I came home, and I was induced to use that wretched shampoo, and—"

"You may thank your lucky stars you did use it!" cried madame.

"What?" gasped Miss Wickens.

"This other stuff you're talking of—this Desert Glory—is the cause of all your trouble!" Madame Maribel cried, her hands waving in the air. "It's a tint—it's a violent chemical! It's poisonous to some hair—and it was poisonous to yours! Did you wash it with the shampoo quite soon afterwards?"

"Y-yes," stammered Miss Wickens; "and it made my hair go green, and then p-pink, and then b-blue—"

"That was the shampoo bringing out the poison!" burst in Madame Maribel. "It was the finest thing you could have used, Miss Wickens. It is the only thing that has saved you from actually losing your hair!"

Susie was hugging Phyl's arm. She had known the shampoo was harmless and innocent of any blame; but she had never hoped for such a glowing advertisement as this from the famous Maribel.

"I—I don't grasp this!" stammered Miss Wickens, blinking stupidly at Susie's cousin. "If—if that shampoo isn't obnoxious—"

"It certainly isn't! We've analysed it," put in madame, "and we find it particularly pure and good. A most interesting discovery!"

"Then why," stammered Miss Wickens—"has that girl admitted liability? Wh-why should she send me here and pay for expensive treatment?"

"Why, indeed? It would be almost as silly as you suing her in court, wouldn't it, Miss Wickens?" Susie said heartily. "I think it was you who suggested she was paying the fee. That was a misunderstanding. What my cousin did was to get you in on her card. It means you'll only have to pay Madame Maribel trade price!"

Miss Wickens blinked again, to make sure she was awake.

"The treatment is four guineas, Miss Wickens—trade price!" Madame Maribel said sweetly.

"And that includes the advice!" added Susie.

"Wh-what advice?" stammered Miss Wickens.

"That you can use no better shampoo than my Cousin Phyl's! Isn't that so, Madame Maribel? Remember, it saved Miss Wickens' hair from permanent discolouring!"

Madame Maribel not only agreed. At Susie's suggestion she placed an order with Cousin Phyl for a regular supply, to sell to her own clients.

It has been the making of Phyl's little business, which is now flourishing like a house on fire.

As for Miss Wickens, she went to the trade dinner four guineas poorer, but with her hair looking really bonny; and she had the kick of telling everybody that it was done "at Maribel's, don't you know!" Susie has gained her permanent custom for Phyl's shampoo since that expensive lesson.

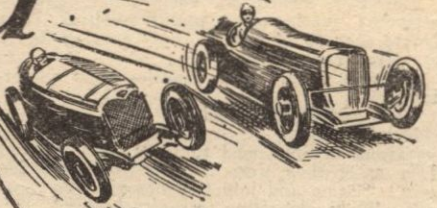
END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

Meet Susie again next week, girls, in a full-of-life story that you'll love. Order your GIRLS' CRYSTAL in advance.

GIRLS' CRYSTAL
11/9/37



The Schoolgirl Speed Star



THANKS TO JULIE

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.

Pat won her first two races in the Crimson Comet, but her position in the school became more difficult than ever, for, thanks to the scheming of Alice Smailes, who wanted to be head girl herself, most of the prefects turned against her.

As a result of a foolish escapade, Julie fell over the edge of a cliff. Pat rescued her, but Mr. Fingleton blamed her for his daughter's accident, and he took the Crimson Comet away from her.

In the next race Bert Preedy drove Mr. Fingleton's car. Pat discovered that he intended to lose; so, when he put in at the pits, she jumped into the cockpit and drove off before anyone could stop her. In spite of her gallant attempt, Pat lost the race.

She was ordered to appear before the track committee. Pat did not let this daunt her, because her two friends, Jim Mace and Jimmy Walsh, would speak for her. Pat went to ask Miss Clifton's permission to attend, little guessing that Alice Smailes had a scheme to spoil Pat's "case."

PAT SUMMERS knew nothing of Alice Smailes' plot as she approached the headmistress' study.

Standing before Miss Clifton's desk, Pat asked if she might have permission to attend the meeting at the Ivydale race track that evening at six o'clock.

She did not tell Miss Clifton why that meeting had been called. There was no need to, and Pat didn't wish to worry the harassed headmistress further.

"Certainly, Patricia!" Miss Clifton said. "Go by all means. I expect it is important, or you wouldn't have asked."

It was important—only Pat knew how important. Her happiness—even her whole future—depended on this meeting. But Pat was not worrying, for she was sure she would not be blamed for that incident on the track the other day when she had taken the Crimson Comet over. True, she was not supposed to be racing. Bert Preedy had been in charge of the car, but Preedy had been deliberately trying to lose the race.

Those good friends of hers—Jimmy Walsh and Jim Mace—would bear out her story in front of the committee that evening. But Pat

must not think too much of that now. Miss Clifton was speaking again:

"And, Patricia," she said, "you know I do not blame you. But if you can persuade the prefects to work in harmony with you, I shall be most happy."

With a kindly nod Pat was dismissed.

There was no earthly sense in calling a meeting of the prefects. Pat realised in their present mood they would just stand firm and refuse to obey. For Miss Clifton's sake she must tackle each of them separately and individually.

Pat tried it that morning while the rest of the school was at lessons.

The Sixth, of course, did not do lessons as other girls. A good many of them had already matriculated, and were stopping on for special study with a view to getting degrees. Others were in the process of matriculating, and though there was a Sixth Form class-room, it was only used for special lessons, and, more largely, as a lecture-room.

Usually the Sixth spent lesson times either swotting in their own studies, or reading under the shadows of the elms. As long as the Sixth worked, indeed, and as long as they kept within school bounds during lesson hours, they were free to study where they liked.

Pat sought out Amy Hemmingway first. If Amy could be won round, the others might follow her example, Pat felt.

She found Amy sitting with her book on a seat which overlooked the school swimming bath. She dropped beside her with a friendly smile.

"Lovely morning, Amy!" she said.

Amy, with a haughty glare, turned her head.

"The water looks good," Pat tried again.

For answer, Amy collected her books and haughtily walked away.

Pat pulled a face. Oh, what was the good, she thought, with a flash of despair. And then,

What a task Pat Summers has! She has to face friction and discontent among the prefects at school, and yet make good on the race-track at the same time. But the Head Girl means to win through—while she has the loyalty of the juniors to inspire her.

By HAZEL ARMITAGE

spotting Enid Farrow approaching, she took another grip upon herself.

She rose. Enid paused.

"Hallo, Enid!" Pat said smilingly. "I was just thinking about you. I hear you're hoping for honours in literature. How are things going?"

"I don't see," Enid said distantly, "that that concerns you!"

"But I've got a splendid book on Keats that I'm sure—"

"Keep your nose out of my business!" Enid snapped, and, head in air, stalked off.

Pat smiled wryly. With a shrug she drifted away, and paused again as Vera Dalton came sauntering up the drive.

Now, Vera. Before she had got in with Alice & Co. Vera hadn't been a bad girl. Always a waverer, very much inclined to swim with the tide of popular feeling, Vera might be won over.

She treated her to a bright nod.

"Lo, Vera!" she said.

Vera paused, her cheeks turning pink.

"Oh, hel-hello!" she said awkwardly.

"Hefty book you've got there," Pat said brightly, nodding at the book of Virgil Vera carried under one arm. "Pretty warm for Latin, eh? I was just thinking of popping into the tuckshop and drinking a lemonade off the ice. Like to join me?"

Vera hesitated. She bit her lip.

"Oh, I don't think—"

"Oh, come on!" Pat urged. "Nothing like a nice cool drink to wake the old brain up, and you do look as if you've been overdoing it a bit, you know," she added quickly. "As a matter of fact, Vera, there are one or two things I'd like to consult you about. I'm a bit shaky on Latin myself, you know, and you have got rather a flair for it, haven't you? And—here, I say," she added, dimpling, as Lila Horrocks appeared from behind a tree where she had been sitting, "here's Lila, too. Vera, call Lila, will you?"

"I really don't know, you know," Vera said uncomfortably; but she paused. "Ahem! Lila! Lila!" she called.

Lila looked up. Her face darkened a little at sight of Pat, but rather slowly she came over.

"Vera and I are just thinking of having a lemonade together," Pat said. "Like to join us, Lila?"

"What?"

"Oh, Lila, come on!" Vera urged.

"Yes, please!" Pat pleaded. "And—well, Lila, I'm just dying to know how that dog of yours is getting on. You know, the one that had distemper so badly. You needn't come if you don't want to, of course," she added, knowing exactly the way in which to treat Lila—herself a waverer, very much in the Vera Dalton class. "Just a cool little lemonade, with a nice North Pole freshness—"

She paused, smiling but anxious. She saw that they were tempted. She knew a glow of victory in her heart. If she could win them round, she was telling herself! They, with loyal old Lena, would make four against Alice Smailes' three, and there was always the prospect of Gladys Warr's returning to school, which would very much upset the support which Alice had won for herself at the moment.

The two looked at each other, plainly attracted by the offer, plainly melting. But before they could utter a reply another figure appeared on the scene.

"Vera! Lila!" Alice Smailes cried quivering.

Vera and Lila jumped. Pat laughed. "Hold on! No need to shout at Vera and Lila as if they were Second Formers," she said. "Come and join the merry party yourself. We're just going to the tuckshop."

"With you?" Alice's eyes lit up with flame.

"Well, why not?" "You know jolly well we're on strike against you!"

"Well"—and again Pat laughed good-humouredly—"that's no reason why you should send me to Coventry, is it? Come on, Alice! Don't be a grouch!"

But if Vera and Lila were easy prey, Alice, who hated Ivydale's head girl with all the passion of her spiteful nature, who saw in this at once an attempt to undermine her own influence, quickly threaded an arm through the elbows of both the waverers. She faced Pat jealously.

"If anybody," she snapped, "is a grouch in this school, Pat Summers, it's you! Crafty thing! This is your way of trying to get us on your side! Let me stand you a ginger-pop, and then you'll be my friend for life!" Alice sneered. "No jolly fear! And I'm surprised at you," she added, flashing angrily upon the now uncomfortable Vera and Lila, "for falling for it—just like Grace Campbell or any of the other kids!"

"Oh, really!" murmured Vera.

But they went off with Alice, all the same.

Pat's heart was heavy as she moved away. She didn't go into the tuckshop as she had intended.

Unconsciously her steps took her towards the Comet's garage—that garage which for so many days had been empty, which Julie had promised should be full again as soon as her father returned.

But supposing to-night's inquiry went against her—what then?

She stood looking on, queer emotion tugging at her. In imagination she could see the Comet again, with its streamlined, slinky lines, its beautiful curves, its glittering, crimson body. In fancy she could hear the mighty thrum of its engine, the explosive pop as it started up.

For some reason she sighed. Her fingers, thrust into her pocket, unconsciously fastened on the peremptory summons she had received, bidding her attend the track meeting that night.

And then, quite startlingly, she was jerked out of her thoughts by a laughing:

"Penny for 'em, Pat! But, no—not a penny! I know what you're thinking about—the Comet!"

Pat wheeled, and then her face broke into a smile. For behind her, being pushed in a bathchair by Nurse Knight, was Julie Fingleton—Julie, still pale, but brighter, better than Pat had seen her since she had saved her from that almost certain death at Beechfield Woods.

Pat laughed.

"Well, yes, I was, young Julie."

"I guessed it!" Julie chuckled. "But don't worry, Pat. Everything will come right, you see. I got a letter from dad just now," she added. "He says he expects to return to England at any moment. We'll make things right then, Pat."

"Thanks, Julie!" Pat said.

"And, meantime"—Julie's face softened; her eyes were large and soft with the admiration she felt—"meantime, Pat, you do believe don't you, that I'm on your side—now and for ever?" she added fiercely. "I've been hearing, Pat, of some of the things which are happening, and I'm just dying to see that cat Alice Smailes! But, look!" she added, as Pat

unthinkingly dropped the letter in her hand. "Pat, you've dropped something."

The something fell at her feet, opening as it did so. Julie caught a line before Pat hastily retrieved it, and glanced at her curiously.

"Pat, that's from the track. It's not serious, is it?"

Pat nodded.

"Of course not, goose!" Pat said lightly.

Julie smiled. But it was a smile with a curious quality—a smile which made Pat flush slightly as she caught it.

Julie said no more then, but her face was troubled and thoughtful as she was wheeled back to the sanatorium.

When she arrived there she turned to Nurse Knight.

"Nurse, when you meet Lena Grange—she's Pat's great chum, you know—will you ask her to come and see me?"

"Why, my dear, of course!"

PAT, locking the garage, went off to see the gardener's boy, Willie Prior, to ask him once again if she might borrow his motor-bike. And Willie, of course, eager admirer of Pat that he was, replied:

"Pleasure, Miss Summers! Certainly, Miss Summers! I'll fill it up with petrol and pump up the tyres, shall I? Call for it when you like, Miss Summers. I'll leave it propped up against the wall of the lodge."

Good-hearted Willie! If, Pat ruminated, she ever won the Grand Prix, Willie should most certainly be rewarded for his devotion. A new motor-bike, at least!

She went back to her study. All morning she worked steadily on the reports and indexes with which the rebel prefects had refused to help on. All afternoon she worked, her mind shadowed by doubts, misgivings, as to the outcome of the committee inquiry to-night. Now and again she cast an anxious look at the clock.

Of course, everything was going to be all right, so Pat told herself. Jim Mace and Jimmy Walsh were her witnesses—Jim and Jimmy, trusted and true, those staunch and stalwart friends who would never let her down. With their testimony, what had she to fear?

She laughed a little—on a tremulous, uneasy note, however. Six o'clock! She mustn't be late. The track committee was strict about time, and if anything happened so that she could not be there, then automatically the judgment would go against her.

At five o'clock she paused, putting her papers away. The door opened then and Alice Smailes looked into the room.

She saw Pat and hastily withdrew.

"Oh sorry!" she mumbled.

Pat blinked as the door slammed. Why on earth had Alice had done that? Still, no time to worry about her. Must tidy herself now, and be off so as to arrive at the track in time.

She went out, walking quickly up the corridor, never noticing in her perturbation that the crafty eyes of Alice Smailes watched her from the doorway of her study.

Upstairs Pat dashed to the senior bath-room on the third floor—a white-tiled apartment, which looked down into an alley of the building, thirty feet above the ground.

Hurriedly she washed, did her hair, and feeling nervous, keyed-up, she stepped to the door again.

Her hand closed on the handle of the door. She pulled. The door did not budge. She pulled again. Still no movement. Rather angrily she rattled the handle, calling out at the same time.

No reply. Nothing! And Pat, staring at the door, realised the trick which had been played on her. The door was locked, and in this part of the school—especially at this hour, when most girls were either in the dining-hall, study, or out of doors, she might shout and hammer for an hour without being heard!

A STARTLING INTERRUPTION

BUT it was not Pat's intention to hammer and shout for an hour—or anything like it.

Time was precious—more vitally precious now perhaps than it had ever been before.

At once she abandoned the door. The only

other avenue of escape was the window. Swiftly she crossed to it, swiftly threw it open. To a girl in her plight the view was not encouraging.

She found herself looking out into the narrow, deserted alley between the school and the science-room. Beneath her was a smooth wall with a drop of thirty feet.

Pat bit her lip. And then her eyes gleamed. She stared for a moment at the window-sill, a wide, stone buttress which ran the length of the wall.

If she could climb along that she would reach the corner, and there would be able to attract attention. Dare she?

Dare she? Pat laughed, remembering that dreadful nightmare in Beechfield Woods, when she had rescued unconscious Julie. This seemed child's play compared with that ordeal. All the same, her heart was beating uncomfortably as she climbed out and spreadeagled her palms against the wall to steady herself.

Now— Inch by inch she worked along, clinging to the wall like a spider.

She was doing it!

Not once did she pause. Not once did she stop. Three yards—feeling more confident now. She could already glimpse running figures in the quad. Now another two feet, and there she was, at the corner of the buttress which here joined the west wall in a right angle, forming a rectangular platform which gave her a wider foothold.

Then for the first time she looked down.

Two girls were just strolling across the quad arm in arm. Pat shouted.

"Grace! Evelyn!"

Grace Campbell and Evelyn Terry started. They looked round. Pat, clinging to the wall, shouted again.

"Ahoy!"

And then, looking up, both juniors jumped. Grace almost shrieked.

"Pat! Oh, you'll be killed—"

"Get a ladder," Pat cried urgently.

"Quickly! You'll find one at the other side of the tower. But buck up, for goodness' sake!"

No need to tell alarmed Grace and Evelyn that. Before Pat had finished the sentence they were off. Pat stood still, breathing heavily, waiting impatiently until they returned, thinking angrily again of Alice Smailes, certain that Alice, and no one else, had been responsible for this nasty little trick.

Then a shout. Grace and Evelyn, staggering under its weight, with fear in their eyes, came tottering round the angle of the building, supporting the heavy ladder between them.

"Rear it up!" Pat called.

She waited in a ferment of impatience until that was done—no easy job for even two girls. Almost with a gasp of relief she heard the edge thump against the buttress. While Grace and Evelyn steadied it at the bottom, she shinned down, arriving breathless, between them. The two girls stared.

"Why, Pat, what ever—"

"Thanks!" gasped Pat. "Sorry! Can't explain now. Somebody shut me up in the cloak-room. Take the ladder back, Grace. See you later."

"But—"

But Pat was flying—hair streaming, skirt flapping. Twenty valuable minutes had been lost in that escapade.

Breathlessly she reached the gardener's shed. Swiftly she trundled off with Willie Prior's motor-bike, and snorted off through the gates. But Willie's bike was an old one. It had had at least three owners before Willie.

It was a quarter past six when at last Pat reached the stadium. A quarter past six then—with the committee already a quarter of an hour in session.

The steward at the door looked at her curiously.

"They're waiting for you, Miss Summers. They've already taken Preedy's evidence," he said. "Where's Jimmy Walsh and Mace?"

Pat stared.

"They're not here?"

"No!"

Pat felt almost sick. It did not occur to her that this was further work of her enemies.

"But they said—"

"I know they did. They said this morning that they'd be here, and then Jimmy Mace got

a phone message, and they both went off. Fingleton's mad. He's talking about giving the verdict in Preedy's favour as you're not here—"

Fingleton! Pat stared at him. Joshua Fingleton—Julie's father! Was he here then? And then she remembered that Joshua Fingleton, as chairman of the track committee, was bound, if in England, to preside at these proceedings. And hadn't Julie herself told her that she had heard from him that morning saying that he was on his way to England.

"Better get in," the steward said, "and good luck, Miss Summers! You'll need it," he added under his breath as he closed the door upon her. Pat, bright-eyed in dismay, stood still gazing around her.

For a moment no one spoke. In front of her, staring with a little alarm, she saw the pasty-faced Bert Preedy. Ranged round the long table she saw the committee, Joshua Fingleton, his features hard and uncompromising, at its head, Malcolm Cobb on his right.

Pat found her voice. "Good-evening," she said thinly. "I'm sorry I'm late. I—I had difficulty in getting away," she added with a gulp.

"Most of us had difficulty in getting away, too," Fingleton said harshly. "But we managed to get here. I myself flew all the way from Paris to-day, arriving here only half an hour before time. Still, I managed it, and what I managed from Paris, surely you could have managed from a point which is less than twelve miles distant. I was," he added, "on the point of advising that the case should go to Mr. Preedy."

"Yes," Bert Preedy angrily put in, "by not attending to time, Miss Summers should not be heard."

"Preedy, you will please speak when you are spoken to," Malcolm Cobb said. "We have heard your evidence. Miss Summers, will you take a seat, please?"

Pat sat down, feeling the chill hand of despair tugging at her heart. Joshua Fingleton kept his eyes on her. Uncomfortably the steward looked towards her. In only one face—the face of Malcolm Cobb—did she detect even the faintest gleam of sympathy.

"Patricia Summers, the case against you," Joshua Fingleton said, "is as follows: On the day of the Ivydale Cup race you deliberately took Albert Preedy's place in the Crimson Comet to finish the race when Preedy had already completed half the course. In doing what you did, you defied all the rules of the track; and in finally losing the race, you cheated Preedy of a victory that might have been his. What have you to say?"

Pat gasped; but she faced up squarely. "I did not intend to rob Preedy of the race," she stated. "If he had been trying to win that race, nobody would have been more pleased than I."

"You are accusing Preedy of deliberately trying to lose?"

Pat hesitated a moment. Then, boldly: "Yes."

There was a pause. Preedy said something, but was waved to silence by Malcolm Cobb.

"On what grounds?" "I was watching," Pat said. "It was plain to everybody that Preedy was deliberately trying to lose. The Comet was easily the best car in the race, but Preedy wasn't even racing her. With half the course completed, he was three laps behind."

Preedy sneered. "And so—so I was desperate," Pat blurted. "I knew the Comet could do better than that. I—I suppose I forgot myself, but I just couldn't stand by and see the race wasted. When Preedy, for no reason at all, came into the pits to refuel, I jumped into the cockpit. And," she added quietly, "I should have won if it hadn't been for a stroke of awful luck."

"Never mind that," Fingleton spoke testily. He looked at Preedy. "This, Miss Summers, is the second time you have made a serious accusation against this driver. Preedy does not deny that he was lagging half-way round the course, but Preedy has stated quite clearly his reasons for that—he was holding the Comet back so as to make a fighting finish. As a driver, he is, of course, entitled to use his own methods of racing. There is not an atom of

proof to show that you have any foundation whatever for your accusation. Indeed," Fingleton went on coldly, "it is perfectly plain to me that, jealous because Preedy had taken your place as my driver, you are deliberately trying to blacken his name."

Pat bit her lip. Bert Preedy sneered triumphantly. Pat's face turned pale as she read the hostility and the condemnation in the committee's faces.

"Have you anything else to say?" Fingleton asked.

"No," Pat said dully. "Any witnesses to call?"

"Yes, I have—or had—two. Jimmy Mace and Jim Walsh."

"Then, in that case, why are they not here?" "I—I don't know," stammered Pat.

There was a movement. Fingleton impatiently nodded. Pat gripped the arm of the chair. She saw in advance that the case had gone against her. She saw her racing permit gone. She saw herself banished from the track in disgrace, her career ruined! They believed Preedy!



Just as Mr. Fingleton was about to give his verdict, the door burst open. "Wait!" a voice cried. Pat turned in amazement. It was Julie!

Where was Jimmy Mace? Where was Jim Walsh? They would have stood by her.

Wildly she looked round as the committee conferred.

Then Joshua Fingleton spoke. "Patricia Summers," he said—and his voice was heavy—"please stand up. The committee finds you guilty. You have tried to blacken another driver's name. You have interfered with that driver's chance of winning a race. You have been guilty of racing my car without my own or Preedy's permission! As the president of this inquiry it falls upon me to pass sentence upon you. And that sentence is—"

Pat found herself swaying upon her feet. She wanted to clutch at something for support.

"Yes?" she muttered faintly. "You be suspended from racing on this track until—" And then he rose. "What the—" he spluttered; and then he almost shrieked: "Julie!"

For suddenly, with a crash, the door had burst open. And suddenly, tempestuously, a girl hurled herself into the room—a girl breathing heavily, whose face was aflame, whose eyes were bright and burning.

Julie Fingleton, his own daughter! "Julie!" Pat cried. "Julie—"

"Wait a minute—wait a minute!" Julie, panting, stood before them. "I heard! Before you pass sentence, daddy, listen to me," she cried wildly. "Yes, listen to me! If you suspend Patricia Summers I'll never—never

come home again! Pat is the truest, the finest, the greatest girl who ever lived, and whatever Pat has told you is true! If anybody's guilty in these proceedings, it's not Pat Summers, Daddy Fingleton; it's you, for being such a dreadful, unsporting old—old idiot!"

A HAPPY CELEBRATION

"JULIE!" cried her father. "No, wait—listen to me!" And Julie, with flaming eyes, faced them all. "You think you know a lot, but you don't know half!" she cried. "Before you condemn Pat Summers listen to me—and then, if you can bring yourselves to do it—suspend her. It's my fault," she added, "all my fault, in a way."

Her father blinked. "Julie, what are you saying?" "I'm saying what you ought to know," Julie got out. She was swaying so alarmingly on her feet that Pat put a quick arm around her. "It was my fault," she added. "I was a little pig—a beast! I let you believe

rotten things of Pat when all the time Pat was trying to do the decent thing. You blamed her because I wasn't in the pageant. That wasn't Pat's fault; it was mine! I wouldn't go in the pageant when she asked me. Instead, I went off on a silly picnic and fell over the cliff in the thunderstorm."

The millionaire looked amazed. But Julie was not finished then. She had come to save Pat. She meant to see things through. This Julie did not spare herself. She told her father how Pat had saved her life, and reminded him that while she had been saving her life he had been accusing her of not fulfilling her duty.

The millionaire sat quietly, uneasy, amazed, bewildered.

"And now," Julie said, "I've come to speak for Pat. You can't—you just can't—do a thing like that to her! If it hadn't been for me you'd never have taken the Comet away from her; Preedy would never have driven it, and all this silly fuss would never have cropped up. Besides," she added, "Preedy was trying to lose. A lot of the girls at the school were at the race, and they say it, too!"

"Hem-hem!" Joshua Fingleton was the most flusteredly amazed man it was possible to meet. "Really, really!" he murmured, but his eyes glowed now as they fastened upon the radiant Pat. "Well," he said—"well, gentlemen, I am going to put a proposition to you. I hope you will agree with it. We can hardly call my daughter's impassioned speech evidence, but it most certainly throws

new light upon the conduct of Patricia Summers. Also," he added, "we have to remember that Patricia has not been able to call her witnesses."

There were nods. Malcolm Cobb delightedly and smilingly winked at Pat.

"And—and so," Joshua Fingleton said, "I am going to ask you, in the absence of Miss Summers' witnesses, to postpone this inquiry indefinitely. Until, of course, a later date to be fixed by myself," he added hastily. "Are we agreed, gentlemen?"

They were glad to agree. Hostility had changed to admiration now. Impossible to condemn such a fine girl as Pat when they had just heard these reports of her conduct.

Despite the protests of Bert Preedy the meeting broke up.

Pat's head swam. She hugged Julie to her. Postponed indefinitely! That meant probably that the case would never be heard of again.

"Oh, Julie—Julie, you little sport!" she choked.

And then she was surrounded. The committee which, a few minutes before, had been judging her, were shaking her hands, congratulating her. Beaming and bright Malcolm Cobb's face, grinning, congratulatory the others.

She saw Joshua Fingleton before her, his face working with emotion. She felt his hand thrust almost shyly into hers.

"Patricia, forgive me," he said. "I did not know. I'm sorry—sorry! I should have known, but—but well, you can guess a father's feeling when I thought Julie was going to die, and blamed you. I didn't know, but, of course," he added, "everything's all right now."

"She's still your driver?" Julie demanded. "If she will act for me," Fingleton said, almost humbly.

"Are you going to give her the Comet back?" Julie pressed.

"The Comet," he said, "is in the sheds on this track. Pat can run it back to school now. And, if you don't mind," he said, "I'd like to come with you. No, Patricia, I've done you a great injustice—I've done you a great harm; and I feel the least I can do is to

make it up to you. Take me back to the school with you. We're going to celebrate this!"

Pat's head was whirling, her cheeks were bright. How happy she was then! In a moment all shadows were swept away. In a moment she was laughing, chatting, bright-eyed, rosy-cheeked. With her arm round Julie, she stood there, eyes dancing.

And later—oh, was it a dream?—when she sat again in the cockpit of her beautiful, beloved Crimson Comet, the glistening wheel in her hand, the wind rushing through her hair, and the white road rushing like a ribbon towards her, with Joshua Fingleton, his beloved daughter on his knee—in the little seat beside her!

"Of course, I shall want you to race in the big events in London next week, Pat," Mr. Fingleton was saying. "And if you like, I'll speak to Miss Clifton and ask her to allow a dozen of so of your friends to come with you. You'll stay at the Grand Hotel, of course—at my expense!"

"Glorious!" Pat laughed. Then the gates of Ivydale were in sight—with a cheering crowd of schoolgirls to welcome Pat and her Comet home again.

And then Joshua Fingleton, more boyishly boisterous than anyone had ever seen him.

"To the tuckshop, girls—to the tuckshop! All of you—all of you!" he beamed. "I want you all to drink a toast—a toast to Pat Summers. Go and fetch your friends—fetch the seniors, the prefects. Ay, fetch the mistresses, if they'll come!" he added recklessly. "Whoops, daddy, go easy! This isn't Gay Paree, you know!" Julie laughed.

"Gee-golly!" he laughed, as he ran a handkerchief round his collar. "Gad, I feel like a boy again!" he laughed. "And you, you little imp—and Pat, too—you've done it! Now, girls, buck up and get everybody!" "Oh goody!" yelled Grace Campbell.

And off girls flew—some to collect at the tuckshop, some to fetch others. Before long the school was ablaze with the news.

Alice Smailes, talking to her rebels, heard it and grinned.

"Well, if there's anything free, I don't see why we shouldn't be in it," she said. "Come on!"

Out they went, joining streaming girls. The tuckshop was crammed, the space outside it crowded.

"Fill your glasses, girls!" cried Joshua Fingleton. "Fill them to the brim—lemonade, ginger-beer, grape-fruit, I don't care—but don't drink until I give you the toast! And the toast," he added, raising his own glass on high, "is to the bravest and the whitest girl in the world—Pat Summers! Hip—pip—hurrah!"

Up went the glasses. Pat, crimson, laughed. But Alice Smailes & Co. stood still, green with dismay, with fury, and with chagrin. They had not realised until then that Pat was the heroine of the toast. They did not drink.

Pat, seeing them standing there in a knot, thought here was a chance, if ever, to take advantage of the good spirit now abounding, and made one more effort to establish peace in the school. She raised her own glass.

"And now," she cried gaily, "a toast with me, girls. A toast"—and she nodded at Alice & Co.—"a toast to our prefects! Now we've happy harmony in the motor-racing camp, let's have happy harmony in the school! It's up to us to pull together and make Ivydale a school to be proud of! Down with squabbles and bad feeling! The prefects!" she cried.

She raised her glass on high. But Alice stood there, glittering-eyed and shaking with jealousy. As Pat raised her glass she stepped forward.

She could not speak, but her hand, holding the glass, swept forward.

And there came a cry from Pat, a gasp of angry and intense indignation from all the school as Alice, with one single jerk of her arm, swept the contents of her glass right into Pat's smiling face!

Alice's spite seems to know no bounds. It is quite clear that if she possibly can, she will still ruin Pat. Don't miss next Friday's chapters of this splendid serial. Order your GIRLS' CRYSTAL in advance.

What he searched for she did not know, though she had a suspicion that perhaps he was looking for the Phantom Monk. But that frightening spectre seemed to have disappeared for good.

During the following week Kitty neither saw him nor even thought of him; she didn't even have time to try to discover the meaning of the intriguing message she had found in Remus' collar.

Every hour of daylight was spent with Pogo, Nippy, Bob, and the other two dogs. They meant a lot of work, as well as pleasure, for they had to be fed, groomed, and exercised.

Occasionally, when out in the paddock with her charges, she caught sight of Judith. But that girl never spoke, though that she had not forgotten her threat against Remus was quickly shown. For one evening a stolid, red-faced policeman arrived at the abbey.

He met Kitty just as she was taking Nippy and Bob out into the paddock for their usual spell of jumping practice.

"Miss Graham?" he asked, pulling out his notebook. She nodded, and he looked at her grimly. "I've come to make inquiries about a black retriever," he explained.

"You mean Remus," she said. "Yes, he belongs here. But what's the trouble?"

"I've been instructed to warn you that a complaint has been made against him," was the reply. "It's been reported that he's dangerous."

Kitty's cheeks flamed indignantly. She guessed who had made the complaint.

"But—that's absurd!" she protested. "Remus is as harmless as a kitten.—He isn't a bit vicious. I'll call him if you like."

"No need for that, miss. It's quite likely that there's nothing in the complaint. But it's my duty to warn you to keep an eye on him. If he should be reported again, you may find yourself faced with a summons."

He nodded respectfully and departed.

KENNEL-MAID AT PHANTOM ABBEY

(Continued from page 9.)

leaving Kitty angry and a little disturbed. However, she quickly recovered her cheeriness as she called Bridget, and they both set about exercising the two greyhounds.

In order to train them to race-track ways, Kitty had made a dummy hare. This consisted of pieces of an old fur necklet sewn around a rag ball. Holes had been cut in the furdles so as to allow the "hare" to pass through, and the hare was drawn along by means of a rope.

One end of the rope was attached to the hare; the other end was tied to a spindle fixed to the hub of the rear wheel of an old cycle.

The cycle was mounted on a stand at the far end of the paddock, and Bridget supplied the motive power. When Kitty gave the signal she would pedal away for dear life, the revolving spindle would wind up the rope, and the dummy hare would be drawn along the grass and through the hurdles.

Nippy and Bob needed no urging to try to catch the fleeing hare. The instant Kitty let them off the leash they would set off in excited pursuit.

The two Pokes generally watched in haughty disdain, but not Pogo. The comical little Scottie insisted on joining in the fun—and sometimes he actually won! But that was because he cheated. Instead of trying to jump the hurdles, he always nipped through the holes cut for the hare.

Bridget, flushed and panting, hurriedly jumped off the bike as Nippy and Bob came hurtling over the last hurdle. Frantically

she snatched up the dummy hare—just in time to prevent it from being torn to pieces by the two greyhounds.

Barking, they jumped up, pawing her in a wild effort to seize the trophy. But laughingly Bridget held them off while Kitty, running forward, felt in her pocket.

"Here you are, lads!" she cried. "Here's something better than that stuffy old hare to chew!"

And she tossed them a handful of tasty biscuits. Eagerly the greyhounds came scampering forward, Pogo yapping at their heels. The little Scottie was the last to arrive; nevertheless, he got most of the biscuits.

"Now greedy, that's enough!" Kitty declared, grabbing him. "You've had your share, so—"

She broke off and swung round in alarm. For from the direction of the ruins had come the noise of an appalling clatter, followed by a series of wild shouts.

Then came a thunderous bark, followed by an angry growl. Kitty gave a gasp.

"Remus!" she cried. Screwing up her courage, she turned to Bridget.

"We must go inside and see what's happening!" she whispered.

On tiptoe they crept across to an ancient archway that led into the vast stone chamber that centuries ago had been the abbot's kitchen. Then, as they paused, they heard Remus give another long-drawn-out growl.

Kitty clutched at the Irish girl's sleeve.

"He has got him!" she breathed excitedly. "Remus has got the Phantom Monk cornered!"

Thanks to Remus it looks as if the Phantom Monk is cornered. Will Kitty discover the true identity of the Green Friar? Don't miss next Friday's chapters of this splendid serial. Order your GIRLS' CRYSTAL right away.