

"THEIR QUEST AT THE WINTER SPORTS" One of the six splendid stories for schoolgirls —inside.

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# GIRLS' CRYSTAL <sup>2<sup>D</sup></sup> WEEKLY

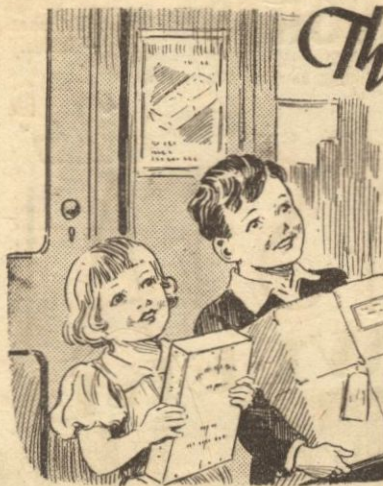


**"DO THESE BEADS  
BELONG TO  
ANYONE HERE?"**

—They were Norma's, but she dared not claim them!

See "The Girl Who Haunted Grey Gables," inside.

# The GIRL WHO HAUNTED GREY GABLES



## THE MISSING NECKLACE

**N**ORMA ROYSTON, who lived in the Cornish village of Clovellyn, believed that Grey Gables, a large house near by, contained a secret connected with her dead father.

Mr. Penhale, who owned Grey Gables, tried to turn Norma out of the village, but Gerald Graham, a boy who lived with Mr. Penhale, was very friendly.

Norma looked after a small shop, whose owner, Ben Tregellis, had mysteriously disappeared, leaving his two small grandchildren, Elsie and Martin.

To carry out her search at Grey Gables, Norma decided to impersonate Lady Rowena, whose ghost was supposed to haunt the place.

Norma and the children were invited to a Christmas party given by Squire Guthrie, whose custom she hoped to obtain for the shop.

The squire announced that his friend, Mr. Penhale, had found two coral beads dropped by the "phantom" at Grey Gables. He asked if anyone could identify them.

They had dropped from Norma's own necklace! She looked in her bag for the necklace—to find it had vanished!

**N**ORMA felt momentarily stunned by the shock of her discovery. She was scarcely aware of the buzz of voices around her—the excited murmur that greeted the squire's request.

"Do these beads belong to anyone here, or can any of you identify them?"

The coral beads that Mr. Penhale was holding aloft had been snapped from her own necklace on her last visit to Grey Gables; and if that fact ever came to light, she would be exposed as the "phantom."

But where was the necklace now? It was not in her handbag—into which she had slipped it before coming to the party. And she could not remember having opened her bag since arriving at the Hall.

Frantically she racked her brains, realising the vital importance of finding it—before it was picked up by anyone else.

The initials on the gold clasp would be sufficient to establish its ownership, and the unusual shade of the coral beads was unmistakable!

If only she could recollect—  
Then, like a blinding flash, she remembered. On the stairs—she had dropped her handbag—and Gerald had retrieved it!



By RENEE FRAZER

She remembered, now, that the snap-fastener had been open, and she had closed it hastily, because Ethel Penhale was watching.

It had happened at the bend of the stairs, where the light was bad. It was possible that the necklace was still there!

Even as the thought occurred to her, Norma's heart gave a violent jump.

For making her way hurriedly across the room, towards the door that led to the stairs, was Ethel Penhale!

Did Ethel suspect the truth?

It was hardly likely. Norma was convinced by her last visit to Grey Gables that both Mr. Penhale and his daughter were scared of the "phantom"; and that would not have been the case if they had any inkling of the Lady Rowena's true identity.

Yet they might cherish other suspicions about herself and her secret quest in Clovellyn!

Norma made to slip away from the group, desperately anxious to reach the stairs before Ethel.

But just then a hand detained her; Squire Guthrie was regarding her shrewdly.

"Don't go yet, Miss Royston," he said. "I want a word with you."

Norma's heart sank; she felt that

More and more difficult has Norma's task become. Already it is suspected that the phantom Lady Rowena is someone dressed up. Yet Norma cannot give up her daring role!

disaster was approaching—and she was helpless to prevent it.

She could see Ethel trying to make her way through the crowd of guests who were thronging the doorway; the squire's hand was resting firmly on her own shoulder.

"I— There's something I want to fetch!" she faltered lamely. "My handkerchief—I dropped it—"

"Gerald will fetch it!" put in the squire.

Gerald crossed to her side; his eyes were questioning. He must have noticed her agitation, her unusual pallor, but he gave no hint of it.

"Anything I can do for you, Norma?" he asked cheerfully.

Norma shook her head, wondering desperately how she could hope to escape from the net that seemed to be closing in on her.

"I think I'd better fetch it myself," she gulped. "If you'll excuse me, Mr. Guthrie—"

She did not dare glance at the squire as she twisted from his firm yet not unkindly hold.

The next moment she was racing breathlessly through the crowd.

Ethel saw her coming, and increased her efforts to break through the crush. The momentary excitement aroused by the squire's question had faded in the absence of any reply. Someone had turned on the radio, and a lively dance tune echoed through the ball-room.

Norma saw Ethel reach the door—and her hopes sank. Then, unexpectedly, the other girl found her way barred—by Gerald.

"Hallo, Ethel!" exclaimed Gerald gaily, grabbing his cousin by the hands. "Whither away so fast? What about this fox-trot with me?"

"Another time—" began Ethel hastily.

"No time like the present!" chuckled Gerald. "You can't escape all your obligations, you know!"

Norma encountered Gerald's smiling glance over the heads of the crowd—and she saw his eyelid flicker.

The next moment she had slipped out of the room and was racing for the stairs.

She scarcely paused to think, but one question flashed into her mind.

Why had Gerald done this? Was it just an act of boyish devilment on his part, a desire to rag his cousin for her recent show of bad temper? Or—had he an inkling of the truth?

Norma reached the bend in the stairs and looked round anxiously.

She could see no sign of the necklace.

Her heart sank. If someone else had picked it up—

Just then a hand plucked her by the sleeve. Little Elsie stood there, smiling up at her; and in the little girl's chubby hand glimmered the coral necklace!

"Look, Norma—I found it on the stairs!" she declared eagerly. "Is it yours?"

Norma caught in her breath in sharp relief as she hastily snatched the necklace.

"Thank you, darling," she breathed, forcing a tremulous smile. "Yes—it's mine, but don't breathe a word about it to anyone. You see, it's a secret."

Elsie's blue eyes widened.

"Why?" she whispered.

"S'h!" breathed Norma, as she heard footsteps on the stairs. Hurriedly she slipped the necklace into her handbag, as Ethel Penhale, her face crimson, came hurrying up the stairs.

Ethel halted abruptly as she caught sight of Norma and her small companion.

Norma, pale but composed, returned the other girl's vindictive stare; little Elsie, realising that something was wrong, clung more tightly to her hand.

"I suppose," sneered Ethel, choosing her words deliberately, "that you put Gerald up to that trick?"

"I don't know what you mean," replied Norma quietly.

Ethel came nearer, an unpleasant sneer on her lips.

"Miss Innocent, eh? You're feeling pretty pleased with yourself about stealing the limelight, and currying favour with the squire; but if you think you can come to the village and have everything your own way, you'll find out your mistake! Father's not forgotten how you turned down his offer; and there's something fishy about your staying on here—whatever Gerald and the others like to think. One of these days, you'll go too far!"

There was concentrated venom in her tone; her eyes gleamed with suppressed fury.

Norma drew back instinctively, slipping an arm round Elsie's shoulder. Her face was pale, but she kept a firm hold on herself.

"I think you're horrid to talk to Norma like that!" exclaimed little Elsie indignantly.

"Never mind, darling," put in Norma hastily, "she doesn't mean it." She treated the other girl to a scornful glance as she drew Elsie away. But her thoughts were working swiftly.

How much did Ethel know—or suspect?

The unpleasant tension was relieved by the sound of Gerald's cheery voice from the head of the stairs.

"I say, Norma," he called, "when you've quite finished your chat, the squire's waiting to see you in his study."

Norma's heart missed a beat; taking Elsie by the hand, she hurried upstairs, ignoring the other girl's malicious stare.

Just then young Martin raced up, in search of his sister, and Elsie was carried off to join the other children.

Gerald carefully refrained from making any mention of the episode, as, with a mock gallant bow, he ushered Norma into the squire's study.

Squire Guthrie stood by his desk, scanning some papers, but he looked up quickly as Norma entered with Gerald.

Norma tried to appear composed, though she felt a trifle sick with apprehension. Was the squire going to question her about those fatal coral beads?

But, to her relief, he did not refer to them, apparently having dismissed them from his mind.

"So here you are, Miss Royston!" he

remarked bluffly. "You're an elusive young person, aren't you?"

He shook his head, but with a kindly smile that removed any suggestion of annoyance.

Norma flushed, encountering Gerald's amused smile.

"I understand from Gerald," went on the squire, "that you're anxious to obtain my custom for your shop. Is that so?"

Norma's heart gave a bound of relief, as she flashed a grateful glance at the boy.

"Oh, yes!" she replied eagerly. "If—if you could give me an order, Mr. Guthrie—"

"I think," put in the squire, smiling, "that it might be arranged. I've heard all about your decision to take charge of Tregellis' shop—and at the risk of disagreeing with my friend Penhale, I feel that you did the right thing. I'm sure that, in his heart, my friend admires you for your plucky stand. Is that not so, Gerald?"

"Rather!" replied Gerald loyally. "Uncle's not such a bad old stick, when you get to know him."

The squire coughed, his lips twitching; Norma looked down, not daring to contradict.

She was relieved when the squire came down to business.

The order for the children's party almost took her breath away by its size. It was to be delivered without fail, on the morning of the party.

Norma gladly promised this, and the squire generously insisted on writing a cheque on account.

"And don't forget," he added smilingly, waving aside her thanks, "you'll come to the party yourself, with the two children, and you'll sing that song of yours, in costume! That's part of the bargain—eh, Gerald?"

"I'll keep Norma up to it, sir!" promised Gerald.

"You may borrow the costume," went on the squire. "It's an old family heirloom, but I can rely on you to take care of it. And now, run away and enjoy yourselves; by the sound of things the festivities appear to be in full swing!"

He dismissed them benevolently.

"Come along, Norma," said Gerald, as he cheerfully evaded her attempts to thank him, "let's dance."

For the rest of the evening Norma had little chance for serious thought; it was a night of merrymaking, and Gerald was the life and soul of the party.

It was not until she took her leave with the two tired but happy children that she had an opportunity to ask a question that was uppermost in her mind.

"Gerald," she gulped, as they shook hands, "why—why did you prevent Ethel from following me out of the ball-room?"

Gerald grinned boyishly.

"Oh, I don't know! I got a kind of hunch that she might be in the way. Was I right?"

Norma nodded, her heart thumping. Then he didn't suspect the truth yet!

Once again she felt an almost overwhelming desire to confide in him; her secret would be so much easier if it were shared.

"You—you've been awfully kind to me," she said unsteadily, "about everything—"

"Oh, rot!" Gerald flushed; then he grinned. "Glad you hooked that order, Norma. Mind you deliver it on time. The squire's a stickler when it comes to business. Wish I could see you home," he added regretfully; "but I promised uncle I'd go along with him."

Just then a footstep crunched on the drive; the tall, burly figure of Mr. Penhale loomed in the darkness.

He glanced keenly at Norma and turned to Gerald.

"Come along, Gerald," he said gruffly. "The car's waiting."

"Just coming, uncle!" Gerald gripped Norma's hand. "Don't forget the party," he murmured. "So-long, youngsters! Happy New Year!"

He joined his uncle on the drive, and a moment later they had vanished into the gloom.

Norma shook herself with a little sigh as she turned to the children and set out on the walk home.

That night, after packing the two flushed and happy children off to bed, Norma unlocked the cupboard in the parlour and took out her phantom robes.

Christmas was over, and it had been happier than she had dared to hope, but the sight of those old-world robes came



"Thank you, darling," breathed Norma in relief, and hurriedly she slipped the necklace into her handbag. Then she turned, for Ethel Penhale was running up the stairs, her face crimson with anger.

as a reminder that her secret mission was hardly yet begun.

A dark mystery clouded her life—a mystery that involved not only herself, but the two innocent children asleep upstairs and old Ben Tregellis, who had gone out into the night, to vanish completely.

Norma clenched her hands, her grey eyes gleaming with determination.

The Phantom of Grey Gables would continue to walk until that mystery was solved.

### NORMA'S SURPRISE VISITOR

THE days that followed passed happily enough. Norma saw nothing of Gerald, but she was kept busy by the little shop, which in a surprising and gratifying way seemed to be attracting more custom.

Possibly rumours of the squire's order had got around, as rumours will. At any rate, Norma rarely had an idle moment, and the little bell over the shop door was kept busily tinkling.

The goods she had ordered for the squire's party arrived in due course. Norma, with the willing aid of the two children, cleared a large space on the shelves behind the counter to store the precious packages away until required.

There were biscuits, cakes, sweets, cases of mineral-waters, crackers, and novelties. Young Martin's eyes goggled, and little Elsie emitted squeals of delight as Norma went through the list.

They were to be delivered at the Hall on the following morning. Norma had ordered them a day in advance to make certain that there should be no hitch.

She was busily checking the list in the little parlour behind the shop when she heard the doorbell tinkle.

"Go and see who that is, Martin," she murmured, intent on her task.

A moment later young Martin returned, bringing with him an unexpected visitor.

Norma looked up with a start, and a quick flush crossed her face.

The newcomer was Ethel Penhale! "Don't trouble to get up," said Ethel, as Norma rose hastily to her feet, instinctively on the defensive.

The other girl's manner was surprisingly friendly; she appeared a trifle shamefaced.

"I just dropped in to—to have a word with you," she said and glanced at the children.

Norma sent them into the shop to watch for customers.

"Well," she asked, wondering what had prompted Ethel to call, "won't you sit down?"

Her tone was a little cool; she had not forgotten Ethel's uncalled-for show of spite on their previous meeting.

Ethel dropped into a chair; she seemed a trifle ill-at-ease.

"The fact is, Norma," she blurted out, "I've called to apologise—about the other evening, you know." She went on hurriedly before Norma could speak: "I know I acted like a little cat, but I was feeling a bit peevish. I suppose it's too much to ask you to forgive me, but—well, I'm sorry."

Norma possessed a warm-hearted and forgiving nature. She wondered if, after all, she had misjudged Ethel.

"Of course!" she said quickly, holding out her hand. "I'd like to be friends with you, Ethel, if you'd let me."

Ethel gave a little sigh—it might have been relief or satisfaction. Norma believed that it was the former.

"I didn't mean half that I said," Ethel declared; "I just spoke stupidly in the heat of the moment. I was upset about

that horrid phantom; and then Gerald ragged me for not offering to sing—"

She smiled a little wanly. Norma felt a momentary twinge of remorse.

"I hope you didn't mind my taking your place?" she asked, flushing.

"Oh, no, not in the least!" Ethel spoke airily. "Of course, you've not really got a trained voice, but you sang quite nicely. Quite impressed the squire."

Her tone was a shade patronising, but Norma could afford to make allowances.

"I hear you've got the order for the children's party to-morrow?" added Ethel, her restless gaze flitting round the room.

"Yes, I'm just checking the list," replied Norma quietly.

Ethel rose to her feet, holding out her hand.

"Well, I won't detain you; I expect we'll meet at the party. You're going to sing, aren't you—and in costume? Feeling nervous?"

"I am a bit," admitted Norma, smiling.

How nice of Ethel to take it like this!

The other girl paused in the doorway.

"By the way," she added confidentially, "I suppose you can keep a secret. You've heard all about the scare we had over that ghost—"

Norma's heart gave an uneasy jump; she forced herself to meet the other girl's shifty glance.

"Well?" she asked unsteadily.

Ethel gave a rather sickly smile. "We thought it was a ghost at first—at least, father did. But Gerald declares that it's someone dressed up. He says he's going to trap it next time it comes."

"He's found some footprints in the spinney, and when he comes back from town this evening he's going to trail them. He's got an idea that they'll show him how this person gets into the house—and from which direction they come."

Norma caught in her breath sharply as she strove to retain her outward composure.

She had not given a thought to the danger of footprints!

If Gerald should stumble on her secret way of entry into the house, her last chance of searching Grey Gables would be snatched from her; her mysterious quest would be brought to an untimely end.

And the tell-tale footprints might betray even more—

It was with difficulty that Norma managed to smile as she watched Ethel take her departure.

Her thoughts were racing anxiously, and she hardly noticed the children's eager chatter.

They were all agog with the subject of to-morrow's big party; little Elsie wanted to know what frock she was going to wear, and Martin asked how late they would be allowed to sit up.

Norma's disjointed replies revealed plainly to them that something was wrong.

"Don't you feel well, Norma?" asked little Elsie anxiously.

"You look jolly pale," added Martin. "I 'spect it's being in the stuffy shop all day."

Norma forced a quick smile. "Perhaps—perhaps you're right, Martin," she said.

She glanced out of the shop window into the gathering twilight of the late winter afternoon.

If only she could slip across to the

spinney and attempt to obliterate those tell-tale footprints!

But it would be an hour, at least, before she could close the shop; and she did not like leaving the children alone after dark.

It was little Elsie herself who solved the problem. She was whispering eagerly to Martin—and her brother nodded in enthusiastic agreement.

"I say, Norma," put in Martin, "S'pose you go out an' get some fresh air; Elsie an' I will look after the shop. It'll be jolly good fun."

"I'll wrap up the parcels," declared Elsie eagerly.

"An' I'll weigh the things," added Martin importantly. "I know how!"

Norma's heart missed a beat as she stared at their two eager faces. After all—why not? It would be a full hour before it was dark, and she would be back long before then!

And she could trust them to see to any customers who might call. All the villagers were known to them, and they could not possibly come to any harm.

"All right, dears," she said, with a grateful smile. "I'll just slip out for about ten minutes. You're quite sure you'll be all right?"

"Course we will!" declared Martin; and little Elsie darted behind the counter, proceeding to don Norma's overall, which almost enveloped her.

A little lump in her throat, Norma hurried to put on her things.

Giving the two children a final hug, she left the shop and walked quickly in the direction of the cliffs.

Once out of sight of the village, she made a sharp detour that led her back through the trees to the spinney adjoining Grey Gables.

Cautiously, her heart in her mouth, she hurried through the spinney.

Beneath the shadow of the trees it was almost dark—a fact for which she was profoundly thankful.

She reached the spot, close to a gnarled oak-tree, where she had halted to divest herself of her phantom robes. It might be somewhere about here that her tell-tale footprints had been discovered.

Norma bent anxiously to scrutinise the ground, and then her blood ran cold.

Stealthy footsteps were approaching through the trees—closing in on her!

She heard muttering voices and Mr. Penhale's harsh, familiar tones giving orders.

"Careful, men! There's someone moving! Close in and grab anyone who appears—ghost or not—when I give the word!"

Norma's hand flew to her mouth, stifling an involuntary cry.

She had walked into a trap!

### A NIGHTMARE PURSUIT

THERE was no time to think—to wonder how, or why the trap had been laid.

Someone must have suspected her visit, or seen her enter the grounds.

It was too dark beneath the trees for anyone to have recognised her, yet; but if she was caught—

Mr. Penhale's harsh voice rang out suddenly.

"Now!" he shouted. "Close in! The scoundrel can't escape!"

There came a tramp of heavy footsteps—a crashing among the bushes.

Norma stared round her wildly, her face deathly pale.

Her glance rested on a hollow in the gnarled trunk of the old oak-tree. It was her only chance.

(Please turn to the back page.)



# Peril at the New Year BALL



By  
PETER  
LANGLEY

## THE MANDARIN COSTUME

**Y**OUR costume is being wrapped, sir; if you wouldn't mind waiting—"

Noel Raymond smiled at the dark-haired girl behind the counter of the well-known theatrical costumiers.

"No hurry!" he replied. "I suppose New Year's Eve is one of your busiest times?"

The girl nodded as she busied herself at the counter. Noel could see that her attractive face was rather pale, and her hands shook slightly.

Just then a shadow fell across the counter. A tall man, muffled in a heavy travelling-coat, beckoned to the young assistant.

"I have called," he said softly, "for the Chinese mandarin costume that was ordered and paid for in the name of Ransome. Here is the receipt."

The girl looked up quickly, and Noel saw her dark eyes widen with something like terror.

"Well?" demanded the man impatiently. "Why do you stand there, staring? I am in a hurry."

The girl swallowed hard, her slender hands clenched.

"There must be some mistake," she breathed. "No such costume was ordered, sir."

"What?" The stranger raised his voice. His accent was unmistakably foreign. Noel caught a glimpse of his thin, aquiline features as he leaned across the counter. "Do not trifle with me, girl! That costume was ordered and paid for, and promised for tonight."

The girl's face was paler than ever; there was an almost reckless gleam in her dark eyes.

"I'm sure you must be mistaken, sir!"

Just then the manager of the shop bustled up.

"What is the trouble, Miss Tarrant?" he demanded.

The stranger immediately turned to him.

"I have ordered a costume—the costume of a Chinese mandarin—here is the

receipt—but the girl tells me there is a mistake—"

"Nonsense!" snapped the manager, frowning. "You know very well that the costume was ordered, Miss Tarrant. It is all ready wrapped for the gentleman. Kindly fetch it at once."

Biting her lip, the young assistant departed.

Noel's eyes were puzzled. He was convinced from her manner that the girl had been deliberately withholding the costume. But why?

A moment later she returned, carrying two parcels. She handed one to the irate stranger, and the other to Noel.

The young detective paid for his costume, trying to catch the girl's eyes; but she kept her face carefully averted. Her agitation was more apparent than ever.

With a thoughtful frown, Noel left the shop. He tried to dismiss the incident from his mind; after all, it was no concern of his. But the recollection of the girl's dark, frightened eyes haunted him as he drove back to his flat.

Parker, his valet, was waiting for him.

"You haven't much time to change for the ball, sir," he remarked.

"I've certainly run it rather fine," agreed Noel, with a glance at the clock.

"I promised Baron Garcia that I'd be there punctually. I'd better get a move on."

Parker coughed deferentially.

"Might I inquire, sir, whether it is business or pleasure?"

The young detective chuckled.

It was a Robin Hood costume that Noel had ordered for himself to wear at the New Year Ball. But it was a Chinese Mandarin outfit that was delivered to his flat. And pinned to the rich silk was a note begging him to wear it.

"Both, I fancy. There'll be a pretty distinguished gathering there—foreign diplomats, and others. I'm supposed to keep an eye open for any hint of trouble. You might ring for a taxi while I'm changing."

"Ahem! What is the costume, sir, if I might ask?"

Noel grinned. "Robin Hood. Hope it'll suit me. One thing, we'll all be masked."

In his bed-room the young detective unwrapped the parcel, disclosing a box. He opened the lid, and a startled whistle escaped his lips.

Instead of the plain costume of Lincoln green that he had chosen, the box contained a magnificent robe embroidered with large gold dragons, together with ornate slippers and head-dress to match!

"Ye gods!" he cried, lifting out the costume. "The Chinese mandarin costume! The girl must have got the parcels mixed up in her agitation—"

He broke off, snatching up something that lay among the folds of the robe. It was a single sheet of paper, and scribbled across it in pencil was a brief, urgent message:

"Wear this costume at the masked ball to-night, and look out for the girl in the red domino. Do not fail me! It is a matter of life and death . . ."

The message ended abruptly, as though the writer had been interrupted.

The young detective whistled noiselessly; his eyes narrowed as he stared from the cryptic note to the magnificent robes of the mandarin. Then he chuckled.

"I'll take a chance!" he decided. "Don't suppose it'll come to anything, but one never knows."

There was a glint of boyish excitement in his eyes as he proceeded to attire himself for the masked ball.

Half an hour later, Noel's taxi drove up outside the palatial London residence of Baron Garcia, the famous diplomat.

He was admitted at once, on the production of his invitation card.

Soft music and laughter came from the direction of the great ball-room. A number of the guests were already dancing, while others stood about in groups, talking and laughing. Liveried footmen moved unobtrusively among the crowd, carrying trays of refreshments.

The young detective's keen eyes scanned the throng; he was seeking one figure in particular—a girl in a red domino.

In a moment he caught sight of her—loitering on the outskirts of the crowd;

a slim, dainty figure attired as an Egyptian dancing-girl, her features partly hidden by a crimson domino. She appeared to be looking for someone.

"Now for it!" breathed Noel. He crossed the room deliberately, with a stately tread in keeping with his dragon-embroidered robes.

The girl did not observe his approach till he was close beside her. He could see that her face was pale and tense under her crimson mask; one slender hand grasped the heavy velvet curtains near to which she stood.

"Your humble and willing slave, fair dancer!" murmured Noel, his eyes gleaming quizzically through the slits in his mask.

The girl turned with a violent start; her lips trembled, but no sound left them.

"You wished to see me?" asked Noel quietly, as he stared more keenly at her face.

The girl looked round cautiously. "Not here; we might be overheard." Noel's hand closed on the girl's arm. "What about a dance then?" he murmured. "Will you give me that pleasure?"

He drew her out on to the ball-room floor as the orchestra struck up a waltz.

Noel was an excellent dancer, and the girl was as light as a feather in his arms.

"Now," he breathed, "what's the trouble?"

"I—I can't speak to you here," she whispered. "I daren't!"

"I was right then," murmured Noel. "You sent me that note?"

The girl nodded.

"I was desperate," she whispered. "There was no other way."

"Won't you explain?"

"I can't—not here." Her fingers closed on his arm. "Fetch me an ice; I'll meet you—"

She hesitated, staring round her quickly. "I'll meet you in the conservatory, in five minutes' time."

"Is that a promise?"

"Yes! Now, please—please go!"

They had reached the outskirts of the crowd, and she slipped from his arms, vanishing through a doorway.

For an instant Noel hesitated; then, with a shrug, he made his way to the buffet.

There was a baffled look in his eyes as he ordered refreshments.

Was the girl's terror genuine—or was she merely acting?

He could not make up his mind.

How had she—an assistant in a shop—managed to gain access to this exclusive ball, presumably without an invitation? Was her purpose here above board?

He was angry with himself for his suspicions, yet instinctively he was on his guard.

Tray in hand, he made his way to the conservatory. It was in semi-darkness, and apparently deserted. The music from the distant ball-room came faintly to his ears.

Noel placed the tray on a small table, as he heard a cautious footstep approaching in the gloom.

"Red Domino?" he inquired softly.

There was no reply. Noel stiffened, stepping back into the shadows as he heard something rustle behind one of the palms. Footsteps were converging from two directions.

His eyes narrowed, and his hand slipped instinctively into the pocket of his voluminous robe.

He drew in his breath sharply; the revolver he had placed in that pocket before leaving his flat had vanished!

"Ye gods—a trap!" breathed Noel between his teeth.

He sprang suddenly at a shadowy figure that loomed suddenly in front of him. He found himself grappling with a man of tall and powerful build—but the young detective maintained his advantage.

"Jose—quickly!"

It was his opponent who spoke—and swiftly on the words Noel felt something flung over his head.

He struggled gamely, taken off his guard, but his opponent had gained the upper hand. Noel was thrown to the ground, his head striking the floor.

It was several minutes before he regained his senses; vaguely he heard a door slam—a key grate in the lock.

His head was throbbing violently as he managed to struggle to his feet.

He extricated his torch from his dishevelled robes, and flashed it round him.

He was in some kind of dismal cellar, apparently situated beneath the conservatory; Noel could see the trapdoor through which he had been dragged—and left unconscious.

### NOEL REAPPEARS!

THE young detective lost no time in attempting to escape from the cellar. The trapdoor, as he had expected, was securely fastened on the outside—and the possibility of being able to attract attention was remote.

But there was a grating half-way up the wall, and Noel endeavoured to climb up to it.

The Chinese robes hampered his movements; he slipped them off and renewed his efforts. At length he managed to gain the grating. To his relief he found that it was movable. He lifted it, squeezing through the narrow aperture into the moonlit garden of the mansion.

The sound of music drifted faintly to his ears through the open windows.

Noel smiled grimly, imagining the sensation he would cause if he reappeared in the ball-room in his present attire.

There was obviously a desperate plot afoot—a plot in which the mysterious young girl assistant was involved.

Noel surmised that she had mistaken him for someone else when handing him the costume; then, realising her mistake, she had deliberately led him into a trap.

His mind worked swiftly; whatever the girl's game, there was no time to lose.

But how was he to regain entrance to the ball-room without attracting attention?

As he made his way noiselessly among the bushes that surrounded the house he heard a footstep crunch on the gravel path. Hands clenched, Noel stepped out from the bushes.

"Jumping snakes!" exclaimed a gruff, familiar voice.

A heavy hand fell on the young detective's shoulder.

"Cartwright!" ejaculated Noel, recognising an old acquaintance of his—Detective-Sergeant Cartwright, of the C.I.D.

The plain-clothes man stared blankly.

"Mr. Raymond, by all that's wonderful! Anything—anything wrong, sir?"

Noel smiled grimly, conscious that the Yard man was eyeing his attire askance.

"Quite a lot," he rejoined. "But don't ask questions, Cartwright. Be a good fellow and get me something respectable to wear. Wait a moment. I have it!"

He whispered something in the sergeant's ear. The other grinned broadly.

"I don't know what it's all about, sir, but if you want anything I'm your man. I'll show you the side entrance into the servants' quarters, then I'll leave you. My job's to patrol the grounds."

"Keep within hailing distance," rejoined Noel dryly. "I may want you."

Ten minutes later a dignified young footman in powdered wig entered the ball-room carrying a tray of refreshments.

Noiselessly he moved along the fringe of the crowd, his blue eyes keenly alert.

In a moment he spotted his quarry—the girl in the red domino.

She was dancing with a tall, bearded man in the elaborate attire of King Charles II, and she was laughing gaily into her companion's face.

"So!" breathed Noel, his eyes hardening. "She's a cool customer, and no mistake! I fancy, young lady, that you're due for a shock."

He stood in an alcove, keeping a close watch on the couple. The dance came to an end, and the girl and her companion crossed to one of the small tables at the side of the hall—a table conveniently shadowed by a palm.

Noel's eyes glinted as he approached with noiseless tread, stepping behind the table.

A snatch of whispered conversation reached his ears; the man was speaking.

"You understand?" he asked tersely. "There must be no mistake! Those papers must be in my hands by midnight, or—"

Noel coughed slightly as the girl looked up and caught sight of him, but there was no recognition in her eyes; only a strange, desperate determination.

Her hand closed warningly on her companion's arm.

The man looked round, scowling at Noel.

"What do you want?" he demanded.

Noel wondered where he had seen those dark, aquiline features before; deferentially he leaned forward.

"Pardon, sir, but I have a message for you," he murmured.

"For me?" The man stared suspiciously. "How do you know my name?"

"I don't, sir," replied Noel suavely. "The message was for the gentleman in the Charles II costume; and the messenger said I was to mention a Chinese mandarin."

The man gave a violent start, his hands clenching on the table; the girl's face had turned deathly pale as she stared at him.

"Well," demanded the man huskily, "what is the message?"

"Will you please go to the conservatory, sir? There is a gentleman waiting for you, and he seems very agitated. He said that something had gone wrong."

The man rose suddenly to his feet, his face twitching.

"Wait here!" he breathed, staring at the girl. "I shan't be long—and remember!"

He moved hastily away through the crush.

Noel bit back a grim smile of relief; he had achieved his purpose and had the girl to himself.

He placed the tray on the table.

"Coffee, miss—or ices?" he inquired softly.

The girl shook her head in a distracted fashion, barely glancing at him.

"Neither, thank you. Will you—will you fetch me a glass of water, please?"

"Certainly, miss."

Noel retired, stepping quickly behind the palm. He saw the girl look round

her furtively; then, opening her evening bag, she drew out a folded sheet of paper.

Scanning it swiftly, she struck a match and set fire to the corner.

Noel emerged suddenly from his concealment, his hand closing on the girl's wrist.

"Just a minute!" he said grimly.

A stifled cry was torn from the girl's lips as Noel swiftly extinguished the flame and glanced at the charred paper.

"Midnight . . . His Excellency, the . . . ian Ambassador . . . must be there at all costs . . . beneath the clock . . ."

The gaps in the message had been caused by the scorching flame.

"So?" murmured Noel grimly, retaining his hold on the girl's wrist. "I thought as much! You're playing a deep game, young lady—but you weren't quite smart enough, this time."

The girl was staring at him, her eyes dilated.

"You!" she whispered.

Noel bowed slightly.

"We have met before," said Noel dryly. "On two—or is it three occasions? You did not expect to meet me again so soon."

The girl's face was ashen pale as she returned his stern gaze.

"You don't understand," she faltered. "I couldn't meet you—as we arranged—"

"That was a pity," cut in Noel grimly. "But you arranged for someone else to meet me—and you were present to witness the meeting."

"I—I don't know what you mean—"

Noel's lips tightened. "Suppose we lay our cards on the table," he said grimly. "It's useless to keep up this pretence. I want the truth—and the whole truth! To whom does this message refer—and what is your game?"

The girl shrank back, her lips trembling.

"I daren't tell you," she breathed. "Mr. Raymond—you don't understand; you're in danger while you stay here—and so am I. Please—please go!"

The young detective raised his eyebrows. Either the girl was in earnest—or she was an accomplished young trickster. Judging by what had already happened, he inclined to the latter view.

"Think again," he replied grimly. "You sent me a note, begging me to meet you; you led me deliberately into a trap—"

"No! That's not true—"

The girl broke off, glancing in a terrified fashion over Noel's shoulder.

Before he could guess her intention, she sprang to her feet and dived past him, vanishing among the crowd.

For a moment Noel paused, thinking quickly. From his pocket he took a scrap of charred paper and reread the cryptic message:

"Midnight . . . His Excellency, the . . . ian Ambassador . . ."

He glanced at his watch. It was twenty minutes past eleven. In forty minutes' time the schemers were planning to carry out their plot—aimed at a foreign emissary, at present unknown.

Noel knew for a fact that there were representatives at the ball from a number of mid-European countries, to which those letters might apply. He could hardly warn them all of some intangible plot—that might not materialise.

Yet the danger was there—and it was his duty to circumvent it!

Noel stiffened suddenly, parting the curtains of the window near to which he was standing.

He imagined that he had seen a light flash in the grounds.

Yes—there it was, again! Among the bushes, someone was flashing a torch in quick, staccato signals. Morse code!

His eyes narrowed, Noel contrived to read the message:

"T-o-n-v! Reply! Danger!"

Noel's lips tightened; throwing open the window, he climbed over the sill. A few minutes later he had reached the ground and was sprinting through the shrubbery in the direction of the flashing light.

Emerging suddenly from the bushes, he found himself on the brink of an ornamental lake, the water shimmering in the moonlight.

Crouched by the lakeside, torch in hand, was the girl in the red domino!

He took a noiseless step towards her—and unexpectedly the girl turned, pushing him with all her might. Taken completely by surprise, Noel missed his

among the bushes, watching—and waiting.

The stealthy footsteps drew nearer. A tall figure stepped into the moonlight—a figure clad in the gorgeous robes of a Chinese mandarin.

Noel could see the gilded dragon glimmering on the robe as the man halted by the lake, staring with satisfaction at the widening ripples.

"So much for the meddling detective," he muttered.

He turned, and a startled ejaculation was torn from his lips as he found Noel confronting him, a grim smile on his lips. The man's hand flew to his pocket—a moment too late.

A fist as hard as steel crashed into his jaw, and the scoundrel measured his length on the ground.

Noel, breathing hard, bent over him, peering into his face.

Those pale, aquiline features, without the King Charles beard, were unmistakable.

This was the stranger who had called for the costume at the theatrical stores.



"Pardon, sir, but I have a message for you," murmured the footman. "For me?" asked the man suspiciously. But he did not realise that the footman was really Noel Raymond.

footing, and sprawled back among the bushes.

At the same instant, a muffled shot rang out—followed by another.

The water of the lake was splashed into widening ripples—a piece of stonework was chipped from an ornamental fountain.

"Great Scott!" breathed Noel huskily. He had scrambled to his knees, and was holding tightly to the girl's arm. "Why did you do that?" he panted.

"Don't—don't you understand?" whispered the girl brokenly.

"I think I do; someone tried to shoot me. But why risk your life to save me—if you're on the side of the crooks?"

"You wouldn't believe me—if I told you," breathed the girl. "I told you there was danger! Now—now will you believe me? Please let me go—"

She wriggled from his grasp, and darted among the shadows.

Noel hesitated; he could hear stealthy footsteps approaching from the opposite direction—the footsteps of his would-be assassin!

Swift as thought, he threw a heavy stone into the lake—and crouched

Noel rose to his feet, his mind working swiftly as he attempted to sort out the tangled skeins of the mystery on to which he had stumbled.

If this man was a spy—as he had cause to suspect—then what part was the girl playing?

Until a few minutes ago, he had felt convinced that she was a party to the plot—that she had aided at the treacherous attack that had been made on him earlier that evening.

But now—

"I've been a fool!" breathed Noel. "That girl's no crook. She saved my life, and I've got to find her again. Meanwhile—"

He bent over the unconscious crook; the man's eyelids were flickering. In a minute or two he would come round.

The young detective's lips tightened. His first act was to divest the scoundrel of the stolen costume; then he secured his wrists and ankles, with the silken cord that formed a girdle to the mandarin's robe.

"He ought to be safe enough for the time being," he muttered. "I'll get Cartwright to keep an eye on him."

As an afterthought, he searched the

man's pockets. Apart from some loose money, he discovered only a card with a pencilled address scribbled across the back.

The young detective glanced at his watch. It was twenty-five to twelve.

There was no time to lose.

At midnight an attempt was to be made to rob a distinguished guest of certain vital papers.

Making a bundle of the mandarin robes, he hurried in search of the Scotland Yard man.

He found Cartwright indulging in a quiet smoke on the other side of the house.

"I want you to keep an eye on a chap you'll find trussed up near the ornamental lake," Noel told him. "Can't explain now. I've got to slip off on a little errand."

And, leaving the amazed Scotland Yard man staring after him, Noel hurried back to the house to collect his coat.

Ten minutes later he was hammering on the door of an old basement-type house in the immediate vicinity of Baron Garcia's residence.

There was no reply; the windows were all in darkness.

Noel climbed the wall, and managed to force an entry by a window at the rear.

As he climbed over the sill, a stifled moan greeted his ears.

Noel whipped out his torch; the brilliant beam revealed a fair-haired young man lying on the floor, gagged and bound.

In one bound he reached the other's side, swiftly cutting the cruel thongs that bound him.

The young man groaned, and sat up dazedly.

"Beneath the clock—at midnight!" he muttered. "The silver greyhound is—"

He fell back in Noel's arms.

The young detective stared into the other's pale face, and a gleam of enlightenment flashed in his eyes.

"Great Scott!" he breathed. "I've been blind!"

### AT THE STROKE OF MIDNIGHT

THE hands of the big clock above the ball-room pointed to a few minutes before midnight as Noel, breathless and dishevelled, reached the house.

In the hall he encountered Sergeant Cartwright.

"Did you find him?" he panted.

The Scotland Yard man shook his head lugubriously.

"No, sir. He'd given us the slip. He'd got away by the time I reached the lake."

Noel bit back a stifled ejaculation, his face paling.

"Never mind!" he snapped. "Stand by here; I may need you."

He darted into the ante-room, and swiftly donned the robes of the Chinese mandarin.

As he pushed his way through the crowd in the ball-room, the clock boomed the first stroke of midnight.

The orchestra struck up the traditional air of "Auld Lang Syne."

Noel stepped beneath the clock, staring round him. A grey-bearded, stately figure, attired as an Indian prince, approached him as the guests joined hands in the song.

"The countersign, monsieur?" he murmured.

"The silver greyhound," replied Noel, in the same tone.

A bulky envelope was slipped into the young detective's hand.

He turned it over, noting the heavy

seal on the back. The next moment he had concealed it under his voluminous robe.

He stepped back as the stranger bowed politely, and made to move on. And just then the young detective felt a hand pluck at his robe.

He turned, in time to see a slim figure vanish behind a curtained doorway, a bulky envelope grasped in her hand.

"Ah—a spy!" exclaimed the foreign emissary, his face deathly pale. "She has tricked us!"

Noel made a dive for the doorway, but the girl was not in sight. As he reached the hall, he heard a car start up on the drive.

"Cartwright!" he shouted.

The detective-sergeant appeared on the steps, his face very red.

"The girl in the crimson domino, sir!" he panted. "I tried to stop her, but she had a taxi waiting. I didn't spot her till it was too late."

"Get another taxi!" snapped Noel. "Quickly, man! We may be in time—yet!"

THE girl in the crimson domino alighted from her taxi outside the old-fashioned basement house that Noel had previously visited.

Running quickly up the steps, she inserted a key in the latch, opening the door.

"Tony!" she called anxiously. "Tony!"

A tall figure stepped from the shadows, and a stifled scream escaped the girl's lips as a hand fastened on her arm.

"So—you've come?" sneered a voice. "I was expecting you. Hand over the papers!"

The girl shrank back, staring into the cruel, aquiline features of the master-spy.

"Where is Tony?" she gasped. "What have you done with him?"

"Give me the papers first, and we'll talk afterwards," grated the man.

He jerked back her cloak and twisted the bulky envelope from her hand.

"Jose!" he called. Then, as a dark-featured foreigner appeared, he tossed the envelope across to him. "Take this, and catch the first boat train. Hurry! I'll settle with the girl and her brother."

The other man departed; the girl struggled to free herself.

"You won't get away with it!" she sobbed. "You can't—"

The door crashed back on its hinges. "Put your hands up, Gaston—and keep them up!" rapped Noel Raymond's voice.

The crook spun round, raising his hands; his lips curled mockingly.

"You're a trifle too late, Mr. Raymond," he sneered. "This young lady

outwitted you—without knowing it. She imagined that the Chinese mandarin was myself, not realising that you had taken my place, and she very cleverly snatched the vital papers—and brought them here, as she and her brother had arranged!"

A horrified cry escaped the girl's lips. "Then you were the mandarin!" she gasped, staring at Noel. "If only I'd known—"

"Don't worry," put in Noel cheerfully. "The papers are safe, Miss Tarrant. The envelope you snatched contained blank sheets! I had rather expected an attempt of some kind—and I had a dummy envelope ready prepared in case of emergency."

A baffled expression crossed the face of the master-spy. He ducked suddenly, making a dive for the door.

But his way was barred by Detective-Sergeant Cartwright, accompanied by a fair-haired young man who held a revolver in his hand.

"Tony!" exclaimed the girl joyfully. "Then you're safe!"

"Thanks to you, Jean," replied the young man, as he embraced his sister. "And thanks to Mr. Raymond here!"

Noel grinned as he motioned the plain-clothes man to take the baffled crook away.

"We've been playing a nice little game of cross-purposes, Miss Tarrant," he said. "I thought you were a spy, when all the time you were trying to assist your brother, who is in the Secret Service."

"But one or two things are still puzzling me. I suppose that you recognised Gaston in the shop as the spy your brother had been trailing?"

The girl nodded, her eyes shining.

"Yes; Tony had shown me a photograph some days before, when he called to order the costume. He told me the man was dangerous."

"You knew why your brother wanted the costume?"

The girl shook her head.

"Not then; but I found a note in his diary afterwards—when I became anxious about his absence. I realised that something had gone wrong with his plans, as he didn't call for the costume. Then, when that dreadful man called, I—"

"You very cleverly outwitted him and handed me the costume!" put in Noel, with a smile. "Then, when I turned up at the ball, you were scared, because you knew that Gaston was there, watching us?"

The girl nodded.

"After—after you disappeared," she breathed, "Gaston tried to force me to tell what I knew of Tony's plans. He said that Tony was in his power, and that if I dared breathe a word to anyone he—he would—"

"I understand," cut in Noel grimly. "You tried to signal to your brother, as had been arranged, but there was no answer. Then you decided pluckily to make a last desperate attempt to save the vital papers on your own."

He glanced at the young man.

"I imagine, Tarrant, that your sister has missed her vocation," he said, his eyes twinkling.

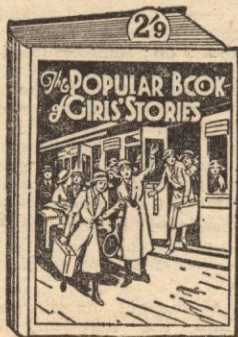
The Secret Service man grinned.

"That's what she's always telling me; but I won't let her take up our risky game. It's not always that she'd find a Noel Raymond to appeal to when things get too hot!"

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

You'll be meeting the fascinating and daring Rosina in next Friday's detective story. Look out for it under the title of "Rosina the Elusive." It's packed with thrills. Order your GIRLS' CRYSTAL in advance.

### AN IDEAL PRESENT!





# Their Quest AT THE Sports Winter



## THE ROSSES RETURN

**D**OREEN CARSDALE and Jean Hinton were having a wonderful time at St. Lauritz, in Switzerland, with Doreen's Aunt Elizabeth.

At their hotel they met Mr. and Mrs. Ross, Irma Ross, their daughter, and Sylvia Drake, the Rosses' ward. The chums distrusted the Ross family, but liked Sylvia, about whom there was some mystery.

Sylvia was a wonderful skater, but for some reason her guardians were determined not to allow her to enter for the St. Lauritz skating championship. Doreen and Jean felt sure there was some reason for their ban, especially when a mysterious woman of the mountains, named Madame Marie, told them that it was vital to Sylvia's happiness that she should win.

From her they also discovered that Sylvia's cousin was hiding from the police in a secret mountain chalet.

The Rosses took Sylvia away to Corvisch, and kept her a prisoner. But the chums followed, and when the Rosses had left the chalet, Doreen climbed up to Sylvia's window to see her.

Then suddenly, Doreen received a shock. From her precarious perch she saw the Rosses approaching the chalet!

**D**OREEN gave a gasp. In dismay she stared at those three figures approaching the chalet.

"The Rosses!" she murmured in panic. "Oh goodness—"

They must not see her. They must not know that she and Jean had traced Sylvia.

But in a minute or two they would be at the chalet. Seconds only remained during which to escape.

Doreen's keen brain raced. Yes, there was just one fleeting chance.

The Rosses were now passing alongside that clump of fir-trees. For perhaps fifteen or twenty seconds those trees would hide the chalet from their view. During that brief space of time—

"Doreen, they're coming. What are you going to do?" floated up Jean's anxious voice.

"Be down in five ticks!" Doreen called back.

"Oh, do be careful—" Sylvia began apprehensively.

"Don't worry about me." Doreen flashed a quick smile at Sylvia, white-faced and anxious as she peered down from the attic window. "Now, chin up! Somehow I'm going to convince aunt of the truth and get her help. We'll be back. Until then—good-bye!"

"Good-bye—"

But Doreen had already dropped out of sight below the roof. Down on to the balcony she jumped, and in the same movement almost, was scrambling over the rail and lowering herself down one of the supporting struts.

Nimble she slithered towards the ground, dropped the last eight feet, and landed with a thud in the soft snow. In a moment she had regained her balance.

"Quickly—towards the trees!" she hissed, grabbing Jean's arm and breaking into a run. "With a bit of luck we'll dodge them!"

Those trees, acting as a windbreak to the chalet, were not far away, but could they reach them in time before the Rosses appeared? Taking a wide circle, the chums pelted on as quickly as they could through the deep snow.

Still the Rosses had not come in sight. Only another few yards, and then, gasping with relief, Doreen and Jean gained the shelter of the trees.

"Done it!" Doreen whispered triumphantly.

On the other side of the trees Mr. and Mrs. Ross and Irma emerged into sight of the chalet. Instinctively they stared up at the window of the attic in which they had locked their victim. But the window was shut and there was no sign of Sylvia. They saw footprints in the snow, but paid no heed.

At all costs, Doreen and Jean must make Aunt Elizabeth realise what scoundrels the Rosses were. For only then could they hope to save their friend Sylvia from them!

By DAPHNE GRAYSON

While Doreen and Jean, congratulating themselves on the success of their escape, had now passed beyond the trees and were quickly making for the main street of Corvisch.

"What happened?" Jean asked eagerly. "I couldn't hear what you were saying—"

Doreen told her. "We've simply got to do something," she finished. "There's poor Sylvia locked up in that attic, and not allowed out anywhere by herself. And her guardians aren't letting her take part in the skating championships after all."

"But she must!" Jean gasped. "Her cousin said she must—"

"I know. And it's up to us," Doreen said. "We're the only ones who can help Sylvia. But at least we know where she is now, and her guardians don't suspect."

"But what can we do?" Jean asked anxiously. "If Sylvia's a prisoner there—"

"I don't know yet," Doreen had to admit. "But we've got to enlist Aunt Elizabeth's aid. We've got to convince her that the Rosses are working against Sylvia, and then I'm sure she would help us—and help Sylvia, too."

"Your aunt will want a lot of convincing," Jean pointed out. "She thinks the Rosses can't do anything wrong—"

"We'll manage it—somehow," Doreen said determinedly. "And now let's get back to St. Lauritz. Hallo, there's Georges—"

Georges, the sleigh-driver, spotted them at the same moment. He had just emerged from a little cafe, where obviously he had partaken of refreshment, for he was wiping his enormous moustachios with a bright red handkerchief, and his round, jolly face bore an even more expansive beam.

He came trotting over as Doreen beckoned. Yes, he remembered the mesdemoiselles—most certainly he did. Yes, he would be delighted and proud and honoured to drive them back to St. Lauritz. But first perhaps they would like to visit the famous ice caves which were nearly half a kilometre farther on down the road where they had just come from.

Doreen shook her head firmly, whereupon the garrulous Georges subsided into silence.

Very thoughtful was Doreen during that ride back. There was so much to occupy her mind. Only too well she knew, as Jean had said, that it would be difficult to persuade Aunt Elizabeth that Sylvia was being victimised by her guardians. But on one thing, Doreen was resolved. Aunt Elizabeth must be convinced somehow.

She was still puzzling over the problem when at last the Crestina Hotel came into view. Georges pulled up outside the entrance.

Having paid Georges, and having added a handsome tip, which again let loose his loquacious tongue, the chums went into the hotel. And there, standing in the vestibule, was Aunt Elizabeth herself. She smiled as she saw the girls.

"Had a nice time?" she asked. "Where have you been?"

"Just for a sleigh ride to Corvisch and back," Doreen told her.

"And very nice, too, on a lovely morning like this," Aunt Elizabeth enthused. "I really think I shall have to go for a trip myself this afternoon. By the way, I have just received a letter from Mrs. Ross."

Doreen started.

"Oh, have you!" she murmured.

"Yes. It's curious, isn't it, that Mrs. Ross never told me where they were going. She hasn't put her address on the letter even now. But she says they're having a very good time, that they've taken a furnished chalet, and adds that Irma and Sylvia are both practising hard every day for the skating championship."

Doreen's hands clenched beside her. Mrs. Ross said that, did she? Just another of her many lies; just another example of how she pulled the wool over Aunt Elizabeth's eyes!

Oh, if only aunt knew the truth, Doreen thought. How could she make her realise the true facts—

And then, suddenly, Doreen's eyes widened; a flush of excitement came into her cheeks.

"Golly, I wonder—" she muttered.

"Doreen, I do wish you wouldn't use that expression," Aunt Elizabeth reproved.

"Oh, sorry! But, aunt," Doreen went on eagerly, "I was just thinking. You said you would like to go for a trip this afternoon. Well, let's go to those famous ice caves just beyond Corvisch. It's a lovely drive, and I do want to see those caves."

"A splendid idea, Doreen," Aunt Elizabeth agreed at once. "Yes, we'll most certainly go."

Doreen could hardly repress a cheer. But then, as soon as Miss Hill had strolled away, Jean caught at her arm.

"I say, what's the wheeze? It is a wheeze, isn't it? To reach those ice caves, we shall pass the Ross' chalet."

"Exactly!" Doreen grinned. "That letter gave me the idea. I've got it all worked out in theory, and, with a bit of luck, it'll work out in practice as well. The whole point is that aunt mustn't suspect a thing. We've got to take her by surprise—"

"But how are you going to do it?"

"Listen!" And swiftly Doreen explained her plan. "Get it?" she added.

"My hat, yes!" Jean exclaimed enthusiastically. "And if only it works, it—"

"Let's hope it will," Doreen said fervently.

Lunch came and went. Doreen suggested an early start, and Aunt Elizabeth—beaming benevolently at their impatience, unsuspecting its real reason—was agreeable.

Half an hour later, having hired a sleigh, all three of them were on their way to Corvisch. At last they came to the village. Along the main street they swished, and then they were swinging down the road which led towards the famous ice caves.

Now Doreen felt her heart pounding. Her eyes gleamed with excitement as they approached the picturesque chalet which they had visited only that morning.

"I say, aunt, that's a lovely place—" she began, pointing, and then abruptly gave a gasp of dismay. "Jean!" she cried, in sudden agitation. "Jean, what's the matter?"

For Jean, with a little groan, had slumped limply against her chum.

"Jean!" Aunt Elizabeth exclaimed. "Bless my soul, the poor girl's fainted!"

"We must get some water!" Doreen cried. "Driver, stop—stop! Jean, dear—"

Jean stirred; opened her eyes. "Sorry; but I—I'll be all right in a moment. But I'd like a drink of—of water—"

"You poor child, of course," Aunt Elizabeth said, in a relieved voice now. "Perhaps we could get some from that chalet. Wait here, Doreen, and look after Jean while I slip across."

She went hurrying over towards the chalet. Doreen grinned.

"Fine, Jean!" she approved. "I'm glad you 'recovered' quickly. We didn't want to upset aunt too much. But now to see if the rest of the stunt works. Golly, there's Mrs. Ross at the door now. Just look at her expression."

Over in the chalet doorway, Aunt Elizabeth and Mrs. Ross were staring at each other in amazement. Aunt Elizabeth was genuinely surprised and delighted. Mrs. Ross, while certainly surprised, was trying to look delighted, too.

"My dear Miss Hill—well, good gracious me—"

"What an extraordinary coincidence!" Aunt Elizabeth gasped. "But, Mrs. Ross, Jean has come over a bit faint. If I could have a glass of water, please—"

"Yes, yes, of course!"

In a few moments the woman was back again with a glass. Making no attempt to invite them in, she hurried across to the sleigh. The chums simulated surprise, and then Jean was sipping at the water.

"Well, how curious!" Doreen said. "Fancy meeting you, Mrs. Ross. And how is Sylvia? Oh, I say, couldn't we see her just for a moment or two? Aunt, please!" she added. "Just to wish her good luck in the skating championship, you know."

She saw the startled expression that had come into Mrs. Ross' face. But now the woman, as if recovering her composure, smiled.

"I'm sorry, but Sylvia isn't in," she said. "She's practising on the lake now, as it happens. Irma is with her, and Stephen, too."

Doreen's eyes gleamed. That was just what she had wanted to know. Her lips tightened.

"Aunt, you hear that?" she asked abruptly. "Mrs. Ross says Sylvia isn't in. She says Sylvia is out skating. Now watch!"

Quickly, before anyone could stop her, she ran forward towards the house.

"Sylvia—Sylvia!" she shouted, at the top of her voice.

"Doreen!" came back an answering voice.

And there at the window of the attic in the roof appeared a face—Sylvia's face.

Triumphantly Doreen swung round to face her aunt.

"You see, aunt?" she cried. "Sylvia isn't out skating. Mrs. Ross has just lied to us—as she's lied so many times before!"

#### IN THEIR TRUE COLOURS

A TIDE of guilt and rage mantled Mrs. Ross' cheeks scarlet.

Doreen and Jean, seeing it, thrilled. Aunt Elizabeth, seeing it, stared at the woman as if hypnotised—from her to Sylvia, framed there in that upper window.

"How—how dare you!" Mrs. Ross cried furiously. "Miss Hill, are you going to allow your niece to talk to me in such an outrageous way? Really, this is unbearable!"



"Are you Mr. Drake?" Doreen asked quickly. The young man nodded, and looked agitatedly around. "I shouldn't have come, but I had to see Sylvia," he said. The chums then had to tell him that his ~~girl~~ was a prisoner in her guardian's house.

Aunt Elizabeth seemed to come out of a trance.

"Doreen, that is certainly not the way to speak," she reproved. "But— but, good gracious!" She was plainly staggered. "I must confess, however, Mrs. Ross, that you did say Sylvia was out—"

"I—I forgot, Mrs. Ross blustered. "You know how—how it is. Sylvia said she was going skating with the others, and then changed her mind at the last moment. Yes, that was it. So silly of me—"

Doreen smiled grimly. "You mean, you wouldn't let her go skating?" she accused. "Aunt, ask Sylvia to come down here—"

"But—but why—"

"Don't take any notice of her!" Mrs. Ross broke in agitatedly, darting a venomous look at Doreen.

"Ask her!" Doreen insisted. "Sylvia, come down!" Aunt Elizabeth called.

"But I can't!" Sylvia replied. "Oh, Miss Hill, please do help me! I'm locked in. I've been a prisoner in this attic for days—"

"Sylvia, be quiet!" Mrs. Ross cried harshly. "A prisoner, indeed! Anyone would think I was ill-treating the child—"

"You are—you are!" came Sylvia's voice piteously. "Mrs. Hill, you must believe me—"

"Silence!" Mrs. Ross cried; and now her eyes shone with a light of fear. Huntedly she was looking around her, avoiding Aunt Elizabeth's gaze, her face flushed, her whole manner one of guilt. She tried to laugh. "My dear Miss Hill, the child is being absurd, of course. You mustn't take any notice. And—and now I'm afraid I must be going. I—I promised to meet Irma and Stephen at the lake. So nice to have seen you all again—"

Doreen interrupted her with a laugh. "Oh, I shouldn't bother to go!" she said. "Here is Irma, coming down the road now. Well, well, I should have thought she'd been shopping, not skating, judging by all the parcels she's carrying. And Mr. Ross is with her, dragging a toboggan. There, isn't that queer, aunt? Mr. Ross apparently does his skating on a toboggan!"

She couldn't keep the sarcasm out of her voice. And she thrilled again as she saw the shocked expression on Aunt Elizabeth's face. At last her aunt was beginning to realise things. Disillusionment was showing in her face as she stared coldly at Mrs. Ross.

"It seems to me, Mrs. Ross," she said, "that my niece is right. Why should you say things that are not true? Good gracious me, this—this seems most suspicious!"

"Let me out—let me out!" came Sylvia's pleading voice. "Miss Hill, make my guardians release me. Tell them that they've got to allow me to enter for the skating championship!"

Again Aunt Elizabeth started. "But I thought you were entering." "I'm not—they won't let me!" "Mrs. Ross, you said in your letter that—"

"I don't care what I said in my letter!" Mrs. Ross snapped. "I shall do as I please with my own ward. I resent this interference!"

"Interference!" Aunt Elizabeth bristled. Now her own anger was rising.

"Yes, interference, Miss Hill! Kindly understand this is none of your business. Nor is the business of your niece!"

Harshly Mrs. Ross spoke. Gone from her face was all pretence of friendliness. Aunt Elizabeth stared at her



# FROM ONE GIRL TO ANOTHER

## Cheery Chatter and Helpful Hints by Penelope

course, all sorts of plans are flying around.

There'll be the usual games and charades and things—and we shall all wear our second-best dresses. Not our very best, for fear they get spoiled.

Kathleen's got all sorts of weird and wonderful ideas for sandwiches.

There will be the old favourites, such as egg, cress, and so on. Then we shall have a plate of "surprise" sandwiches. There will be banana and nut, and apple and honey.

Both of these are delicious—do try them yourself some time.

Some very small people are coming, so for them I am going to cut very frail bread-and-butter, brown and white, and sprinkle "hundreds and thousands" on top. I think they'll find that a change, don't you? For ordinary bread-and-butter can be a bit dull at a party, much as we like it at other times.

### GAY LABELS

Kathleen has set herself the task of making sandwich labels to be jabbed into the sandwiches on various plates.

She is cutting out some crown-shapes from pieces of stiff paper (the backs of Christmas cards would do beautifully) and decorating them as shown in the picture here.

Into each "crown" she will jab a cocktail stick (threepence for a hundred or so) which will then stick into the sandwiches, you see, so that guests can pick the sandwich of their choice.

Another idea she has, is to paint each guest's name on a gay paper serviette, and to arrange these on the table, so that everybody will know where to sit.

I thought this was a bright notion, which will certainly do away with all those "where shall I sit?" questions that are so frequent at party-times.

Good-bye now until next Friday!

Your own,

PENELOPE

**H**ALLO, EVERYBODY,—Happy New Year to you, and did you have a lovely Christmas? Of course you did!

So did your Penelope. We didn't do anything very, very exciting at home. It was just a family Christmas, with some of our many friends and relatives popping in at various times for slices of Christmas cake and snippings of turkey. But a very happy one, for all that, with everyone in their kindest and most youthful mood, ready to join in all the fun that was going!

Cousin Kathleen, and her very nice parents stayed with us.

### COUSIN KATHLEEN

I gave Kathleen those fur-topped gloves which I told you about, and she was ab-so-lutely thrilled with them, and started apologising because she had only given me a pair of bed-room slippers! (They were just what I wanted, too!)

Young Kathleen is quite a keen film fan, you know, and also, as I have told you before, she is always wishing her name was something different from what it is.

She was reading a film magazine on Boxing Day, when suddenly she looked up at me.

"Penelope," she said. "Do you think the name Scarlett would suit me?"

"You dreadful child," I hooted. "It most certainly would not! You'll be wishing your name were Purple, or Heliotrope next!"

Whereat Kathleen grinned.

"I was only teasing," she chuckled. "I'm just reading about that new film that's going to be made, 'Gone with the Wind,' in which the heroine's name is Scarlett."

### PARTY PLANS

We are having a party this week in honour of the New Year, so, of

incredulously, in shocked and angry amazement. But now the truth was dawning on her—the truth as to this woman's real character.

"Oh, aunt, can't we do something?" broke in Doreen. "Can't we release Sylvia? Let me go and bring her down here!"

"Well, yes, I certainly think something should be done!"

"Stop! Irma—Stephen, stop that girl! Don't let her enter the chalet!" Doreen, running towards the house, suddenly found herself confronted by

Mr. Ross and Irma, who had come racing on to the scene. Roughly the man seized her arms.

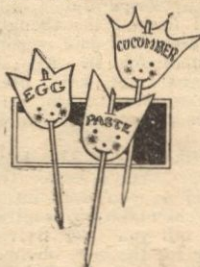
"Here, what's happening?" he demanded.

"Let me go!" Doreen cried, struggling.

"Release her instantly!" Aunt Elizabeth exclaimed indignantly.

Now Mrs. Ross had rushed across to the doorway of the chalet—was standing there barring the way.

"I'll tell you what's happened, Stephen!" she cried furiously. "These



—these people are having the impudence to tell us how to run our affairs!" Eyes narrowed and gleaming, her face distorted with rage, she glared at Aunt Elizabeth. "Miss Hill, you will understand that Sylvia is our ward. We are her legal guardians, and we shall manage her affairs as we think fit."

"You're not fit to look after her!" Doreen cried passionately. "Aunt, we must do something. We must help Sylvia. We've got to release her—"

She broke off in dismay, for Aunt Elizabeth was shaking her head sadly.

"I'm afraid, Doreen, we are helpless," she said. "Mrs. Ross is right. They are Sylvia's legal guardians, and we can do nothing. This is their house, and they have the right to bar us entry!"

"I'm glad you realise it!" Irma sneered.

Aunt Elizabeth eyed her contemptuously.

"But I also realise, Doreen, how right you have been about these people, and how wrong I have been!" Her voice shook. "I am thankful that my eyes have been opened as to their true characters. I am deeply sorry for Sylvia that she should have such people for her guardians!"

Her lips compressed grimly, her tone was steel-like now.

"But let them realise this," she went on. "If it comes to my ears that they continue to treat Sylvia as apparently they have been treating her—if they make her suffer in any way for what has happened this afternoon—then I shall feel it my duty to report the matter to the right quarters. That is a warning," she added, grimly eyeing the group in the doorway, "which for your own sakes I hope you will heed!"

"But the skating championship!" Doreen broke in desperately; and through her mind flashed the thought of that message from Sylvia's cousin. "Sylvia must enter for it. All—all her hopes and ambitions have been centred on trying to win it. Oh, isn't there some way in which we can force them to—"

"Force us? I like that!" Mr. Ross laughed gratingly. "You'd better try it, that's all. And as you're so interested in Sylvia's championship aspirations, just let me tell you this. Sylvia will not be skating for the very obvious reason that she won't be here. Sylvia, if you must know, is being sent back to England to-morrow. Now clear off, all of you! And don't come here again, or it will be the worse for you!" And the door slammed shut.

### THE PROOF THEY NEEDED!

IT was something that would always haunt Doreen—the memory of Sylvia Drake's white face staring out so piteously from that attic window as they drove away from the chalet.

It was as if they were deserting her and leaving her to her fate. For they were helpless to do otherwise.

Sylvia was legally in the Ross' charge.

And to-morrow, the first day of the St. Lauritz skating championships!

That evening—that night—Doreen could think of nothing else. Was there nothing they could do—nothing, when Sylvia's cousin had sent that message saying that it was so vital she should enter for the championships—should make every possible effort to win?

But why should it be so vital for her to win? Surely there must be some

tremendous reason behind it all—something more than the honour and glory which would be hers if she were declared champion?

And what of Sylvia's cousin himself? There had been no further word from either him or Madame Marie.

That night Doreen lay listening, ears strained to catch the signal which he had said he would give. Surely he must come to-night? Surely he would want to see Sylvia on the eve of the championships?

But the following morning dawned and still he hadn't come.

Doreen and Jean were up early. Their faces were gloomy. Even Doreen, always so full of optimism, so confident that something would turn up at the last moment, shook her head hopelessly.

"Poor Sylvia!" she murmured. "If only we could do something—but I'm jiggered if I know what! I'm stumped, I don't mind admitting it—"

She broke off, jerking round. "What was that?" Jean exclaimed.

"Listen!"

The sound came again. The hoot of an owl, then another.

"Three hoots!" Doreen cried. "The signal! Sylvia's cousin—"

She rushed across to the french windows, threw them open, and strode out on to the snowy balcony.

Her gaze swept the hotel grounds below. And then she tingled, pointed. "Look, over by that shrubbery. Golly, it must be him! Come on, Jean, we'll—"

Just one more look she took at the slim figure in Swiss clothes, standing half-hidden in the shrubbery, and then she was rushing from the room, just pausing to slip on snow-boots and a coat.

Downstairs they raced. Hardly anybody save hotel employees were about as yet. Then the two girls were hurrying down the drive, cutting across the snow.

The figure standing by the shrubbery looked startled, made as if to bolt, but quickly Doreen waved.

She saw he was tall and broad-shouldered. He could not have been more than twenty, with a strong, lean face.

"Are—are you Mr. Drake?" Doreen asked quickly, as she approached him.

"Yes. And you— Yes, you must be those two girls Marie told me about, Sylvia's friends. But where is Sylvia?"

"She's at Corvisch. Her guardians took her there. But you," Doreen said anxiously. "We thought you were coming under cover of darkness? The risk—"

"I know. They're looking for me even now," Douglas Drake said, and glanced huntedly about him. "I shouldn't have come—but I had to see Sylvia. Tell me quickly—what's been happening? Why has she been taken to Corvisch—"

In as few words as possible, Doreen told him. She saw the look of alarm, of anger that came over his face.

"The scoundrels!" he said fiercely. "But Sylvia mustn't go back to England! She must take part in that championship. She must! She doesn't know what depends on it! Gosh, if only I could get to Corvisch! But I can't—I daren't! It would be worth more than my liberty—and then what could I do? I must stay in hiding, searching for the evidence which will prove my innocence—"

He broke off, his eyes dilating as he stared across the roadway.

"The gendarmes!" he panted. "They've tracked me here—"

Quickly he ducked down behind the shrubs. Doreen and Jean, glancing over

the top of the snow-laden branches, saw two uniformed gendarmes approaching the hotel drive.

"We'll help you get away," Doreen said. "Dodge round the back of the hotel—you'll be able to slip away through the pine forest."

"But they'll follow me. They'll see my footprints in the snow—"

"We'll put them off somehow!" Doreen told him. "Quickly—"

He flashed them a smile. Then suddenly he was fumbling in his pocket.

"You're friends, indeed!" he said fervently. "Marie was right. But take this!" he added, and now in his hand was a long envelope. "I wanted to give this to Sylvia, but I know I can trust you with it. It's a document proving that the Rosses are not Sylvia's legal guardians."

"What? Not her legal guardians, and—"

"No! The Rosses have no hold over Sylvia whatsoever! It was all a trick to get—"

"The police!" broke in Jean frantically. "They're coming in at the gates."

"Yes; I must go!" Douglas Drake said. "But see Sylvia. Give her that document. Say she must skate in the championships."

And then he was gone. Crouching half-double so that he should not be seen above the shrubbery, he went racing away across the snow, in a few moments had vanished from sight.

Quickly the chums made their way round towards the drive, even as the police halted as if to consider which route to follow.

Doreen's eyes shone with excitement. "We must show this to aunt!" she said.

Back into the hotel once more they ran. Up to Aunt Elizabeth's room they pelted, knocked on the door, and burst in.

And then Doreen pulled up with a gasp of dismay.

"She's not here—"

"Let's try downstairs again," Jean said.

So downstairs they hurried, across to the reception desk.

"Mademoiselle Hill?" the clerk said, in response to Doreen's inquiry, and smiled. "Oui, oui, I have seen her. She left the hotel verve early. She says she not be back until dejeuner!"

"Not back until lunch-time! Oh, great Scott!" Doreen groaned.

In consternation she gazed at her chum. And then her chin squared, her eyes gleamed.

"Then there's only one thing for it!" she said fiercely. "We've got to prevent Sylvia going. M'sieur," she added, turning to the clerk again, "can you tell me when the train for England leaves Corvisch?"

"Oui, m'selle! It leaves at ninety—"

"Oh, my hat! That gives us just half an hour! Jean, come on—come on!"

Out of the hotel they flew. Half an hour in which to get to Corvisch Station! Half an hour before Sylvia left for England!

A sleigh was passing the hotel gateway. The chums rushed out to it.

"Corvisch Station!" Doreen told the driver. "We've got to get there in less than half an hour. Can you do it—"

"Oui, oui! I zink I can."

The chums scrambled in. The driver cracked his whip, and off the sleigh whished at a gallop.

Oh, could they do it? Could they do it in time?

Aren't you longing to follow the chums' further adventures in this exciting and colourful story of Switzerland? You simply must read next Friday's enthralling long chapters. Order your copy in advance!

# RIVALS FOR THE STAGE STAR'S FAVOUR



## PAT HAS A PLAN!

**P**AT LOVELL, youngest girl reporter on the staff of the "Midshire Gazette," danced rather than ran along the pavement of the main street of the busy town; for Pat had an exciting job to do.

She had been given the task of interviewing the glamorous actress, Lys Lorraine—Lys, whose charming voice had touched so many hundred hearts, whose pretty legs had flashed their lovely rhythm in the bright foot-lights—who had made the most beautiful frocks that the wit of man could design even more beautiful, more entrancing.

First of all, however, Pat intended to break the glad news to her Aunt Grace—and other, even gladder news.

Aunt Grace owned a little cafe called the Lucky Charm, a cosy little place, in which she had invested all her savings, and which until the opening of the Kimono Cafe down the road had done well.

Lately it had been doing badly; but Pat had a wonderful new idea that would help—and Lys Lorraine, although she did not know it yet, was to help.

Pat pushed open the door of the cafe. It was of the old-world type—oak beams, shining brass, cosy fire, and gay cretannes. The cakes were homemade, and well made. It was small, intimate; but, at the moment, going down-hill fast.

Pat entered, noted with a soft tutter of disappointment that there was only one customer, and then, smiling to Bessie, the waitress, went through to the back room.

To give her aunt a surprise, Pat did not call out. She went softly. But it was Pat who had the surprise.

She had only just closed the communicating door quietly when she heard the unmistakable sound of tears.

"Aunt," said Pat softly, and going forward, she slipped an arm around her aunt's shoulders. "Oh, what is it, darling?"

Her aunt, startled, and a little ashamed to be found crying, took her hands from her face and hurriedly dabbed her eyes with a small hanky.

"Oh, Pat," she gulped, "I'm silly, that's all! I—I'm a bit down, I suppose!"

But Pat knew it was something more, and the pressure of her arm about her aunt's shoulder increased.

"Aunt, you're worried," she said. "You've just got to tell me."

Her aunt could not deny it.

"Yes, Pat. Mr. Kendal came in to see me. Oh, he's hateful! He really means to put me out of business. Just for the time he's lowering prices—running practically at a loss, to make sure that it does ruin me, and when it has, and he's bought me over for a song—why, then his prices will go back to normal!"

Pat's eyes glinted. She disliked Mr. Kendal, the smart business man who had opened the large Kimono Cafe, and she only wished that she could have gone in and told him what she thought of him and his business methods.

But Pat remembered her good news. "Aunt, cheer up! It may be the turn of the tide," she said. "I've got news for you. You see, I'm going to write an article about Lys Lorraine, and I shall mention that she drops in here for tea. And where Lys goes, the crowd will go, just to see her. You'll be made! And old Kendal will be green with envy!"

Her aunt stared blankly.

"Oh, but she doesn't come here, Pat! You can't write what isn't true!"

Pat laughed. "She doesn't come here yet; but she will," she said. "I'll make her—lure her. And I've thought out how. Alonzo shall do it for us!"

"The pup?" asked her aunt, surprised.

There came a thumping sound from under the armchair. The pup, Alonzo, a plump little fellow with an impish nature, knew that he was being mentioned, and wagged his tail to win favour in advance.

"That little imp, yes!" said Pat eagerly. "Unless I'm on the wrong rails entirely, Lys will love pups. She'll come here just to play with him. Oh, I'll make him seem a little wonder! She'll fall for him!"

Her aunt smiled.

Gladly the famous stage star promised to have tea at the cafe run by Pat's aunt. But an unscrupulous rival was out to get that honour for himself. And he would have succeeded—if it hadn't been for the young girl reporter.

By ELIZABETH CHESTER

"Oh, Pat, if only you could!"

Pat kissed her. "Then stop crying, aunty," she said, "and go and sit down at one of the tables as though you were a customer, and then put on a disguise and come in as another, and then another, to make business seem brisk. I'll fix things for you!"

And off Pat went, laughing. For it was nearly time for the interview—nearly time for the matinee at the Theatre Royal to end.

But to reach the Theatre Royal, she had to pass the Kimono Cafe, and at the door stood Mr. Kendal. She had met him only once before—when his new cafe had opened, and she had written about it in her newspaper, fairly and well. But he did not know that the owner of the Lucky Charm was her aunt.

"Ah, Miss Reporter," he said in his oily way, "just dropping in here—or did I see you emerging from the Lucky Charm? I notice you didn't stay long. Not so good there, is it?"

"Very nice, I think," answered Pat coolly. "But excuse me if I hurry. I have to interview Lys Lorraine at the theatre."

She saw his start, and how his eyes glinted.

"Mention my cafe to her," he said in a lower tone. "And if you do, you can have free teas for a week. Drop in any time you like, Miss Reporter," he added with a wink. "No need to pay the bill, except by the power of the Press."

Pat longed to tell him what she thought of him. He was trying to bribe her! But Pat answered quite pleasantly.

"Not tempted. I don't really like your cakes, you know."

And with that, Pat passed on, chuckling.

Pat reached the theatre and took a glimpse at herself in a mirror outside a tobacconist's shop. All was well. Then in her most official manner she approached the stage door.

"Representing the 'Midshire Gazette,'" she said, showing her card. "Miss Pat Lovell, for an interview with Miss Lys Lorraine."

The doorman smiled dourly, and shook his head.

"No interviews for anyone to-day, miss. The Press is barred. No reporters wanted. Miss Lorraine's Press agent says so. All rights reserved. Good-afternoon, miss."

And opening the door, he made his meaning clear. Pat was not wanted; no reporters were wanted. In one

simple American word, the answer was "scram."

### AN UNEXPECTED HONOUR

PAT hardly breathed. She was quite unprepared for this shock. No interview had been arranged, but her chief had just said "Run along to the theatre and interview Lys Lorraine—ask if the rumour about her forthcoming marriage is true."

It had not occurred to Pat that she might be barred.

She went out on to the pavement, and stood there with heavy heart; for it was not only that she was missing a grand journalistic triumph—and a grand chance to meet the beautiful Lys face to face. There was her aunt's cafe to consider, and her promise.

"Oh, poor aunty! What a let-down," groaned Pat in deep dismay.

There was the chief, too. What would he say? Perhaps he would think that Pat was not really up to her job.

As she stood there, agitated, wondering what to do, Pat saw another girl approach the stage door. The girl carried flowers delicately wrapped in tissue paper; and the door was opened to her as if by magic, and she went in.

"From the flower-shop," said Pat, as she recognised her.

A moment later the girl emerged; and Pat, with a sudden idea in mind, accosted her.

"Oh, just a moment, please," she smiled. "I think you are from the flower-shop at the corner. Would you mind telling me who those flowers were for? I'm a reporter."

"Why, yes," said the girl, quite excited. "For Lys Lorraine. Oh, isn't she lovely! Isn't she beautiful! And her singing—"

"She's just marvellous," agreed Pat. "Have you ever seen her off the stage?"

"Well, once, when I took some flowers up that had to be delivered in person, you know."

That was just what Pat had hoped to hear. If flowers were delivered in person one day, they could be so delivered another day—to-day, for instance. But not by the flower-girl. Pat Lovell would deliver them herself.

"Taxi!" hailed Pat, and took the girl's arm. "Here, in with me back to your shop," she said briskly. "I want some flowers urgently. And I want to borrow that hat and coat of yours—"

Into the lovely flower-shop Pat went a few minutes later with the excited girl, who had thought it a wonderful treat driving back by taxicab instead of walking. And it was thrilling for her, too, to be taking part in a reporter's plot.

The flower-shop was a wonderful, colourful place, and with the special bright floodlights looked a perfect picture.

It was spring again in that shop, and Pat's heart leaped.

"Some flowers for Miss Lorraine," she said. "And some lovely ones, too—but not too expensive," she added.

The "Gazette" would foot this bill. There might be a little argument, but it would be advertisement, a nice compliment to the actress, and the chief could be made to see reason.

"Mimosa, and something to go with it," decided Pat. "It spells sunshine."

The other girl wrapped the flowers carefully and handed them to Pat. At the same time she slipped off her hat and coat.

Five minutes later, wearing the flower-girl's hat and noticeable blue coat, Pat was in a taxi bound for the theatre. Stopping short of the stage

door, she paid the man off, and holding up the neatly wrapped flowers so that her face was concealed, she once more faced the doorman.

"Well?" he said. "Flowers for Miss Lorraine, and a message to be delivered personally," said Pat huskily.

"Uh! Why personally? Miss Lorraine has just come off the stage; she won't want anyone there—"

But he let her pass. And Pat, smiling, hurried down the stone corridor.

Thinking it was the same flower-girl again, he did not give the number of her room, but being a star, Lys's name was on the door, and Pat halted and knocked, holding her breath. In another minute she would be face to face with the famous Lys. Would she be as lovely—

The door opened, and a middle-aged woman dressed in black and wearing a white apron looked out.

"Flowers? I'll take them," she said.

"A personal message," said Pat.

"Oh—come in!" called a sweet voice.

The door was opened, and Pat, on the threshold, paused, spellbound. Lys Lorraine, in one of the loveliest frocks Pat had ever seen, turned from the dressing table.

"Oh!" said Pat, and sighed a little, thinking how wonderful it must be to be so beautiful.

"For me—from whom?" asked Lys Lorraine. "Aren't they too lovely? Mimosa! Who guessed I like Mimosa? It makes me think of the South of France, and sunshine, the blue seas and skies—oh, dear! It makes me yearn—"

She took the flowers and buried her face in them.

"From the Editor and staff of the 'Midshire Gazette,'" said Pat glibly. "In token of admiration of a wonderful star."

The actress flushed with pleasure, and there was a softness in her smile, a new tenderness in her eyes.

"The first time a newspaper has sent me flowers," she murmured. "What a charming thought. How really nice! And you—are you on the 'Gazette?'"

"Just a reporter," said Pat deprecatingly. "Only a junior at that. I suppose, Miss Lorraine, you are used to the really famous reporters who interview you?"

Lys Lorraine gave the flowers to her dresser, and surveyed Pat, who was trying to get her interview without asking for it.

"Yes, you are different," she admitted. "But I shouldn't mind in the least being interviewed by you, you know."

Pat nearly jumped in delight.

"I may?" she asked. "I'm not wasting your time? Oh, how sweet of you! I'll be quick—just take notes, and I can work it up into an article after. Do you like dogs?"

"Dogs? Why, yes. Of course. I love them," smiled Lys. "Dear things, all of them. But I haven't one of my own because—well, it's really not fair for a working actress to have a dog, and leave it in a hotel every evening when she has to go to the theatre. And, of course, one cannot very well have a dog in a theatre dressing-room."

"Aren't puppies lovely?" breathed Pat, delighted that she had struck the right note.

"Puppies? Oh, heavenly!" agreed Lys Lorraine. "There's one in the pet-shop in the High Street. I stopped to admire it, but unfortunately they have snakes in the same window—in a different part, of course—and I can't bear snakes. Ugh! I'd have loved just

to stand and watch if they hadn't been there—"

Then Pat cut in. Her great chance had come.

"I know where there is the most lovable puppy in the world," she said, as one pup lover telling a secret to another. "You'd just adore him. He's the sweetest thing."

And she told one or two stories about Alonzo the pup that made Lys laugh.

"What a sweet thing. I must meet him," she said.

"He lives in the Lucky Charm Cafe," Pat said.

"Where is this cafe? I must drop in and see him," said Lys.

Pat managed not to cheer as she described where her aunt's cafe was; but hardly had she finished when the door was opened, and a man looked in.

"Can you spare a moment, Miss Lorraine?" he asked. "In the office? Urgent conference—"

Pat, dismayed, saw that the interview, hardly begun, was ended.

"There—all too short. Now I have to go," said the actress. "I could have chatted on and on. But I'm afraid you haven't had much of an interview. We chatted about dogs," she laughed. "Most reporters would have asked a hundred questions with machine-gun-like fire. Excuse me—"

But Pat detained her in the doorway.

"Perhaps I could interview you again?" she asked eagerly. "If you really are going to the Lucky Charm tea-shop—could I meet you there?"

Lys Lorraine looked taken aback—so surprised, in fact, that Pat dismally expected the answer "no." But the young actress was always ready to help, and she knew that this interview meant much to Pat.

"Why, yes—I'll meet you there. Half an hour's time," she said.

Pat skipped with joy, smiled at the dresser, and then hugged her, much to that woman's amazement. Then twirling out of the room, she danced down the stone corridor.

Taking off her borrowed hat, she waved it at the doorman who came from his cubby-hole to see who it was skipping down the corridor.

"Why, you—you're the girl reporter!" he gasped. "You don't mean you actually saw Miss Lorraine?"

"Saw her? Of course I did," said Pat, smiling. "And got my interview; and I'll put you in the paper, too! I'll say that there's a grumpy old doorman, whose bark is worse than his bite."

She opened the door for herself, and then paused; for just outside, talking to a man in a brown overcoat, was the owner of the rival cafe.

"Yes, I will persuade her," he was saying.

Pat closed the door quickly. She guessed what had brought Mr. Kendal here; he wanted to persuade Lys to go to his cafe!

"Oh, sergeant!" said Pat to the disgruntled doorman. "Here comes an autograph hunter with a bunch of roses to see Miss Lorraine. I bet you a bob to a ha'penny he gets past you!"

The door opened before the sergeant could reply, and Mr. Kendal walked in, nodding to Pat, who slipped out, and waited.

It was only a minute later that arguing, still holding his flowers, Mr. Kendal emerged, scowling.

"Didn't you see her?" asked Pat solemnly.

"No," he snapped.

"What a shame," Pat murmured. "Well, never mind. Look in at the Lucky Charm Cafe in half an hour's time. She's going there to see the puppy."

Then off went Pat, laughing to herself, to take the great news to her aunt.

Mr. Kendal watched her go, his eyes glinting, and then turned to the man in the brown overcoat waiting near by and whispered the unscrupulous plan that was forming in his mind.

### A BLOW TO HER HOPES

**P**AT LOVELL stood in the doorway of the Lucky Charm Cafe, amazed, thunderstruck. For the place was crowded—packed. Not a table was to be had, and the waitress and her aunt were running to and fro taking and executing orders.

How it had happened, Pat could not imagine; but if Lys came now, there was not a table for her. And worse—it did not look the kind of place she would care to patronise for tea.

Never had Pat seen such a crowd. A dish of cakes had been knocked on to the floor; milk had been spilled, and Pat's aunt looked distraught.

Pat went to her at once. "Aunt. What's happened? Lys is coming. She won't step inside with this gang here!"

"Pat—I don't know! I can't think!" said her aunt, in dismay. "They came crowding in only a minute ago. It looks to me as though it's part of a plot."

Pat hurried with her aunt into the small kitchen.

"Aunt—we must get these people out of here quickly," she said, in dismay. "It would ruin everything, if Lys looked in—"

She paused in mid-sentence as a crash came from the cafe; and, rushing back, she came to a startled halt.

Lys had just opened the door, and was standing there with tea splashed over her frock, and the marks of cream cakes on her expensive fur coat.

Roars of laughter came from those in the cafe, and Lys, with a startled, horrified expression, dodged back into the street, closed the door, and stepped into her car.

Pat, feeling that she could weep with rage and disappointment, stood transfixed; and then, with clenched hands, she addressed the crowd in the cafe.

"This is a put-up business," she said. "Who sent you here?"

No one troubled to reply. Silence fell for a moment, and then came a clinking of spoons against cups and saucers, and a chanting of "We want tea; we want tea!"

"They won't stay long now," she said grimly to her aunt. "Their work's done!"

She was right. In fifteen minutes they had gone. Some did not wait for tea; others paid for what they had had, but not for the damage done, and hurriedly went.

But Lys, having looked once into the cafe, would not be likely to go there again!

It was in a depressed mood that Pat reported to the office a little while later.

"Well? Get the interview?" asked the chief.

"I—I saw her," Pat said. "She's awfully fond of dogs—"

"H'm! Not an article in that. Is that all she told you?" he asked.

"Well—and she doesn't like snakes," said Pat. It was the only other thing she had learned. "But," she added quickly, "the interview was interrupted. She was called to a conference. We were getting on awfully well until then. I'll have to get in touch with her again."

The chief grunted. "You should have hung around. Still—you got in touch with her; and if she's

friendly, maybe you can draw her out, and get her to talk about this engagement. Follow it up. I want that interview by to-morrow at the latest."

Pat, with a heavy sigh, returned to her desk and typewriter, wondering what on earth she could do to win her way back into the actress' good books. Wondering how—

And then an idea came; an idea in which there was the germ of success. Jumping up from her desk, she snatched hat and coat, and hurried out to find Alonzo, the pup.

"**W**ELL, here I am, Mr. Kendal," smiled Pat.

She was sitting at a table in the Kimono Cafe, and the owner, noticing her, had hurried across. Pat had called in during the evening for some coffee—but not only for that.

"Nice place, isn't it?" he asked, with a smile. "We don't have rough crowds here!"

Pat shivered with anger; but she managed to appear calm outwardly.



The other girl wrapped the flowers carefully, then she slipped off her hat and coat for Pat to wear. This was Pat's one chance to have an interview with the famous actress.

"Perhaps she'll come here next time," said Pat.

He winked and lowered his voice confidentially.

"Secretly, I have planned it. She comes to-morrow," he said. "I give you the tip. Arrange to be here, and with a Press photographer. You can have a fine picture. And I am getting a puppy."

Then Pat played her trump card. "Oh, yes; what a splendid idea. And snakes, too?" she asked.

"Snakes?"

"Why, yes! Some actresses like to have pet leopards, or lion cubs, and some—well, you know what publicity is. Naturally you couldn't get a python or a boa constrictor; but I saw some snakes in the pet-shop window. Lovely looking things—so Oriental!"

Mr. Kendal's eyes gleamed, and he stroked his chin. It certainly was an idea.

"Put them right in the window," said Pat, "and some in a glass case right inside the doorway."

Mr. Kendal needed but a hint. He could use his own imagination. To have secret information of this sort was invaluable; for, clever though he was, he would never have thought of snakes

himself. But, as Pat had interviewed the actress, she surely knew her tastes.

In thoughtful mood, he walked away; and Pat, paying her bill, went from the Kimono to the Lucky Charm, where her aunt was bathing the pup.

"He'll look just wonderful. I promise I won't really lose him," promised Pat—"only for awhile."

On the morrow she called for the pup, and, tucking him in her coat, carried him to Lys Lorraine's hotel, walking boldly in.

Pat could easily enough have entered the actress' suite, but she did not want to interview Lys again until she had reason to think that the actress would be quite glad to see her; for what Pat wanted was her confidence.

Both Pat and her aunt had written to the actress explaining about the ugly scene in the cafe, and apologising; but an early reply could hardly be expected from anyone with so many interests and as busy as Lys Lorraine undoubtedly was.

It was not to interview the actress

that Pat went to the hotel, but to lose Alonzo, the pup. And she lost him. But she made quite sure that he would not really be lost by tipping the page half-a-crown to take the "lost" pup to Lys and ask if he were hers.

And what did Lys do? Pat waited below in the foyer to hear the answer, and, hearing it, went out with new hope in her heart.

For Lys Lorraine promptly said that she would look after the pup until his owner claimed him.

Pat returned to the office, having several other jobs to do, and then took a call from Mr. Kendal, reminding her that the famous Lys Lorraine was visiting his cafe.

"Good—good!" said the chief, when he heard. "Get some good pictures. It means some free advertisement for that rascal Kendal, but Lys Lorraine's Press agent fixed it. Does her good to be seen about the town. Hurry along, Pat, and mind you get that interview."

Pat hurried along with the photographer, who did not know what to expect. Her heart thumped with excitement—for she did.

In good time Pat and the photographer reached the cafe.

"I say," exclaimed the photographer,

in surprise, halting outside, "just look at this window! Snakes! What an idea in a cake-shop window!"

"Odd!" said Pat coolly. "And—look! Snakes inside, too!"

It was very odd, the photographer thought, and he took a picture of them, thinking it might be worthy of comment in the paper.

The waitresses of the Kimono wore garments that explained the cafe's name, and the whole place was Oriental in appearance, so that the snakes were not inappropriate, considering their popularity in Japanese designs. But not every customer seemed to appreciate them.

Mr. Kendal, smirking, greeted Pat, and gave her a table with a good view of the door, and of the other table where Lys would sit.

Ten minutes later Lys' car drew up outside—a splendid, expensive car that suited her personality. Looking dainty and attractive, Lys alighted, and in her arms Alonzo, the pup.

At the window, however, Lys paused. Her expression changed; then, mastering her repugnance, she walked through the doorway as the man in Japanese attire opened the gilded doors.

"Oh golly," murmured Pat to herself, "she's going to brave the snakes!"

The whole cafe was silent; everyone was feasting his and her eyes on the lovely Lys Lorraine, and the cameraman prepared for a good picture.

But Lys had seen the other collection

of snakes, and pulled up with an expression of horror on her face. Yet, even so, turning her head, she seemed about to walk to a table, when Mr. Kendal appeared.

"Ah!" sighed Pat happily, as she saw him. "Camera—quick!"

For artful Mr. Kendal had gone the whole hog. He had sent a whole gang to the Lucky Charm Cafe, not one or two, and now, to please the actress, he advanced, carrying a snake which would surely delight any snake-lover—a long, wriggly one he held safely in his hands.

Lys Lorraine's eyes widened. She stared, and then uttered a sharp scream, wheeled suddenly, collided with the snakes in the glass case, and bolted for the door.

Pat ran after her, and caught her up on the pavement.

"Miss Lorraine!" she exclaimed. "So you've found him! Hurrah!"

"Found him? You mean this pup?" asked Lys. "Oh! You know the owner?"

"Yes," nodded Pat.

Lys Lorraine stepped into her car, and then, as Mr. Kendal came from the cafe, beckoned Pat.

"That awful man!" She shuddered. "Carrying a snake! Ugh! Come in the car—quick!"

Pat stepped in, her eyes dancing.

"Shall I tell the driver where to go to take the pup home?" she asked.

Lys sighed sadly.

"I'll be so sorry to lose him; but, after all, I can't steal him," she said. "Yes; tell the driver where to go, please!"

And five minutes later the car pulled up outside the Lucky Charm Cafe, in which there was only one customer having tea.

"Here?" said Lys.

"It's the pup I told you about," said Pat. "And this is the dear little cafe. It was that man with the snakes who sent that gang here the other day. He's trying to ruin the place."

"What a horrid trick!" said Lys.

There was no difficulty then in persuading her into the cafe, for she wanted to speak to the pup's owner, and to go on petting the pup, to whom she had taken such a fancy.

"What a charming, cosy place!" murmured Lys, when she had been found a table.

Then she met Pat's aunt, who hugged the pup in delight; and presently homemade cakes were being brought, and tea was made.

"If you're so fond of pups, Miss Lorraine," said Pat's aunt, "why don't you have one of your own?"

"Oh, well, my fiance is buying me one! That's the real truth, so I mustn't get one before and grow fond of it—" Lys murmured, and broke off, looking at Pat.

"Your fiance?" said Pat.

Lys grimaced, and smiled. "I forgot you were a reporter," she said; and then shrugging, she laughed. "Oh, well, we're being married in June, so everyone will know then; and it's no secret now that we've come to terms! He's giving up motor-racing, and I'm giving up the stage."

Pat could hardly breathe for excitement, for here was news indeed—something the big London papers hadn't learned! Lys leaving the stage, marrying in June; her fiance was giving her a pup! And he was a racing motorist. He was, in fact, Giles Forster, the rumoured bridegroom-to-be; but this was the first official confirmation.

But that was not all Pat learned, for in the cosy atmosphere of the cafe Lys talked freely. And when the photographer took a picture he secured a really happy one of her, laughing.

"Darling Alonzo!" said Lys, fondling him. "You're a sweet pet! Can I come and play with you every tea-time?"

"Why, of course!" said Pat's aunt eagerly.

She looked at Pat; their eyes met, smiling. For now all troubles were gone. Already the word was going round that Lys was in the Lucky Charm Cafe, and people flocked in. But they flocked in on the other days, too.

THE "Midshire Gazette," small country paper though it was, was first with the news about the engagement, the planned wedding in June, and the fact that both Lys and Giles Forster were giving up their respective careers.

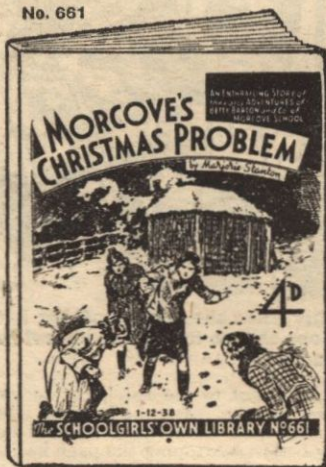
Pat had scooped a story, had secured a first-rate interview, and she was happy—not least of all because she had outwitted that very smart and cunning Mr. Kendal.

Whenever he saw Pat Lovell after that he gave her a queer, resentful look—possibly because he read her interview in the paper and learned of Miss Lys Lorraine's antipathy for snakes. At least, Pat always supposed it was that.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

Another complete story featuring Pat Lovell will appear in next Friday's GIRLS' CRYSTAL. Order your copy in advance.

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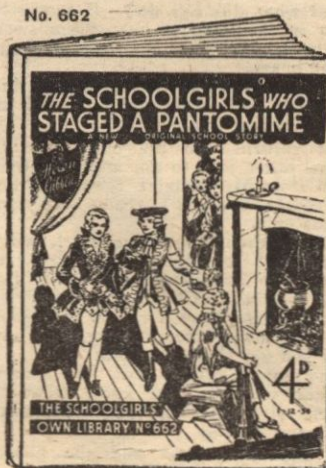


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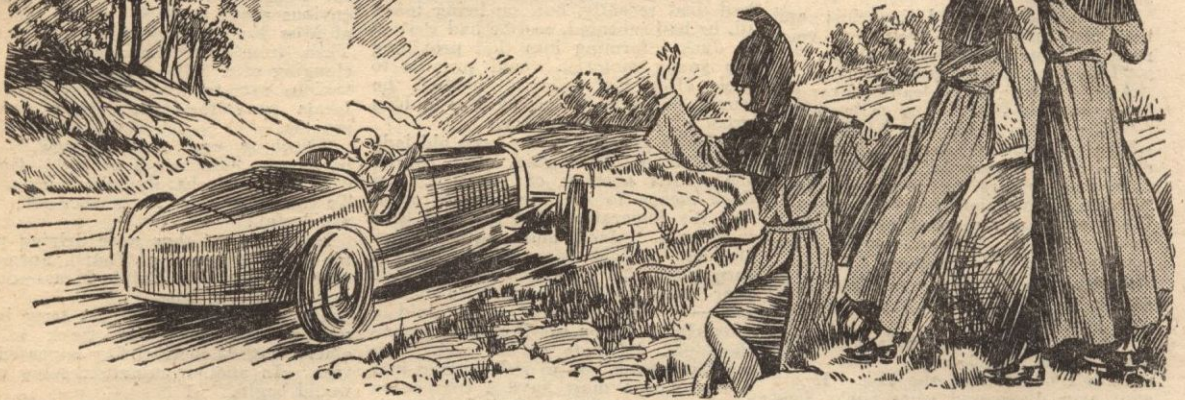


No. 663





# SECRET FRIENDS of the SPEED GIRL



## THE SECRET THREE'S CAPTURE

LINDA HALE, Terry O'Dare, and Mary Walton, of Abbey School, who called themselves the Secret Three, were helping Miss Nemo, a girl racing-motorist, who was actually her headmistress' niece.

Miss Grange, the Head, was determined to go to Hanthorpe Track to see that her niece did not enter for the championship race. So the Secret Three made plans to lead Miss Grange on a false chase to Moordale, some miles away, to make sure that she could not reach the track before the race had started.

But on the day of the race, Florrie Mears, a prefect who was Miss Nemo's enemy, suspected the chums' trick. She intended going to the Head before she set off, to warn her.

So the Secret Three laid in wait for Florrie in the Head's garden—and captured her as she came by!

IT all happened so quickly, so unexpectedly that Florrie Mears had no chance to escape.

She was powerless in the grip of the three girls who hustled her along the path.

"'Tis no use you trying to get away," declared Terry O'Dare. "'Tis all in a good cause that you're having marching orders."

Instantly Florrie understood. This was a daring attempt to prevent her from warning the Head not to drive to Moordale.

The prefect redoubled her efforts to escape, but firmly the Secret Three hustled her on down the narrow path between the bushes.

Ahead loomed the dark outlines of a garden shed. Linda jerked her head towards it.

"In with her," Linda ordered. "Let me go! Don't you dare!" Florrie shouted, but the Secret Three paid no heed. They propelled the prefect into the shed, slammed the door behind her, and hurriedly pushed home the bolt.

"There! She'll be safe enough for a bit," panted Linda, pulling off her hood and mopping at her hot face with her sleeve. "Once the Head departs I don't care—"

She broke off and they all ducked down out of sight, for from the near-by

house had emerged a tall, stately figure. Miss Grange herself!

Linda & Co. held their breath as they watched her cross to her waiting car and clamber aboard. A minute later she drove away.

"Hurrah!" The Secret Three let out a triumphant whoop. Their plan had succeeded. Now there was no chance of Miss Nemo meeting her aunt at the race-track—not until the championship race had started, anyway.

"Off with your hoods now," Linda ordered, grinning breathlessly at her chums. "The sooner we get into Hanthorpe and see Miss Nemo, the better."

Having hidden their hoods and robes, they hurried across to the cycle sheds and rode off. In their hurry to depart they did not notice Lena Craike pacing impatiently up and down beside the waiting taxi.

Lena was wondering what had become of Florrie, and as she saw the three

Lena stared blankly for a moment, then she gave a gasp.

"Goodness, it sounds like Florrie!" she exclaimed. "But what on earth's happened to her?"

She quickly discovered when, running across to the garden shed, she pulled back the bolt. As the door swung open a dusty, dishevelled figure toppled panting into her arms.

"Florrie!" exclaimed Lena, hardly able to believe her own eyes. "What have you been up to? Surely—surely no one locked you up?"

Florrie was nearly bursting with fury. Her eyes blazed and she brandished a grimy fist in exasperation.

"For goodness' sake stop gassing and let's get going," she shouted furiously. "We've got to chase after Miss Grange—catch her before she gets to Moordale!"

"But why? What's happened?" asked the bewildered Lena.

But Florrie was in no mood to explain. Grabbing Lena by the arm, she half-led, half-ran her down to the waiting taxi. Not until they were both settled inside, not until they were being driven madly down the road, did she clear up the mystery.

"It was the Secret Three," she panted. "The wretches shut me up. But I'll beat them yet. If only I can overtake her—"

"But she's had over a quarter of an hour's start," protested Lena. "She'll be half way to Moordale by now."

Florrie gritted her teeth. "I can't help that—we've got to bring her back," she snapped. "Got to get her to the track before the big race begins!"

"THERE'S that rascal Ralph Mears, but I don't see any sign of Miss Nemo. She can't have arrived yet."

It was Mary Walton who spoke. The chums had arrived at the Hanthorpe motor-track, and, having dismissed their taxi, were eagerly peering through the open entrance gates.

They had a good view of the pits and paddock, and although the race was not to begin for some while yet, a number of the competitors had already turned up. But the chums looked in vain for the Red Star and its slim, masked owner.

"Never mind," said Linda. "We'll

Thrills, Speed, and Triumph for  
the Secret Three in these final  
chapters of a grand serial.

By GAIL WESTERN

chums, laughing happily, go cycling down the road, she scowled and bit her lip.

"Hallo, what are they looking so pleased about?" she asked herself, then irritably she glanced at her wrist-watch. "Where can Florrie have got to?" she muttered. "The Head's gone, so she can't be with her."

She waited another few minutes, then, her patience at an end, she went in search of her crony. Her first port of call was the school. Failing to find Florrie there, she made tracks for the headmistress' house.

"But she can't be there," she told herself. "Either she missed the Head, or else—"

She broke off and pulled up dead, staring about her in alarm. For from the distance had suddenly come a nerve-racking din.

Crash! Bang, thud! Above the ear-splitting crashes arose a shrill, incoherent voice.

pop across and tell her everything in the garden's lovely. She's staying quite near here, you know."

Eagerly all three of them went in search of the house where, ever since her flight, Miss Nemo had been hiding. They found it easily enough, and quickly the front door was opened by a plump, motherly woman.

"May we see Miss Nemo, please?" asked Linda.

The landlady looked doubtful; and then she turned as a delighted voice rang out from the top of the stairs.

"Linda, oh, thank goodness!" And, standing there, leaning over the banisters, was Eileen Grange herself.

"Miss Nemo!" shouted Linda, and, whooping with delight, she and her chums brushed past the motherly landlady, and went racing up the staircase. "We've got wonderful news for you!" Linda cried, as the speed girl led them into her room. "There's no need for you to worry. You see—"

Swiftly she related what had happened, and Miss Nemo's eyes glowed with gratitude.

"It was fine of you to scheme like that," she declared. "But you shouldn't have taken the risk. If my aunt ever discovered what you'd done she'd—"

"Pooh! No chance of that ever leaking out, my darlint," said Terry, with a roguish chuckle, then curiously she looked around. "But where's Jack Naylor? Shure and 'tis myself who's dying to meet that broth of a boy!"

The speed girl's face fell. "I'm afraid he—he can't get here in time for the beginning of the race," she said. "You see—". She broke off and felt in her pocket for a letter.

"I had this this morning. Jack sent it by special messenger the moment his boat docked," she explained. "In it he clears up all the mystery."

"Is it that the darlint can prove his innocence?" added Terry.

Miss Nemo nodded. "Yes—at least, we both hope so. That's why Jack will be delayed getting here. He's gone off to see someone who can clear his name. You see— But you had better read the letter yourselves."

She passed it over, and, with excited interest Linda & Co. scanned those hurriedly written lines, and as they read their interest changed to feelings of horror and disgust. For that letter made everything perfectly clear. It showed that the accident that had turned Eileen's aunt so much against motor racing had been no accident at all, but a villainous piece of treachery.

Ralph Mears, Florrie's rascally brother, had been responsible for it, of course. He and Jack Naylor had been employed by the same motor firm, and each of them had designed a racing car they hoped would bring them fame.

But very soon Ralph Mears had discovered that the Red Star was the better car, and so deliberately he had attempted to bring the car into discredit. He had tampered with the steering—a wicked act, though at the time he had not realised a serious accident might result.

As a result the Red Star had earned a bad reputation, and to make certain that his rival did not win back their wealthy employer's good regard, Florrie's brother had treacherously got Jack Naylor accused of embezzling the firm's money that he himself had stolen.

"The cunning spalpeen!" exclaimed Terry, her plump cheeks red with wrath. "Bedad, no wonder he was so

mad when he learnt that the Red Star was still being raced—when he learnt that you, me darlint"—she smiled across at Miss Nemo—"was struggling to prove the car was a real champion."

Linda, however, was still puzzled. "But how can Jack prove his innocence after all this time?" she asked.

Quickly the speed girl explained. It seemed that Ralph Mears' accomplice had died recently, but, on being taken ill, he had repented, and he had written to Jack informing him that providing the young motorist would promise to look after his widowed mother, he would tell him where he had hidden proof of Jack's innocence.

"Jack's gone to see the poor old lady now," Miss Nemo said. "Of course, she knows nothing of the plot, and Jack means to see she doesn't want. But it's imperative that the Red Star must win. Jack must have money. Besides, his old boss will be at the race track this afternoon. If the Red Star wins, then he may take it up, and— Oh, Linda!" She laid a quivering hand on the Fourth Former's shoulders. "I hate to ask you. It's not fair to ask you to risk getting into a row, but I must have a companion in the race, and now that Jack won't be here—"

She paused uncertainly, and Linda let out a whoop. With glowing eyes she regarded her.

"You mean you want me to ride with you?" she asked.

The speed girl nodded.

"Will you?" she asked. "Will I?" echoed Linda, and she let out another wild whoop. "You bet I will!"

#### MISS GRANGE CHANGES HER MIND

"WHERE'S Linda & Co.?" "And what the dickens has become of the Red Star?"

The Fourth Formers, packed together at the foot of the grand stand, were becoming impatient and anxious. Soon the championship race would begin, and still there was no sign either of Linda & Co., or of the masked speed girl.

Out in the paddock the rest of the competitors were giving their engines a final overhaul. Amongst them was Ralph Mears, and, like the Fourth Formers, he was worried. But it was not the Red Star's absence that worried him, but the failure of his sister to turn up.

"What on earth can have kept her?" he wondered irritably. "It's a good job I didn't agree to let her act as my mechanic. I'd have been properly in the cart then."

He looked across at the lanky, over-alled man he had hired, and his eyes narrowed anxiously.

"What's my chance?" he asked.

The mechanic grinned encouragingly. "Reckon you're on a certainty," he replied. "There's nothing here can beat you. O' course, if that masked speed girl had showed up—"

"There's no hope of that," broke in Ralph, and he grinned maliciously. "She's a non-starter. She won't dare race to-day. You see—"

He broke off, and both of them stared in surprise and consternation, for suddenly there had come a wild, delighted cheer from the crowd of schoolgirls seated at the foot of the grand stand, and they were all waving to a long, red car that had come humming up the gravelled drive towards the pits.

Ralph Mears' face went deathly

white. He stared at the oncoming car as if it were a ghost.

"The—the Red Star!" he choked.

And Miss Nemo's wonder racer it was. The masked speed girl was at the wheel, and beside her sat a slim figure whose features were hidden from view by a pair of huge goggles.

This slim figure was waving to Terry and Mary, who had joined the rest of the Fourth Formers, and a surprised, envious shout went up as the identity of Miss Nemo's companion was learnt. Then, from down the course, came the clanging of a bell. The signal for the various cars to take up their position. Linda gave the speed girl's arm a squeeze.

"Nothing can stop us now," she breathed. "But am I excited! Golly, even now I can hardly believe it's true! To actually ride in a race—oh, it's wonderful!"

Next moment they were driving past the cheering crowd of Fourth Formers, past the scowling Ralph Mears—down to the starting line.

The shouts died away. A tense hush settled over the whole track as an official with a checked flag appeared to view. In another minute the big race would begin.

But even as the starter raised his flag, even as all the drivers tensely reached for their gear levers, from the distance came the grinding roar of an over-strained engine, and through the entrance gates rumbled an old two-seater car.

Miss Grange, Florrie, and Lena had arrived!

As Florrie saw the cars lined up, she gave a desperate shriek:

"Stop—don't let them go!" she yelled, leaping out of the car and racing forward. "There's an objection against one of the drivers! She mustn't be allowed to race!"

At that moment a thunderous roar drowned her irate voice. The official in charge of the gate grinned.

"Fraid you're too late, miss," he said. "Whether you like it or not, the race has begun."

NEVER would Linda forget those first few moments. To her both the grand stands and the cheering Fourth Formers seemed to be plucked aside by some invisible hand. Her first impression was that of being hurtled forward as if shot from the muzzle of a gun. In her ears was a deafening uproar; in her nostrils was the tang of burning oil. And on either side the safety fence that hemmed in the track seemed to be whirling madly by—faster and faster!

Miss Nemo flashed her a swift smile. "Feeling scared?" she asked.

Linda sat up with a jerk.

"Scared?" she echoed. "Well, I like that! Why, it's—it's— Oh, it's marvellous! But don't let those four ahead beat you. Open out—oh, please open out. We must take the lead."

Miss Nemo laughed. "Plenty of time. We mustn't be rash, dear. We'll let the engine warm up first," she said.

Linda sank back in her seat, flushing a little. What a chump she was! She ought to have realised that Eileen had a good reason for taking things gently. Though gently was hardly the word for it. To Linda it seemed that the Red Star was hurtling along at dizzy speed.

Her thrilled eyes found the speedometer. The needle flickered over the 80 mark. Eighty miles an hour! Golly! And the needle continued to rise; Linda could not tear her gaze from it.

The Red Star had gone shooting

round the first bend by now; it was speeding along the far straight. Then another wild, heart-stopping skid announced that Miss Nemo was taking the next corner. Linda's pulses raced; her heart thumped harder than ever. She was enjoying every moment of it. The rest of the Fourth Form were enjoying it as well. How they cheered when the Red Star, still lying fifth, came hurtling by! And how they waved in response to Linda's uplifted arm! The rest of the watching crowd also gave the Red Star a cheer. Indeed, there were only two persons in all that vast crowd who were not enjoying this breath-robbing duel of speed.

One was Florrie Mears, who, with her crouny, Lena Craike, had slunk off to a deserted part of the paddock. The other was their headmistress.

At first there had been a look of disapproval on Miss Grange's face, but now it had been replaced by one of agitation. Knowing nothing of motor racing, to her it seemed that her niece was doomed to crash at any moment.

"Oh, the foolish girl!" she gulped. "The reckless creature! She will injure herself, I know she will!"

Her hand flew to her mouth, and she gave a little scream as, to the accompaniment of squealing brakes, the Red Star came skidding round yet another hair-raising bend.

Seeing her agitation, the well-dressed, dignified looking man standing beside her turned with a smile.

"There's no need to worry, madam," he assured her. "Miss Nemo's in no danger."

Miss Grange clutched nervously at his arm.

"You—you are sure?" she asked.

He smiled again.

"Perfectly sure, madam. Perhaps you will allow me to introduce myself. I am Sir George Whitlow."

"Sir George Whitlow!" The Head eyed him in new respect. "The famous motor manufacturer?" she breathed in awe.

He looked embarrassed.

"I don't know about being famous, madam, but manufacturing cars is certainly my job. That's why I'm here this afternoon. I am thinking of buying the Red Star."

"Buying the Red Star!" Miss Grange gazed at him in surprise.

"You mean that awful car my niece is driving!" she gasped.

"Your niece, madam?"

"Yes, that girl in the mask. She is driving, against my wishes, in that car which proved dangerous in the hands of that young rascal, Jack Naylor!"

"Jack Naylor!" It was the motor manufacturer's turn to look surprised.

"Then you must be Miss Grange, the headmistress of Abbey School. Pleased to meet you, madam. But you are misjudging both Naylor and his car. If what he says in his letter is true, I am afraid we have all done him a terrible injustice!"

"Injustice!" The Head looked incredulous. "You must be joking!" she gasped.

"Indeed I'm not! But perhaps you would like to read the letter for yourself!"

From his pocket Sir George produced it and handed it over. Silently Miss Grange read it. The letter was very similar to the one Miss Nemo had shown Linda & Co. It gave all the facts, and stated that before the end of the afternoon Jack hoped to be able definitely to prove his innocence.

"Bless my soul!" The Head stared in amazement. Her head was in a

whirl. She hardly knew what to say. "Surely—surely this cannot be true!" she gasped. "Surely Florrie's brother cannot have been responsible for all the trouble!"

Her companion's face was grim. "It certainly looks like it. However, we shall know for certain when young Naylor shows up. But whatever the truth, Miss Grange, you ought to be proud of your niece!"

"P-proud?"

"Yes, proud! Her driving is superb!"

Dazedly Miss Grange watched the five leading cars come plunging down the banking. She was beginning to revise her ideas about motor-racing. Despite herself, a thrill of excitement coursed through her veins as she saw her niece fighting to pass two of the cars.

Br-uuu-mmmm!

Ralph Mears in his big white car went thundering by. Close on his heels roared three other racers, and behind

Linda sat back and gasped, for the two rival cars had disappeared. They had been left behind. Now the Red Star was lying third. Only Ralph Mears and one other competitor to beat.

Up flashed the speedometer needle. From the eighty-five mark it jumped to ninety, and steadily it continued to fight its way upwards. Linda thrilled as never before.

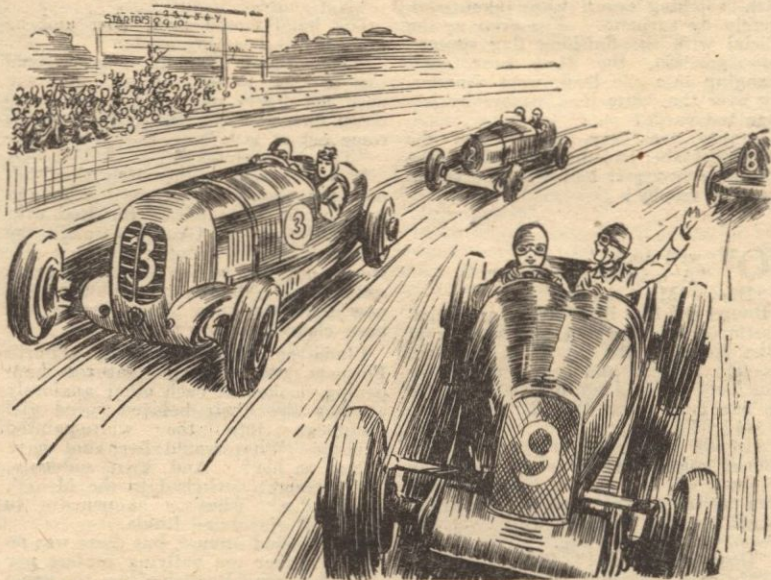
"My giddy aunt!" she gasped. "We're doing a hundred—a hundred miles an hour!"

It was terrific! Heart-stopping, but—wonderful! Never would she forget this! They were whirling past the grand stand again. Just ahead was a long yellow car. It was skidding; one of the tyres had exploded. Linda knew her first fear.

"Look out!" she cried, and shrank back in her seat, for the Red Star was hurtling straight for the screeching, slithering car ahead.

But she need not have worried.

Miss Nemo had the situation under



Linda acknowledged the cheers with a wave of the hand. She was enjoying every moment of this breathless duel of speed.

them again, seeking valiantly to slip between them, was the Red Star.

"Come on, Miss Nemo!"

"Come on—come on!"

The whole crowd was yelling and waving. Even Sir George was so excited that he was brandishing his hat. As for Miss Grange, to her amazement, she found a handkerchief fluttering in her hand, and quite unconsciously she was shouting:

"Come on, Eileen—oh, don't let them beat you!"

### A GRAND FINISH!

**T**ENSELY, Linda crouched in the bucket seat beside the masked speed girl. Her hands were clasped tightly; she hardly dared breathe. Her fascinated gaze was fixed on the space between the two cars ahead. Terribly narrow it seemed. Surely there was not room to pass! Yet calmly Miss Nemo sent the Red Star roaring towards it.

Nearer and nearer it got to the gap. All three cars were now thundering past the grand stands. Linda held her breath. She was in an agony of suspense.

Br-uuu-mmmm!

perfect control. Her slim fingers dragged on the steering-wheel. The Red Star skidded, first one way, then another. It slid past its rival, so close that the two cars almost touched each other. Then—

Crash!

The yellow racer, completely out of control, smashed into the safety-fence. Linda, her heart in her mouth, looked back, to gulp with relief as she saw the driver leap to safety—a split second before his car burst into flames.

Next moment the wreckage was blotted from view, for with a challenging roar the Red Star went plunging round the bend—went tearing after Ralph Mears.

It had only that rascal to beat now. Ralph Mears was a daring driver—there could be no denying that—and now he was driving as though possessed.

He seemed to sense that Miss Nemo was hot on his heels, and with a savage scowl he flung the throttle wide open. But the Red Star held on to its position; began even to improve upon it.

Three laps to go, and Ralph Mears' lead had been reduced to a mere twenty yards. Two laps, and the thundering cars were almost level. As the final lap was begun, the crowd fell

silent. The suspense was too tense for shouting.

Linda sat huddled up in her seat, her eyes never leaving the white car just ahead. Could they possibly overtake it? To her it seemed impossible. Only another half-mile to go, and Ralph Mears was still in front. Three hundred yards from the winning post—and still the Red Star was slightly behind.

Linda clasped and unclasped her hands in an agony of suspense.

A hundred yards to go and then— Suddenly, without warning, the Red Star's roaring hum deepened its note. The long, stream-lined car seemed to fling itself forward, and Linda gave a wild whoop of delight as she realised that the speed girl, superb driver that she was, had kept something in reserve—had waited until this last moment before opening the Red Star completely out.

Br-uuu-mmm!  
It was sensational, unexpected, breath-robbing. Ralph Mears and the vast, watching crowd were taken completely by surprise. For even as the official with the finishing flag stepped into position, the Red Star went plunging into the lead, went thundering over the white line, winner by less than ten yards!

Despite treachery, despite all the handicaps she had had to face, the masked speed girl had won the championship trophy!

"O H, well done!"

"A magnificent race!"

"Bravo, Miss Nemo!"

Round the Red Star surged an enthusiastic crowd, cheering and smiling at Miss Nemo. She sat alone; for the moment the car had drawn up, Linda had leapt out and run off the track, for no one must guess the identity of the speed girl's partner.

Already she had stripped off her helmet goggles, and overalls, and had rejoined the rest of the Fourth Form. And there, at the foot of the grand stand, another scene of wild congratulation was taking place.

"Good old Linda!"

"Crumbs, but you must have some pluck to sit through all those thrills!"

"Bedad, but 'tis a broth of a heroine you are, my darlint!"

With difficulty, Linda stemmed the outburst of back-clapping and hand-

shaking. Red and breathless, she escaped from her too-enthusiastic chums.

"Steady on!" she gasped. "Never mind me. Let's see what's happening to Miss Nemo! Oh look! Someone's just giving her the laurel wreath of victory! Golly, doesn't she look happy—and proud!"

Proud and happy the speed girl certainly was, but her heart began to thump as a tall, distinguished-looking man pushed his way through the crowd, and, after adding his congratulations, whispered in her ear.

"I think you know me, my dear," he said. "I am Sir George Whitlow, and I have brought a message from your aunt."

"From—from my aunt?"  
Miss Nemo's flush faded. Uneasily she gazed up at him. He nodded.

"Yes, she wishes to see you. You will find her in the Members' Pavilion, and, my dear, there is someone else there, too."

"Miss Nemo caught in her breath.

"Not—not—"

His hand closed over hers, and he gave her a beaming smile.

"Yes, young Naylor. He arrived just in time to see you win, and you need not worry, my dear. His innocence has been proved. The truth's come out at last."

"Thank goodness!"

It was a sigh of heartfelt thankfulness that escaped the speed girl, and eagerly she leapt out of the Red Star and followed Sir George through the crowd. She did not care what her stern aunt had to say now; she could suffer any rebukes, any punishment, now that she knew Jack's name had been cleared.

Linda and the rest of the Fourth Formers, not knowing what was happening, looked at each other anxiously as they saw their beloved speed girl disappear into the white-painted pavilion. What would her aunt have to say to her? And then, suddenly, their thoughts switched to the Mears'. "Wonder what's happened to Florrie?" ejaculated Linda.

They looked around, but there was no sign of either the bullying prefect nor of her brother. Realising that the game was up, Ralph Mears had driven off, fearful of being arrested, and with him had gone his sister.

Nor were the girls of Abbey School ever to see them again, for though it

was decided not to prosecute Ralph Mears, Florrie had not the cheek to return to the school.

But all thought of Florrie was wiped from Linda & Co.'s minds next minute, for towards them came running Miss Nemo and a young, bronzed young man.

The Fourth Formers burst into a cheer as they saw them, and happily the speed girl waved.

"It's all right. Jack's innocence has been proved," she cried. "As for aunt—you'll never believe it, but she's forgiven me, and—and she's actually changed her mind about motor-racing!"

"I'll say she has!" It was young Jack Naylor who broke in. "She's secretly as proud as Punch of Eileen—and so she ought to be!" he added, putting one strong arm around the speed girl, and giving her a boyish hug.

Miss Nemo blushed, then laughingly she introduced them all. Linda & Co., of course, were the first to be made known, and it was with grateful eyes that Jack surveyed them.

"So you're the bricks Eileen has been telling me about," he said. "You're the girls we've got to thank for all that's happened?"

Miss Nemo, tears of happiness in her grey eyes, nodded and gave each of the embarrassed Secret Three a fond kiss.

"Yes, they are the darlings," she declared. "But for them I'd never have won through. But for them I'd have been forced to give up the struggle long ago!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Good old Linda & Co—they're three of the best!"

There came a spontaneous burst of cheering from the watching Fourth Formers; and though their faces were red with embarrassment, though they shrank from all this public demonstration, yet the Secret Three's hearts were nearly bursting with joy.

Their secret society had not been set up in vain. Thanks to its activities, not only had Florrie Mears' reign of tyranny been broken, but, even more important, Jack Naylor's innocence had been proved, and Miss Nemo's fight to earn fame on the race track had been brought to a triumphant conclusion.

MISS NEMO stayed on at Abbey School, but she did not give up her career as a racing motorist, and just before the end of the term, with Miss Grange's unqualified approval, she left to take part with Jack Naylor in a famous French road race.

The night before she departed, the Fourth Form organised a Grand Send-off Feast—and what a banquet it was! In foaming ginger-beer the speed girl's name was toasted, but, perhaps, an even more enthusiastic welcome was given to the toast that Miss Nemo herself proposed.

"Here's to the Secret Three!" she cried, looking around with glowing eyes. "I mustn't reveal who they are—their identity must remain a secret—but some of you can guess their names. Anyway, whoever they are, they are the sportiest girls in the Fourth—girls Abbey School can be proud of!"

"Rather!"

"That's true!"

"Good old Secret Three!"

And with musical honours the toast was drunk!

THE END.

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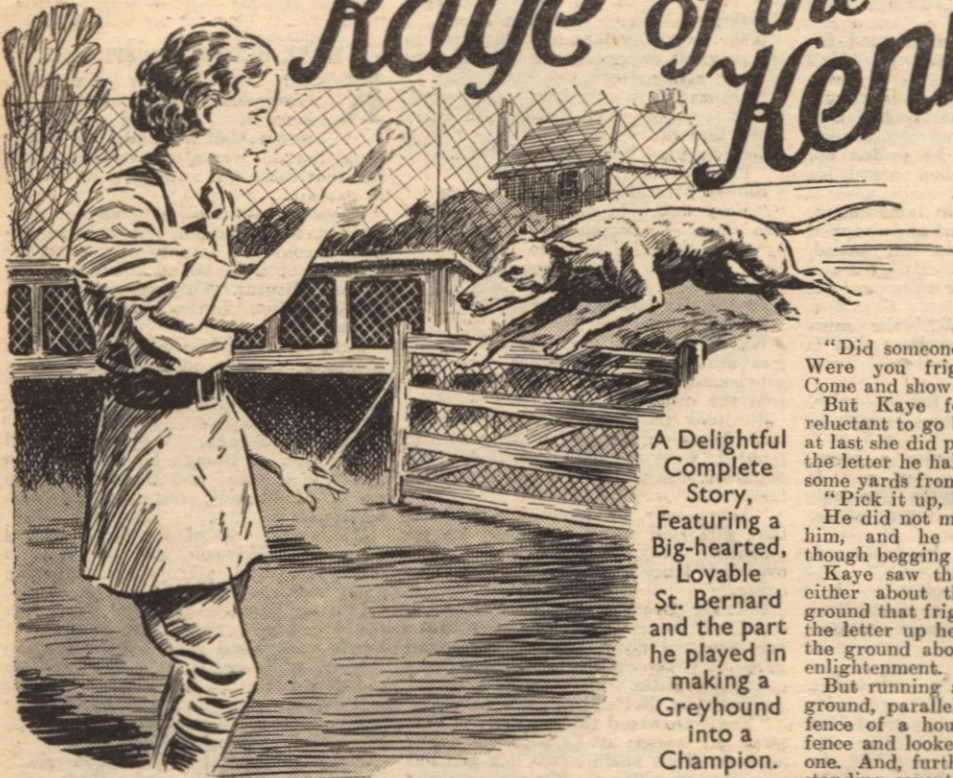
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# Kaye of the Kennels



## THE GREYHOUND WHO WOULDN'T JUMP

**B**RUTUS wanted to carry Kaye's letter. He liked carrying things, and he had been taught to post letters; but what he did not understand was that, being a St. Bernard, he had not been given the kind of mouth for letter-carrying.

Kaye Chalmers, the youthful owner of Chalmers' Kennels, always tried to please him, as, indeed, she did every dog. But she did not want her letter moistened by Brutus' flapping cheeks.

They argued about it.

Woof! said Brutus, looking up at her. "No, darling," said Kaye. "Not unless you promise to carry it right in your front teeth. And no dropping it in the mud, for this letter is very important."

Brutus stood right across the path that led through the field to the letter-box, so that it was hard for Kaye to get past him. Being so good-natured where dogs were concerned, Kaye had no heart to refuse him any longer.

"Ah, well, after all, if you do spoil it I can always write another—and perhaps you'll bring me luck," said Kaye.

It was an important letter—asking the landlord if he could possibly wait a little longer for the rent, for just at the moment money was short.

"There, darling, there it is," she said.

Brutus took it in his front teeth, and his tail went up in pride. There was nothing he liked better than doing small services.

He trotted on ahead of Kaye, and not even when he saw another dog running did he turn aside from his duty. But Kaye, seeing that dog, stopped.

The dog was a greyhound, being exercised, and it was fleeing across the far side of the field at a grand pace, while a girl in a thick winter overcoat

stood waiting for it, a watch in her hand.

"My goodness! Champion Charley," murmured Kaye.

She had heard about the wonderfully fast greyhound who lived near by, but she had never seen him until now.

Kaye stood and watched; but Brutus went on.

Brutus rounded the bend, and saw ahead of him a hurdle. If he had been running fast he might have cleared it, but he was just trotting along on business bound, so he skirted it.

In his head-high, proud manner he went round it.

Brutus was wholly unprepared for anything startling or out of the ordinary, but as he took another stride forward an excruciating pain ran through his whole body.

Frightened, pained, Brutus gave a sharp cry, jumped in the air, leaped sideways, and then bolted in terror.

The letter, forgotten, lay in the mud.

Kaye heard that sharp cry he gave, and ran forward anxiously. As she saw him running across the field, as though towards the greyhound, she hailed him.

"Brutus!" she called. "Here! Oh you bad dog!"

Brutus slowed, his first terror gone; but he was still quivering with shock. For a moment or two he hesitated, then slowly he retraced his steps.

It was the first time Kaye had known the St. Bernard act in such an odd manner, and she instantly realised by his manner that something serious had happened.

"Brutus, what ever's the matter?" she asked. "And where is the letter?"

She looked back, and saw the letter near the hurdle; from it she stared at Brutus, puzzled.

A Delightful Complete Story, Featuring a Big-hearted, Lovable St. Bernard and the part he played in making a Greyhound into a Champion.

By IDA MELBOURNE

"Why did you drop it?" she asked.

Brutus crouched low; then, sitting up, offered his paw in apology. But Kaye was not cross with him, for his whole manner told her that he had been badly frightened by something or someone.

"Did someone throw a stone at you? Were you frightened by something? Come and show me, poor old boy!"

But Kaye found that Brutus was reluctant to go back with her, and when at last she did persuade him to approach the letter he halted definitely and firmly some yards from it.

"Pick it up, boy," she said.

He did not move. Again she ordered him, and he whined pleadingly, as though begging her not to insist.

Kaye saw that there was something either about the letter or about the ground that frightened him. She picked the letter up herself, studied it, studied the ground about her, and received no enlightenment.

But running alongside that stretch of ground, parallel with the path, was the fence of a house. Kaye went to the fence and looked over. But she saw no one. And, furthermore, the house itself, standing seventy yards from the fence, was empty.

"Well, well, this certainly is a mystery!" frowned Kaye.

Lost in thought, she did not hear the other girl call to her; but Brutus did, and turned. A moment later Kaye heard, too, and saw the girl hurrying towards her.

"I say, would you mind standing aside?" the girl asked. "I'm putting my dog through his trials, and it's rather important."

Kaye saw the greyhound in the distance, held by a man in a brown overcoat, and at once she moved back, taking Brutus by the collar.

"Is he Champion Charley?" she asked with interest.

The girl nodded, pride shining in her eyes.

"He's the fastest greyhound in the district," she declared, "and he ought to easily win the Gold Cup."

"I hope he does," smiled Kaye. "Is he going to jump this hurdle?"

The girl's expression changed and she looked a little worried.

"That's what we have to find out," she said. "This is his big test, and he's just got to do it. For the last week—goodness knows why—he has been shying at hurdles."

"Oh!" Kaye exclaimed, surprised. "But surely the Gold Cup is a hurdle race?"

"Yes; and that's why he's just got to jump! I can't think what's come over him if he does go on like this, he can't win the race. But he must—must!" she ended, with fierce insistence.

"Here he comes!" cried Kaye.

She pulled Brutus well back, and they all three stood silent, watching as the powerful greyhound came leaping over the ground. Never had Kaye seen a dog run at such speed, and even Brutus stood entranced by the sight.

Champion Charley was a beautiful animal, lithe and strong, well-proportioned and graceful. He ran like a champion, and, without veering, made for the hurdle.

"He'll do it—he'll do it!" cried the girl, on tiptoe of excitement. "He's not going to—"

She stopped, the sparkle fading from her eyes. Champion Charley had suddenly swerved away from the hurdle. Instead of jumping it, he pulled up, gave a doleful bark, then edged his way nervously round it.

While Kaye stared in amazement, the other girl ran forward and dropped on one knee before the greyhound. Her name was Grace Milling, and there were tears in her eyes as she fondled him.

"Oh, why did you jib?" she murmured. "You know how keen dad is to win the Gold Cup, and you know how cross he gets."

"Cross!" exclaimed a furious voice. "And isn't his stubbornness enough to make anyone cross?"

Kaye, looking round, saw a stout, red-faced man come striding up. It was Mr. Milling, Champion Charley's owner, and he glared in disgust at the greyhound.

"This finishes it," he declared. "The dog will have to be sold!"

Grace gave a cry of protest.

"Oh, no, daddy, don't do that! Give the poor darling another chance—please!"

Mr. Milling scowled.

"What's the use?" he demanded. "The dog's a coward! He's good for nothing. He will have to go, I tell you!"

At that moment the man in the brown overcoat came up. He was the trainer.

"He certainly won't win the Gold Cup," he said. "You'd better scratch him from the race, Mr. Millings. It's nerves he's suffering from, and a dog with nerves can't be cured."

Kaye, seeing how distressed Grace was, decided to intervene.

"I don't agree," she said quietly.

The two men swung round and glared.

"What do you know about dogs?" snorted Mr. Milling.

"Quite a lot. You see, I run Chalmers' Kennels, and if it is nerves Charley's suffering from, I'm sure I can cure him."

Mr. Milling and the trainer looked sceptical, but from Grace there came a gasp of entreaty.

"Oh, please let her try, daddy!" she implored, but her father shook his head.

"It's useless. When a dog gets in this state he's finished," he declared.

Kaye bit her lip. Then, suddenly, as she remembered how scared Brutus had been when she had asked him to pick up the dropped letter, an idea occurred to her.

"My goodness!" she exclaimed. "That hurdle—perhaps there's something wrong with it! Perhaps it's been tampered with!"

She ran across to the wooden obstacle and examined it. The trainer went with her. Together they surveyed the ground all around, but they failed to see anything that could have frightened the two dogs. Then Kaye realised how close the fence to the empty house was to the hurdle.

"Perhaps someone was hidden behind there," she said. "Perhaps someone was there throwing stones—someone who wanted to upset Champion Charley."

The trainer laughed incredulously, but Mr. Milling seemed impressed.

"That's an idea," he remarked. "There are plenty of crooks interested in greyhound racing, and more than one would like to see Champion Charley withdrawn from the race."

Kaye, realising that his opposition to her original suggestion was weakening, plucked at his sleeve.

"Let us try to cure him," she urged. "If it is nerves, then I'm certain I can make him fit."

Grace added her plea to Kaye's.

"Please, daddy," she urged.

Slowly Mr. Milling nodded.

"Very well," he said, "I'll give you two days. If there's no improvement by then, then I'll have to scratch him from the race. But if you do succeed—if the dog does win the Gold Cup—then I'll pay you ten pounds."

"Ten pounds!"

Kaye's eyes lit up, for though she was anxious to help Grace and the greyhound, yet she could not forget the rent she owed.

She took the leash from the trainer, and Champion Charley, looking a little puzzled, went off with her. As they departed, the trainer turned to Grace's father.

"There may be something in what that girl said about enemies," he remarked. "Anyway, I think I'll climb over that fence and see what I can discover."

Leaving Grace and Mr. Milling to stroll off, he climbed over the fence and dropped down into the neglected garden. Creeping forward, he gave a cautious whistle.

"That you, Betts?" asked a voice.

"Yes," answered the trainer. "Clear away all traces; make sure you leave no clue. That meddlesome dog girl has suspected something. She's nearer the truth than she knows herself, and unless I can get rid of her from this business she'll smash our plans."

"That girl from Chalmers' Kennels, isn't it?" said the other angrily. "Confound her! She would interfere. We shall have to go carefully. You put her off the scent if you possibly can. I'll do my best this end. Whatever happens, we mustn't let Champion Charley win the Gold Cup race."

"All right, you; I know my own business!" snapped the trainer, in a surly tone. "Just you keep quiet!"

There was a scurrying amongst the

bushes; and the trainer—scowling, no longer wearing his usual amiable smile—climbed back over the fence.

## KAYE BECOMES SUSPICIOUS

KAYE had a long chat with Champion Charley back at the kennels. He said nothing in words; but he made her understand that he was a sad, unhappy dog, and that there was something he wanted to explain.

Kaye introduced him to all her pets, and, having made him feel at home, she next encouraged him to play with the Dalmatian, a foxhound she was treating, and Brutus. They romped happily, and Champion Charley betrayed no sign of nerves.

Next she tried him with jumps. She threw some meat on to the roof of a low shed, and he jumped up for it easily. He jumped down, too, without a quail.

He seemed eager to please, glad of her praise, as though he had received too little of late; and Kaye made him proud of himself, restoring his confidence.

Unhinging one of the light barred doors of the kennels, she erected it in the yard, and started a scampering game with the dogs.

Placing obstacles so that the dogs could not get round the improvised hurdle, she stood with a bone for the winner, while her grandfather held all the dogs back.

It was an unfair race really, for the greyhound could outpace them all. But could he jump that fence?

Away they went to a good start. Champion Charley led from the Dalmatian, with the foxhound third, and Brutus thundering on in the rear, like a trolleybus trying to catch racing cars.

"Here, Charley—here!" called Kaye, waving aloft the bone.

Champion Charley sped straight for the gate. He did not hesitate for a moment, but, bunching up his muscles, cleared it in one effortless bound.

Kaye was so surprised and taken off her guard that she could not dodge as Champion Charley came hurtling forward. He cannoned into her and fell flat; he somersaulted, got up unhurt, and snatched up the bone just as the Dalmatian and the foxhound cleared the hurdle.

Brutus, flat out, reached the hurdle; he did not bother to jump, but knocked it flat and made for the greyhound and the bone.

"Whoa!" called Kaye. "Brutus, here!"

And from the bag on the ground she took out bones—one for each.

But Brutus had knocked Champion Charley over, and the air was filled with snarling; for this was where the real battle for the bone began.

Kaye rushed to pull them apart; but someone was there before her—a man in a brown overcoat, who, unnoticed, had arrived on the scene.

The trainer! And no worse moment for his arrival than this could have been imagined.

But Kaye soon ended that fight. Another bone for Brutus did it. She pushed it between his jaws and pulled him away.

"Did you see it?" she asked the trainer.

"The fight?" he said, frowning.

"No; the way Champion Charley cleared the hurdle," said Kaye, breathless with excitement. "He jumped it without hesitation."

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The trainer frowned at her. "Yes—and somersaulted, probably straining his leg, and then was set upon by the St. Bernard. And you claim to be responsible enough to look after a champion!"

Kaye did not answer; she stood silent, amazed.

Not a growl was heard now; every dog had a bone; and, looking at the greyhound, she saw that he bore no scar to tell of the "fight," nor did he appear to be in pain.

"Really, I—I—" stammered Kaye, bewildered by his manner.

She had thought him amiable this afternoon, but now there was a glint of anger in his eyes.

"That dog is in my charge," he said. "If anything happens to him I shall be blamed; but I'll see that Mr. Milling knows the truth."

"You mean?"

"I mean I'll tell him that you're not fit to have charge of the dog."

Kaye looked at him measurably, and then swung aside. Puzzled, he watched her as she went to a kennel near by and took out a fluffy dog.

"What on earth are you getting that Peke for?" he demanded.

Kaye said not a word; she took the Peke forward in her arms to the trainer. At five paces distance Ming Wu's heels rose; at three paces he started to snarl.

It was enough for Kaye. The man's manner had aroused her suspicions of him, but Ming Wu's snarl proved that she was right. He was a "no-good." Seldom did the aristocratic little Peke make a mistake. Kaye had implicit faith in Ming Wu's judgment.

"Take that savage little brute away!" snapped the man.

He walked to the greyhound, snapped a lead on his collar.

"You're taking him away?" Kaye gasped.

"Of course I'm taking him! You're not safe with the dog. You'll have him injured with your fool tricks."

Kaye clenched her hands, and her eyes gleamed.

"He jumped the hurdle," she said. "There's nothing wrong with his nerves."

"No? Then perhaps you'll tell me why he has faked his jumps?"

"I'll tell you—yes!" said Kaye fiercely. "Because someone has played a trick; made him afraid of hurdles. But I won his confidence. He was not scared to jump here."

"Is that so? Then you'd better arrange to be at all the hurdles in the Gold Cup race!" was the sneering reply.

"I'll arrange to find out what was on the other side of that hurdle that scared him—yes, and scared Brutus, too!" said Kaye.

The man said nothing. He turned and took the greyhound with him. Champion Charley went with reluctance, but without a struggle. All the way down the drive he looked back at Kaye.

Turning back, Kaye came face to face with her grandfather, who had overheard the argument, but who had not interfered.

"Well, bang goes the ten pounds bonus," he said heavily. "And I've just had a telephone-call from the landlord. The rent must be paid by Monday without fail, or else—"

"Or else what?" said Kaye sharply, her heart jumping.

"Or else he'll let the place over our heads, and sue us for the rent. It'll mean clearing out of here, losing your goodwill, your connection—"

Kaye's eyes shone.

"But we're not going to lose that ten

## Your Editor's Corner



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

MY DEAR READERS,—A Happy New Year to you all! If I know anything about you, I've an idea that you've all been making some Good Resolutions in honour of 1939.

Perhaps you've resolved to spring down to your homework a little earlier in the evenings. Perhaps you're going to try to like washing-up a bit more—or to get up the very first time mother calls you in the morning.

Yes, I have made a resolution this year—but I'm afraid it is not a very original one. In fact, it is the same resolution that I made last year. It is: to make this paper of ours, the GIRLS' CRYSTAL, better and better.

Only you can tell me whether I succeed in keeping this resolve, so I shall hope to hear from you all very soon. (That's one more resolution for you to make!)

### A NEW SERIAL

And now, just to show you that I am really in earnest, I must tell you about the grand new serial which begins in next Friday's issue.

Supposing your own parents were dead, and you had lived with unkind people—when suddenly a kind woman came along, saying you need live with them no more, but promised you a wonderful surprise.

I'm sure you'd be thrilled. Just like Jess Grant was. And she was filled with anticipation when she arrived at the village of Spinnleigh, expecting to meet her mysterious benefactress.

But—the benefactress did not turn up. Jess began to wonder if a cruel trick had been played on her, until she discovered that she was the proud owner of lots of new luggage addressed to the famous girls' school, St. Kit's.

So Jess became a member of St. Kit's School, where she felt she must with Olive French and Letty Johnson. In spite of the mystery surrounding her, she felt she must be the luckiest girl in the world—until she realised that she had a secret enemy at school.

Don't miss a single word of next Friday's extra-long chapters of "Her Unknown Enemy at School"—by ever-popular Gail Western.

### ROSINA AGAIN

Another complete story featuring Noel Raymond, in which he again meets the daring Rosina Fontaine, will also appear—so that's an extra treat for you.

A complete tale featuring Pat Lovell, girl reporter, will also appear, as well as splendid instalments of our serials.

Your sincere friend,

YOUR EDITOR

pounds bonus, granddad," she said. "Because if Champion Charley can make his jumps he'll win. And he can make them—I've proved it. He's been the victim of a plot, and that trainer is the plotter."

As she spoke she got out her cycle. Mounting it, she called to Brutus and went pedalling off, making for the Millings' house a mile and a half away.

The trainer, driving a car, would be there long before her, and so would tell his story first. But if only Kaye could insist that Champion Charley had made a clean jump he could at least have another trial.

She reached the house in a quarter of an hour, and a maid opened the door.

"Mr. Milling? Oh, he's out with Champion Charley!" she said, in answer to Kaye's question. "And Miss Grace went with him."

"Where have they taken the dog?" asked Kaye.

"Well, I did happen to hear," said the girl. "A gentleman telephoned from the kennels, and said that the dog had made a good jump of a hurdle, and that the trainer was bringing it back for a trial. So when the trainer came back they took Charley to the field they always use."

Kaye waited for no more. She guessed who had telephoned—her grandfather, so when the trainer had driven back with Champion Charley they had been prepared for him.

Kaye mounted her cycle and rode back to the spot where she had left Brutus on guard—at the gate that led into the grounds of the empty house.

But as she passed the field she saw the Millings, the trainer, and Champion Charley in the distance. Once again he was being given a trial.

"That hurdle—he'll jib at it again!" Kaye told herself fiercely. "And the reason's something to do with this house."

Opening the gate quietly, she let Brutus in, warning him to be quiet, not to bark. Then stealthily she crept across the grass.

"Smell him out!" she whispered to Brutus.

Brutus hurried forward, nose down. It never took him long to find people, for his ancestors had hunted wanderers in the Alps, and their scent for humans had been handed on to him.

Routing amongst the bushes near the fence, Brutus presently ran his quarry to earth.

Lying on the ground was a youth in a macintosh, and beside him a black box. Brutus' heavy steps gave away his approach, however, and the boy turned. He started up, alarmed, and then suddenly he stabbed a metal prong into the ground.

Once again Brutus felt that excruciating pain. He whimpered and leapt clean off the ground. Kaye, running forward, also felt a burning pain. She tingled all over, but, unlike Brutus, she knew the cause. They had both received an electric shock! The truth was revealed at last. The reason why Champion Charley always jibbed at that hurdle in the field was because he knew what to expect—a strong charge of electricity!

"On guard, Brutus—on guard!" she called to the St. Bernard, then ran madly for the fence. As she clambered over it she saw that Champion Charley had started his trial. He was heading straight for the hurdle, and this time it looked as if he intended jumping it.

Careless of her own safety, Kaye jumped from the top of the high fence. She fell on hands and knees, and the sudden shock jarred her from head to

foot, but, scrambling up, she raced wildly across to the hurdle.

She danced and leaped with the electric shock as she reached the "doctored" strip of ground; but she snatched up the hurdle and ran with it to one side, calling to the greyhound. "Charley! Here, Charley!" she cried.

The dog swerved for her, then went racing on, to clear the other hurdles without faltering.

An approving shout came from Mr. Milling, and a wild cheer from Grace. But from the other side of the fence came frenzied shouts of fear, mingled with Brutus' snarling.

A moment later Mr. Milling shook Kaye warmly by the hand, while the trainer tried to hide his dismay by smiling falsely.

"Well done, Miss Chalmers—well done!" he said. "I admit I was wrong when I thought Charley had been harmed in the fall at your place. You've certainly cured him."

Then he started, hearing the shouts from the near-by garden. Running to the fence, he climbed over it. Mr. Milling would have followed, but Kaye took his arm, hurrying to the gate that led to the garden. When they arrived there, it was to find the trainer trying to beat off Brutus, who stood guard over the fallen, terrified youth.

"All right, Brutus!" said Kaye. "Stand back, old fellow!" She turned to Mr. Milling. "There are the culprits. They electrified the damp earth near the first hurdle and frightened Charley. That boy was hiding

there with the switches and wires, and the trainer was in league with him."

"It's—it's a lie!" said Betts hotly.

"It's true! He made me do it!" panted the frightened boy. "It was Mr. Betts' idea."

"Was there anyone else in the plot?" asked Kaye keenly.

"You might as well know the truth," said the white-faced Betts, in a sulky voice. "You seem to have found out most of it already. Another man was in the plot. He's got a dog running in the Gold Cup race, and only Champion Charley was likely to beat it. He paid me to keep Milling's dog out of the race, and, as he couldn't always be in the garden here, fixing the current, I bribed this kid to do it."

Mr. Milling eyed the rascal in contempt.

"Well, you're coming along with me to the police station," he said. "And you can tell the police who this other scoundrel is. As for you, my lad"—he turned to the trembling youth—"you can go now, and don't let me hear of you getting mixed-up in this sort of thing again. Next time you may not get off so lightly."

Stammering his thanks, the shame-faced youth hurried off, only too glad to make his escape.

The trainer, however, made no attempt to run away. He knew well enough that it would be the worse for him if he tried to evade the police, and, without a word, he allowed himself to be marched off by Mr. Milling.

Kaye was left with Champion Charley. He lifted his sleek, graceful head, and looked at her with bright, intelligent eyes, as though he knew she had saved him from his tormentors, had vindicated him in the eyes of his master.

She patted him, and then turned to hug Brutus, who stood by patiently. Kaye loved all dogs and Champion Charley had endeared himself to her; but Brutus was her real pet—her chum. Brutus had a place in her heart no other dog could ever occupy.

With both dogs trotting by her side, Kaye returned to Grace Milling, and explained everything to her.

And watching the other girl hug Champion Charley, Kaye realised what the greyhound meant to Grace.

IT was a magnificent race for the Gold Cup, and Champion Charley won easily, as the result of a final burst of speed.

The joy of that victory mattered more to Kaye even than the bonus; and yet, what a pleasure it was to be able to pay the landlord on time! She had saved Champion Charley, and he, by his victory, had saved her. But Brutus was not forgotten. His services were rewarded by the biggest, juiciest bone Kaye could buy.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

Another enthralling story about Kaye and her dogs very shortly. Order your GIRLS' CRYSTAL now.

Desperately she darted to the tree, and contrived to squeeze herself into the narrow cavity.

The next moment Mr. Penhale himself burst into the clearing, lantern in hand, followed by several of the men employed on the estate.

Norma stood motionless in the hollow tree-trunk, her heart thudding painfully.

From where she stood, she could see the faces of the searchers, lit by the glow of the lantern.

But she herself was hidden by the shadows; she was safe—so long as no suspicion was directed towards the hollow tree.

A baffled expression on his dark features, Mr. Penhale held the lantern above his head, glaring round him.

"There's someone hiding here!" he declared. "A figure was seen to enter the grounds and make in this direction. Spread out and search! I'll give a pound to the man who catches the intruder."

There was an eager rush to comply; the searchers spread out, beating the bushes, headed by Mr. Penhale himself.

Norma waited in sick suspense, listening to the sound of their receding footsteps.

Gradually they died away in the distance—but it was a full ten minutes before she ventured to emerge from her cramped hiding-place.

Everything was still; Norma gave a little sigh of relief as she stared round her.

There was no time, now, to attempt to obliterate those tell-tale footprints. Her one thought was to escape from the grounds. Her ears strained for the slightest sound, she crept through the trees—making for the gap in the wall.

And suddenly, when she was within a few yards of her goal, she heard a movement.

## THE GIRL WHO HAUNTED GREY GABLES

(Continued from page 300.)

From behind a bush stepped Mr. Penhale!

He caught only a glimpse of Norma's flying figure, almost concealed by the shrubbery. The light coat that she was wearing had a ghostly appearance as it flitted among the trees.

With a hoarse shout, the owner of Grey Gables started in pursuit.

Norma ran wildly, panting for breath, her heart thudding against her ribs.

Mr. Penhale's heavy footsteps were drawing closer; could she hope to escape?

She reached the wall, and scrambled wildly through the gap.

She heard her pursuer's triumphant shout as he made to follow.

Then came a crash—and a stifled ejaculation, as the man slipped on the loose brick-work, and sprawled to the ground.

Norma flung one desperate glance over her shoulder, and ran for dear life. Only when she came in sight of the village dared she pause to regain her breath.

Pale and dishevelled, she halted to smooth her ruffled hair and attempt to regain her composure. And just then she heard a squeal of brakes—and a big car drew up in the road close to her.

"Miss Royston!" boomed a hearty voice.

Norma started violently as she turned to see Squire Guthrie beckoning to her from his car.

Her face rather pale, she crossed to the car. What could the squire have to say to her?

His first words relieved her fears. "Bit of luck I should come across you,

Miss Royston," he remarked jovially. "Matter of fact, I was just driving down to your shop. Have you got my order in?"

"Oh, yes," replied Norma, rather breathlessly. "It's all ready, Mr. Guthrie. I was going to deliver it in the morning."

"I can save you the trouble," chuckled the squire. "As I'm in the village, I'll take the goods back to the Hall with me. Jump in!"

Norma stepped into the car, and the squire drove to the little shop.

A light gleamed through the bottle-glass windows, but Norma could see no signs of the two children. Probably they were in the back parlour.

"If you'll wait here, Mr. Guthrie," she said breathlessly, "I'll see about packing up the things."

She sprang out of the car, and hurried into the shop.

Everything was very quiet.

"Martin—Elsie!" she called.

There was no reply.

With a vague, uneasy premonition, Norma hurried into the parlour. It was in darkness, except for the faint glow of the fire. The children were nowhere to be seen.

Anxiously she hurried back into the shop; could they be hiding behind the counter, perhaps?

She glanced behind the counter—and a stifled cry was torn from her lips.

Her eyes wide with incredulous horror, she was staring at the shelves behind the counter—the shelves on which she had stacked the goods for the squire's party.

The shelves stood bare and empty. The goods had vanished!

Don't miss next Friday's thrilling developments in this grand mystery serial. Order your copy of the GIRLS' CRYSTAL as soon as you can. Better still—place a standing order with your newsagent!