

"The Girl Who Haunted Grey Gables" — One of the Six Fine
Stories for Schoolgirls
Within

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GIRLS' CRYSTAL ^{2^D} WEEKLY



**"HE'S YOUR COUSIN
—IN DISGUISE!"**

Doreen's startling discovery
at the Ice Cabaret. A dra-
matic incident in Daphne
Grayson's thrilling story,
"Their Quest At The
Winter Sports."



Their Quest AT THE Winter Sports



By DAPHNE GRAYSON

JOY FOR SYLVIA

DOREEN CARSDALE and Jean Hinton had been having a wonderful time at St. Lauritz, in Switzerland, with Doreen's Aunt Elizabeth. There they met the Ross family—Mr. and Mrs. Ross, their daughter Irma, and their ward, Sylvia Drake.

The chums soon realized that Sylvia was involved in a deep mystery, and that the Rosses were her enemies.

They discovered that Douglas Drake, Sylvia's cousin, was in hiding from the police, in a secret mountain chalet. From him they learnt that it was vital for Sylvia to win the skating championships. He then gave them a document proving that the Rosses were not Sylvia's legal guardians at all!

Sylvia won the first part of the championships, and the Rosses were furious.

But Aunt Elizabeth insisted that Sylvia should stay with her in future. The schemers went away, apparently beaten. Actually they determined to wreck Sylvia's happiness yet—through her cousin.

"**W**E'VE beaten them, Sylvia—we've beaten them!" Doreen's voice was jubilant. "The Rosses can't interfere any more now. They're not your guardians. They haven't a scrap of authority over you, and that's that!"

Sylvia Drake's eyes shone with relief and happiness.

"It seems too wonderful to be true," she breathed.

But it was true, and she glowed and tingled with the knowledge. She felt as if a tremendous burden had been lifted from her shoulders.

Free from the Rosses! Free from their authority, their forbidding her to do this and that, their enmity which during the last few days they had made no attempt to conceal.

Her eyes searched the people swarming about her, as if even now she feared she would see the Rosses coming back to claim her, as if she still couldn't believe she was rid of them.

But there was no sign of them. Mr. and Mrs. Ross had gone, lost to sight among the crowds that thronged the lake.

Sylvia's heart rejoiced within her,

and again that delicious sense of freedom tingled through her. In those joyous moments she did not stop to think that, though she was free of the Rosses, they still constituted a menace to her future. She was blissfully unaware of the conversation that had passed between Mr. and Mrs. Ross as they had slunk away, thwarted, but far from beaten.

She drew a deep, deep breath.

"Oh, Doreen!" she cried, and hugged her friend. Then her gaze swept to Aunt Elizabeth, and her eyes danced. "Thank you, Miss Hill, for what you did. And—and you really meant it when you said I could come with you?"

Aunt Elizabeth beamed.

"Of course I did, my dear," she smiled. "I see now how I have misjudged you. I shall be delighted to have you under my wing, if I may put it like that, and I know Doreen and Jean will be. You are alone, now, and we must take care of you. But," she added, a frown coming to her face, "there are many, many things which mystify me. I think, Sylvia, you had better tell me everything."

Sylvia nodded eagerly. Doreen smiled with satisfaction; this was what she had been hoping for, striving for all the time—the chance of invoking Aunt Elizabeth's sympathy and help. Now, at last, with her eyes opened to the Rosses' real character, the opportunity had come.

"Let's find a quiet table in the restaurant," Doreen suggested. "We can talk better there."

"Hallo, where have the boys gone?" put in Jean, staring round in surprise.

But Tony and Jack had tactfully made themselves scarce.

"We'll see them again later, I expect," Doreen said. "Come on!"

How thrilled Sylvia was that at last she was to meet her cousin. Even the fact that he was a fugitive—wanted by the police—could not spoil her happiness. For she knew him to be innocent.

So along to the restaurant they made their way, and though it was crowded after the championship skating event, they managed to find a vacant table in one corner of the veranda, overlooking the lake and the mountains beyond.

And there, for the first time, Aunt Elizabeth learned of the many startling events that had transpired since Doreen and Jean had met Sylvia, and of the mystery which they had been endeavouring to solve.

Aunt Elizabeth listened in amazement, startled and dumbfounded that all this had been happening without her suspecting it. She was plainly shocked; but quickly sympathetic as she realised what Sylvia had been through, and how terrible this extraordinary situation must be for her.

"You poor dear!" she exclaimed. "But I had no idea. It—it's incredible. But what can it all mean? Why should Mr. and Mrs. Ross pretend to have been your guardians? There must be some very big reason behind all this trickery—"

"Yes; and it's a reason connected with their not wanting Sylvia to win the skating championship," Doreen put in keenly.

"I agree," Aunt Elizabeth nodded. "And you say, Sylvia, that this cousin of yours knows the whole secret? Then obviously we must get in touch with him. Have you no idea where he is now?"

"Well, somewhere in St. Lauritz. But he's in hiding from the police—"

"Yes, yes; I was forgetting that! Another extraordinary situation!" Aunt Elizabeth said, frowning.

"But I'm sure it must all be a mistake," Doreen put in quickly. "Sylvia hasn't seen her cousin yet, but we have. He's awfully nice. I'm convinced he couldn't have done anything against the law. He told us he was innocent. Aunt, we must help Sylvia—"

"That goes without saying," Aunt Elizabeth agreed. "Of course we are going to help. But there seems nothing we can do until this cousin turns up again. Now, don't you worry, Sylvia. It seems to me that he is certain to make another attempt to get in touch with you. Or, perhaps, this Madame

Marie will. In the meantime, you must make every effort to win the championship—and, after this morning's performance, I'm sure you'll stand every chance of doing that."

"But we'll have to keep an eye on the Rosses," Doreen said shrewdly. "They've shown themselves pretty desperate so far, and I wouldn't put it past them to get up to some more tricky."

"Not if we're careful," Aunt Elizabeth said. "Remember, we are warned now, and must take every precaution. Now, don't make Sylvia start worrying again. Get out and enjoy yourselves—all of you. We'll decide what's to be done after Sylvia has seen her cousin. There, they're just starting an ice-hockey match on the lake. Go along and watch it, my dears!"

Her confidence and cheerfulness were infectious. Doreen rose to her feet.

"Yes, let's!" she cried. "I say, there are the boys waving to us. Come along, girls!"

So back to the lake they made their way, rejoining Tony and Jack, and all five of them making their way to a bench alongside the lake from which they could watch the match.

After that, the morning seemed to fly. All too soon it was time to be getting back to the Crestina for lunch.

"Lovely!" Doreen enthused. "It's been ripping fun. And you're coming back with us, Sylvia. You'll share our room, I expect—"

"Talking about fun," Tony put in, "there's going to be a cabaret on the hotel rink to-morrow morning—folk-dancing, gymnastics, turns, and races between a St. Lauritz club and another team from Corvish. Will you girls be coming along?"

"Rather!" Doreen exclaimed. "We're not missing any fun—" And then she broke off, sudden excitement in her eyes. "Golly!" she gasped. "Look who's over there!"

"Where?"

"Over by those bushes at the side of the lake," Doreen said tensely.

"It's Madame Marie!" Jean cried. There could be no mistaking that figure in the voluminous black cloak. Madame Marie it was—that mysterious woman who lived away in the mountains, and who had been helping Douglas Drake to hide from the police. Even as they stared the woman beckoned towards them.

"She wants to see us!" Doreen said, her voice thrilled. "Golly! She must have news. Perhaps it's about—" She broke off, remembering that Tony and Jack were with them, and that the boys knew nothing about Sylvia's cousin.

Tony grinned. "Don't worry about us," he chuckled. "You go across and have a pow-wow with your mystery friend. See you later, girls!"

Off he and Jack went, while Doreen & Co. quickly made their way round the lake towards those bushes where Madame Marie was awaiting them.

Her wrinkled old face was anxious as they came up.

"M'selles, I have news," she said, glancing about her furtively as she spoke. "But those boys you were with—they saw me, though it could not be helped. Do they know who I am? Do they know anything—"

"Nothing, Madame Marie," Doreen assured her. "But Mr. Drake—he got away safely after seeing us?"

"Oui, m'selles. And he is grateful for what you did." The woman's face relaxed into a faint smile as she turned to Sylvia. "And I see that the M'selle Sylvia has not returned to England. Bien! The M'sieur Douglas will be

relieved. He will be pleased when he knows how magnificently you skated this morning. But listen! I have a message. To-morrow he will be seeing you—"

"To-morrow?" Sylvia repeated breathlessly. "Oh, when? Where—"

"Here at St. Lauritz," Madame Marie replied. "He will be taking part in the cabaret on your hotel rink."

"My hat!" Doreen gasped. "But isn't he afraid of being caught—"

"It is a risk he must take," the woman said. "But he will be in disguise. You will not know him, but he will know you. He will reveal himself at the right time. Be on the watch for him, m'selles—"

"Trust us!" Sylvia breathed. "Bien! Remember—to-morrow, at the cabaret!"

Without another word Madame Marie turned away and was gone. Sylvia's eyes shone as she looked at her friends.

"Oh goodness! I don't know how I'm going to wait until to-morrow!" she exclaimed excitedly. "I'm going to see him at last—"

"And when you do he'll be able to tell you everything," Doreen laughed. "The mystery will be a mystery no longer. Goodness! I bet you are excited. Come on, let's tell aunt the good news!"

Quickly the three girls hurried away—and thus they did not hear the sounds of movement behind the hedge; did not notice the snow that was displaced as someone brushed against it.

On the other side a girl had been crouched, listening to that conversation between the friends and Madame Marie.

Now the girl, still hidden by the hedge, quickly hurried away. It was Irma Ross, and on her face was a savage scowl, though in her eyes shone a light of fear.

A DAZZLING DISPLAY

"LOOK! There's a table!" cried Doreen.

"Yes, right at the front!" Sylvia exclaimed.

"What-ho! Then let's grab it before the rush."

And Tony Semers charged forward.

After him went Jack Huntley, followed just as excitedly by Doreen and Sylvia and Jean.

It was the following morning—one of those perfect mornings which seemed to be a speciality of St. Lauritz.

The air was crisp and invigorating, and yet the sun poured down a warmth that made it difficult to believe this was the depth of winter, and that there was deep snow all about.

Already a few of the tables surrounding the Crestina's large ice rink were occupied. Now one more became "booked" for the forthcoming ice cabaret as Doreen & Co. and their two boy friends laughingly secured possession.

"This is ripping!" Jean exclaimed. "We'll be able to see everything from here."

Doreen shot Sylvia a quick, excited look.

"Yes, everything!" she breathed.

Sylvia's eyes shone with a brightness that served to enhance the colour in her cheeks and the prettiness of her small, oval face.

How excited she was! How thrilled! And how impatient for the ice cabaret to begin—for that glorious moment when her cousin would reveal himself to her!

Douglas had said he would be coming—and thus they did not remember ever having met, who knew the reason behind all this mystery and intrigue which had engulfed her.

Aquiver with excitement and anticipation, she seated herself on the chair nearest to the rink, gazed eagerly about her. She must miss nothing; she must be constantly on the alert.

"It's going to be a good show," Jack said animatedly. "My hat! They know how to do things in St. Lauritz! There's always something going on the whole time!"

"The opening number!" Tony broke in.

"A rhythmical dance by the Skating Seven," Doreen announced, looking quickly at her programme.

Seven Swiss girls, all dressed in different coloured costumes, whirled on to the ice and began a series of marvelously clever evolutions.

"By Jove! They're jolly good,



Cautiously Doreen & Co. were descending the last stairs, when all at once they saw a gendarme. Would he realise that the bearded man was Douglas Drake, for whom he was searching?

aren't they?" opined Tony. "And pretty, too!"

"Trust you to notice that!" Doreen chuckled.

Round and round the Skating Seven whirled, moving as one with perfect precision, and then breaking into a number of individually different motions, during which the clashing of their brightly coloured costumes only added to the dazzling effect of their incredibly rapid evolutions.

At last the turn came to an end, and to the accompaniment of roars of applause, they swept off the ice.

"What's next?" Jean asked.

"The first of the team events," Doreen said, and felt a sudden surge of excitement tingle through her.

Eagerly her gaze swept the ice rink again. Next to her, she saw Sylvia doing the same.

Now the two teams were taking the ice, the St. Lauritz side wearing emerald green high-necked pullovers, the Corvish team in bright pillar-box red.

Instantly the girls' eyes became riveted on the four members of the Corvish team.

"Is he among them?" Sylvia breathed tensely. "Couldn't you possibly recognise him, Doreen?"

Doreen shook her head.

"He's in disguise, remember. If we could recognise him, then the police would, too. And," Doreen said, with an anxious glance round, "there's a gendarme standing over there near the band. And Irma Ross is with a party not many tables away. She would recognise him, too."

"Oh, yes, I was forgetting that," Sylvia said, her gaze still fastened on those four figures in the bright red pullovers. "But I do wish I knew. It would be so wonderful to see him—to know he's here—"

"What are you girls talking about?" broke in Tony. "My hat, what's happening now? They're rolling some barrels on to the ice. By Jove, they must be going to leap over them! On skates, too! Oh, boy, this is going to be good!"

Half a dozen barrels had been placed in a row in the centre of the rink. Officials were hastily clamping them together so that they could not roll apart, watched by the various members of the two teams.

But suddenly Doreen was conscious of one of the Corvish men gazing in her direction. He was tall and broad-shouldered, quite young looking, with a little black moustache. For a moment his gaze held hers, and then he was turning away, skating over to the far side of the rink.

Doreen tingled in the grip of a sudden excitement.

"Sylvia," she whispered, gripping that girl's arm, "I believe that's him!"

"Who? Which one?" Sylvia asked tensely.

"He's just turning towards us. Oh golly! He's getting ready to take the leap. Watch! I'm sure he's your cousin!"

Sylvia's eyes glinted as she saw the figure Doreen had indicated. There was a brief roll of a drum. Then Doreen's gaze switched round, following every movement of that tall figure as he came whirling round the edge of the rink and suddenly shot forward straight towards the barrels.

The spectators held their breath. The skater crouched, and then seemed to lift himself into the air. Through space he soared, up, clean over the half-dozen barrels, then down again. His skates crunched in the ice; then, still perfectly balanced, he whirled on, skidding to a halt on the farther side of the rink.

A volley of enthusiastic applause rang out.

"Golly, now he's going to do it again!" Doreen cried. "They have to make the leap ooth ways!"

Again they all watched. Again that figure in red whirled towards the obstacle set in the centre of the rink. Clean over the barrels he soared in a magnificent leap, cleared them, and then—

Disaster happened then—unexpected, with far-reaching consequences!

For even as the Corvish man's skates touched the ice again, one foot shot from under him, the blade of the skate having slipped on something which a spectator, in thoughtlessness or ignorance, had thrown on to the ice at that moment, unnoticed by anyone.

"He's fallen!" went up a shout. "Oh goodness! He'll be hurt!"

Sylvia gasped. She was on her feet, Doreen beside her, both staring in dismay and alarm at the figure slithering with flying arms and legs over the ice towards them.

Then Doreen's eyes dilated. A gasp of consternation left her lips. For the man's little moustache had slipped, proving it was a false one. A thrill shot through her, even in that moment of horror.

"It is him!" she panted, in Sylvia's ear. "He's your cousin—in disguise!"

"Douglas!" The word formed on Sylvia's lips. Fascinatedly she was staring at him. She saw him hastily readjust the moustache as he slithered to a standstill less than six yards away from the table. But then Doreen gave a cry of horror.

"Golly! Irma—she's recognised him! She's—" Doreen stood transfixed.

Irma Ross had recognised Douglas Drake. Now, with wild triumph flaming in her eyes, she was running straight towards the gendarme, who still stood near the band.

HIDING THE FUGITIVE

"Doreen, she's going to have him arrested! Arrested!" Sylvia's voice was frantic.

"Oh, can't we stop her?" "Too late now!" Doreen jerked. Her face was desperate; her brain was racing. "There's just one chance—"

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"And that?"

"Get Douglas away from here!"

Even as she spoke, Doreen was running on to the ice. Douglas Drake had seen Irma running for the gendarme; knew that she had recognised him. Skaters and officials were rushing up from all directions to see if he had been hurt as a result of his tumble.

"Mr. Drake!" Doreen rushed up and grabbed his arm.

"Gosh, I've made a mess of things this time!" he panted.

"Come on!" Doreen cried. "We'll get you away somehow. Slip off your skates—"

But he was already doing that. Then Doreen was tugging at his arm, almost dragging him off the rink.

"Look here, you can't do this," he protested. "You're not getting into any trouble on my account—"

"Stop! Stop that man!" came a shout from the other side of the rink.

"It's the gendarme!" Doreen panted. "Don't argue! Come on!"

She pulled him on, while Sylvia and Jean followed behind, as if hoping to screen him from the now pursuing gendarme.

"That man—don't let him get away!" hooted Irma.

A whistle shrilled. People were shouting. But all was confusion and bewilderment. This unexpected climax to the skating had left everybody dumfounded. No one quite knew what was happening.

Perhaps Tony and Jack, as startled as anybody else there, had an inkling of what was happening; but they, staunch pals that they were, sat tight and said nothing.

Now Doreen & Co. had reached a snow-covered hedge which divided the hotel itself from the ice rink.

"Quick! Nip through this gap!" Doreen hissed.

"But where are we going?"

"Up to our room."

"What good is that going to do?" Douglas Drake asked.

"I don't know yet."

"But we shall be followed. Now look here, you girls keep out of this mess—"

"Stop arguing and do as you're told!" Doreen said crisply.

Now they had reached a side entrance to the hotel. One or two people were about, and they stared in amazement. Doreen looked grim. Yes, they would be followed. Her brain raced, trying to think of some way to save the situation.

Down the passage they pelted, making for the main stairway in the front of the building.

Douglas Drake gave Sylvia a side-glance. For a moment a faint smile illuminated his pale features.

"So you're my kid cousin, eh?" he asked. "Gosh, what an introduction! Been looking for you for years, and now we meet when I'm being chased by the police."

Sylvia gazed back at him, unable to speak for the emotions that were surging through her.

"Congratulations on winning the first part of the championship," Douglas went on quickly. "Gosh, but you've been lucky, from what Madame Marie has told me. I've a lot to tell you, Sylvia—you're going to get the biggest surprise of your life. If I can only dodge that blessed gendarme—"

"Oh, we must—we must dodge him! You mustn't be captured!" Sylvia cried. "Doreen—"

She broke off, staring.

They had reached the main hall now. Against the wall stood a big hat-stand, its pegs filled with hats and

(Please turn to the back page.)

When Pat brought Good Luck



By ELIZABETH
CHESTER

TROUBLE AT THE AERODROME

"AM I the luckiest girl in the world?" Pat Lovell asked herself, as she stepped from a taxicab into the muddy aerodrome roadway, just when the first tinge of dawn was breaking the blackness of the cold night.

Most people would have answered "no." Those few of England's millions who were not snugly asleep in warm beds would certainly have answered "no," for it was a cold morning, and Pat had been roused by her alarm clock from a deep sleep. The water at home had been cold; she had had to cook her own hasty breakfast, and gulp scalding tea to be at this aerodrome on time. Yet Pat thought herself lucky.

Pat Lovell, girl reporter on the staff of the "Midshire Gazette," was so keen on her job that she loved every minute of it. And she really did think that she was lucky to have been chosen to witness Chris Linmore's take-off for a record-breaking flight to the newly built aerodrome at Tariza in the Near East.

Chris Linmore was a girl pilot who had recently become "news," so, of course, when it was known that she was starting her flight from a Midshire aerodrome, Pat's editor had wanted a report of the take-off, and if possible an interview with Chris.

As the take-off was at daybreak, Pat had had to arise early, and now she was breathing relief that she had heard the alarm, and not just slept on until she awoke to read all about the take-off in some rival paper.

Already a crowd was out on the aerodrome, where the machine was being wheeled from a hangar. There were flares and bright lights, amongst which the signal light of the aerodrome flicked its messages ceaselessly.

Over her arm Pat carried a band-box, and in it was a flying helmet, which she had had sent to the office by the stores. It was of the kind worn by Chris, so that a write-up of it would interest the readers of the woman's page. But the more important reason for Pat's ordering it was that she thought the band-box, with helmet inside, might gain her entry to Chris' room at the aerodrome hotel.

She walked first across the grass towards the machine, and saw that there were other reporters and some

photographers present, but no one who could have been Chris Linmore.

It was obvious that Chris was still in her hotel—perhaps having breakfast, so to the hotel Chris hurried, noting the position of a room on the second floor where a light shone.

Just in case she should not be allowed to go up, it was well to know roughly where Chris' room was, in case she managed to steal up; so Pat made a mental note that it was on the second floor, to the extreme right of the building as one entered the door.

By ill-luck Pat trod in a puddle. Gasping at the coldness and unpleasantness of the water that had inundated her shoe, she stood on the other foot, leaned against the wall, and remedied matters.

As she shook the water from her shoe, she saw a man in macintosh and cap hurry down the steps of the hotel, followed by a woman who called him softly.

"Pilots?" Pat asked herself eagerly. She had made a study of the photographs of well-known pilots so that if any were present at the take-off she could mention them by name in her report, and perhaps interview them.

As the man in the macintosh turned, Pat recognised him—Oliver Hyrel, well-known record-breaking pilot.

"Did you get it?" he asked the woman sharply, turning.

"Yes—if this is it," she replied, in a somewhat shaky tone. "It was in her bag."

Pat watched, and saw the man take something small, and examine it, a grim smile on his face.

"That's it," he said. "You're a clever woman, Barbara, and I shan't forget this, my dear. Superstitious people deserve their fate—"

Pat Lovell adored her job, because it took her to so many places—to see so many exciting people. But when she went to the aerodrome to see the girl flyer start on her record-breaking flight, she little dreamed that she herself would be sharing the thrills.

And so saying, he tossed the small thing he held in his hand as far away as he could, flinging it into the mud.

"She won't find it?" the woman asked.

"Who'll look there?" he shrugged. "Come on! That'll be the final blow."

Pat had put on her shoe, and as her foot touched ground, it made noise enough to cause the man to turn. Seeing her, he gave a violent start, made a movement as though to approach her, and then, muttering to the woman, turned away.

Aware that he was still glancing towards her, Pat walked towards the hotel, taking a path that led away from the spot where the small object had been thrown. When she reached the hotel steps, however, she looked back. The pilot, evidently assured that she was not intending to pick up that object, or that she had noticed its being thrown, walked on, talking to the woman.

Pat hesitated, turned back, and having noted where the thing had fallen, went straight to the spot and picked it up.

It was a tiny black cat, a mascot of the type that is sold in thousands, and often used as charms, or as gifts in Christmas crackers. Quite obviously it was someone's mascot, and Pat's heart jumped as the obvious solution flashed into her mind.

"Chris Linmore's mascot?" she asked herself.

If someone had taken and thrown away Chris Linmore's mascot it was a serious matter, for many pilots are superstitious, and the loss of a mascot might prove unnerving. It would at least rob Chris of confidence.

Recalling the man's words, Pat felt sure that she must be right; and wiping the little mascot clear of mud, she resolved to make quite sure. Chris would know, and the return of the mascot would give her relief and joy.

But as Pat took a step forward, a hand dropped on her arm, and she was swung round.

"Oh!" she gasped, as she saw Oliver Hyrel.

"Yes, oh," he retorted, his face dark. "Give me that thing!"

Pat looked at him coolly.

"It's not yours. And, anyway, you threw it away."

"It's mine. I lent it to someone. If you heard my conversation you're a little eavesdropping spy," he said curtly. "Give that to me at once."

He twisted Pat's wrist so suddenly that she was unprepared, and the little

mascot dropped again to the mud. Even so, she might have been the quicker of the two, and picked it up, but the woman, Barbara, had drawn near. It was she who snatched the mascot.

"All right," said Pat, rubbing her wrist. "But that's made me think less of you than I did before. I'm going to see Miss Linmore, and I shall ask her about her mascot."

Oliver Hyrel looked at the band-box. "Miss Linmore is not seeing anyone. If you have a box to deliver, the page can take it. Or I'll take it—or you, Barbara," he added, and put his hand on the strap of the box.

Pat kept her grip on the box, convinced now that she had guessed right, that it was Chris Linmore's mascot he had taken. Otherwise, this bully would not be so agitated lest she told her story.

"Try to tug this box away," Pat said fiercely. "And I'll scream. I'll scream till my throat aches."

She opened her mouth, and gave just a slight touch of a scream—enough to make the pilot draw back as though the box had become red-hot.

"All right! Go and tell your story!" he snapped. "We'll deny it, you little idiot; and Chris Linmore will take my word against yours!"

He swung away, ran into the hotel, and came out just as Pat, at more moderate speed, walked in.

"Hey!" said a gruff voice; and a uniformed porter barred her way. "No admittance to see Miss Linmore! And that's what you want, isn't it?"

"Yes; but it's urgent. There's a new flying helmet in this box!" protested Pat. "You wouldn't let Miss Linmore fly to Tariza in a dirty helmet?" she added, in gentle reproach.

The porter eyed her keenly. "I can have that sent up," he said. "But you can't pass without a permit. And you haven't got one, nor a Press ticket."

Pat nearly jumped out of her skin with delight as she heard that. For, of course, she had a Press ticket.

"Oh, I haven't?" she asked, and whipped out her Press card, and held it an inch from his nose.

He looked at it, and from it to her; then, handing it back, he took her arm.

"This way!" he said. But it was to the main door he led her, and, before she had time to protest, she was pushed through the swing door.

"Outside!" said the porter, in triumph. "I thought I'd get the truth that way! And it's lucky Mr. Hyrel tipped me off about you!"

"Mr. Hyrel? But, listen," protested Pat, as the door was closed and latched—"listen!" She beat on the glass, and called loudly: "I know where Miss Linmore's lost mascot is! Tell her!"

But the porter stood back from the glass-panelled door, shook his head, and smiled blandly. Shaking her fist at him, Pat trotted down the steps and looked across at the crowd round the aeroplane, seen more clearly in the colour-splashed dawn sky.

"Smart Mr. Hyrel—eh?" Pat asked herself. "Well, I can be smart, too!"

Tipping her hat sideways, pulling hair into view, she ran as hard as she could for the tradesman's entrance, gasping as though she had run non-stop for miles.

The porter had barred her way; but Pat had an idea that if she pretended to be a panic-stricken messenger-girl who was terrified that she had arrived too late to deliver the helmet to Miss Linmore, the servants would take pity

on her, and show her up by the back staircase.

But, as Pat rushed round the corner of the hotel, another girl, head down, came from the other direction, running at speed. Pat swerved left; the other girl swerved the same way.

With a breath-taking crash, they collided, reeled, and then, staggering, lost their balance and collapsed on the muddy ground.

But Pat, at the moment of impact, had seen the other's face; and so great was the likeness to the fifty odd photographs in the folder at the "Gazette" office that she knew her at once.

"Miss Linmore!" Pat gasped.

THE RECORD-BREAKER'S TREACHERY

PAT LOVELL and Chris Linmore scrambled up almost at the same moment, each giving the other a helping hand, and together they offered apologies.

"My fault!" said Chris.

"Mine!" corrected Pat. "I've always wanted to meet you, and, by golly, we've met!"

Chris Linmore laughed, and then looked at the box which Pat was picking up.

"From the stores?"

"Yes; helmet I'm delivering to you," said Pat, wondering why the young girl pilot had rushed out from the back of the hotel at such speed.

"Oh, well, just dump it inside, will you?" said Chris Linmore; her face clouding. "I—" She looked at Pat, taking her arm. "Would you like to do me a kindness—run an errand? It's terribly important and urgent!"

"Why, of course!" said Pat.

Chris Linmore held out a white envelope.

"Then please give that to Commander Locksley. You'll know him; near the aeroplane out there; tall man, red-and-black scarf; limps."

Pat took the envelope and hesitated, having a hundred questions to ask Chris Linmore, and wondering if the time was ripe to mention that she was a reporter. There was the mascot, too.

"Hurry, please!" pleaded Chris Linmore.

Pat made up her mind to deliver the message first, and leave the other matters until later; but when she reached the edge of the flying field she heard the sound of a car engine, and, looking back, she saw Chris Linmore at the wheel of a small, red two-seater.

Seeing Pat hesitate, Chris signalled frantically, making it clear that the note really was urgent.

"Oh, well, but it's queer!" Pat told herself, as, dropping the box, she ran across the field. "Where's she going just when she's due off?"

Pat looked back again just as she reached the group on the flying field, and saw the small, red two-seater making for the gates of the aerodrome.

There was no mistaking Commander Locksley. He was far taller than the others, and the red-and-black scarf was well in evidence.

"A message from Miss Linmore," said Pat.

"Uh?" he said, surprised. He ripped open the envelope, and then goggled at the message, gasped, and turned to a man standing near. "Great Scott! She's backed out! She's not making the trip!"

Pat stood quite still. Of a sudden she knew that she should have guessed it without the need of this message; but none of the others had guessed it, apparently, for the news came as a

shattering blow, and everyone seemed to talk at once.

"But she can't do that—"

"It's all set—"

"Arrangements made—"

"Why's she backing out?"

Pat listened for the answer, and wished she could see the note. Reporters were hurrying forward, and what might have been a "scoop" was now news for all.

"Why? It's the end of her flying career if she does!" said the commander. "But why—I don't think I'm at liberty to say. But so that everyone shall not be disappointed, she suggests someone goes in her place."

"Who?" came a chorus.

"Oliver Hyrel. It was his record she was out to break; so, unless we can make her change her mind, he'll be the record holder still."

Pat Lovell, hearing that, could not hold back a sharp cry that brought everyone's eyes upon her.

"So that's it!" she exclaimed; and then, conscious of their stares, she turned and ran as hard as she could for the edge of the field.

Taxicabs were there waiting for the sightseers who would need them when the machine had taken off.

"Taxi—to the gates!" shouted Pat, scrambling inside the nearest one.

The driver leaped to the wheel, and drove fast as he could to the gates, from which other cars now came speeding to be in time for the take-off. At the gates Pat stopped him to ask the gateman in which direction the small, red car had gone.

"To the right—like a scared cat!" said the man.

"To the right, then," said Pat briskly, "and as fast as you like!"

Then, settling back in the seat, Pat thought hard. The stolen mascot; Hyrel's alarm lest she should tell Chris Linmore, and now Hyrel's flying off in place of Chris. To Pat it made a chain of evidence that pointed to one thing only. Oliver Hyrel had schemed to ruin Chris Linmore's flight; and if there were no other motive, there was the fact that it was his record she had set out to break.

"And if she doesn't make this trip her career's ended," Pat told herself. "That's true enough, unless she's got some very powerful reason for backing out."

But there was no sign of the red car on the long road ahead, and Pat's heart sank as she thought of Chris Linmore's determination and skill. If she were as good and as fast a car-driver as she was pilot, then in her small red car she would be travelling so speedily that this taxi could not catch her.

And but for the roundabout a mile down the road that would have been true. As Chris Linmore swept up to that roundabout another car shot across her path—the driver thinking that no traffic would be about at such an hour and short-cutting it.

By skilled control Chris Linmore swung her car aside; the other driver, tyre screaming, hurled his car round; but with a mighty crash, the rear off-side wheel of the small car met the rear mudguard and bumper of the other larger car.

Swerving, mudguard chafing the tyre, the large car went away, the driver looking back to make sure that his victim was not injured.

Three minutes later Pat, staring ahead, saw the small car at the roadside, rear wheel smashed, and Chris busy with a jack, trying to change it.

Pat was beside her in a moment.

"Let me help, please," she said. "I gave that message to the commander;

but he said it would be the end of your career—"

"End of my career or not," said Chris shakily, "this crash proves I was right. I had my fortune told last night by a gipsy woman. She predicted a crash, an accident—"

Pat stared at her in amazement. "And that's why you've abandoned the flight?" she asked. "Just because of a gipsy's stupid stories?"

Chris coloured slightly and replied with indignation.

"No, I'm not such a fool as that," she said. "Like you, I'd scoff at fortune-telling. But another of her predictions came true. I lost my lucky mascot—"

"Ah!" said Pat. "Well, I can tell you something about that. The mascot was stolen!"

She told Chris what had happened, and the girl pilot listened in amazement. But as Pat, in dismay, realised, she was incredulous.

"Oh, no, I think you're mistaken!" she said. "Oliver Hyrel's not that sort. He has been most concerned about me all along. He has a mascot like mine himself. He told me so yesterday, but said he was going to throw it away. That's what you saw him do."

Pat was not shaken in her belief. "All the same, I stick to my story," she said. "If he'd do that trick he'd just as likely fake the fortune-teller's prophecy. How do you know he didn't put her up to that yarn about your crashing?"

Chris Linmore frowned, and there was something like anger in her eyes.

"I don't know who you are," she said, "nor why you seem to have such a dead set against Oliver. He's been a sportsman all through; he's helped me almost more than anyone else to plan this flight. Even though he couldn't get financial backing himself, he wasn't bitter and jealous as some men might have been, not even though holding that record means so much to him. You've no right to suggest such evil motives without reason. You'll say next that he planned my mother's illness—and, if you must know, that's why I'm going off in such a hurry!"

"Oh!" said Pat, taken aback. "I'm sorry. I didn't know."

"And I didn't know until I had this urgent call. I knew mother was a little qualmy about this trip, but she was brave. Now that she has collapsed, do you think I can go, knowing that a crash has been foretold, that my mascot has been lost?" Chris spoke with low, fierce intensity. "And, besides, that gipsy woman foretold my mother's illness! Remember, she didn't know my name, that I'm a pilot, or anything about me."

"I—I see," said Pat, not knowing what else to say.

"Then perhaps you'll help me change this wheel?" said Chris, tossing her white helmet and macintosh into the car. "And you, too?" she added to the taxi-driver.

Pat, thinking hard the while, gave a hand, and noted the number of the small car, jotting it down in her short-hand notebook. For although it seemed that she was convinced that she had been wrongly suspicious of Oliver Hyrel, Pat's suspicions of him were growing stronger.

How easy to bribe a fortune-teller to tell a "fortune," how easy to predict the loss of the mascot he intended to steal, and a crash—which was not to happen, since she would not fly! But the illness of Chris' mother. That had been predicted too! The fortune-teller could not have known that.

The wheel was changed, and Chris,

wiping her hands on cotton-waste, offered some to Pat.

"You've been very sweet helping me," she said. "Thanks awfully. If I can help you at any time—"

Pat smiled faintly.

"You've helped me a lot. I'm a reporter on the 'Midshire Gazette,'" she said. "And all this will make good copy for the paper. Don't think me mean; it's my job. All I would really like to know now is how you got the message about your mother? One has to mention these things."

Chris looked at her intently, with some signs of being angry, and then she smiled.

"You deserve to get on," she said. "And I hope you do. Yes, I'll tell you. I had a phone call from a neighbour of mother—but don't ask for mother's phone number or address. No newspaper is going to worry her."

"All right; I won't ask it," said Pat. Chris climbed into her car and started the engine.

wanted for the record flight from the aerodrome."

"Papers to read on the way?" asked the man, surprised.

"No; that little mascot on the card; little black cat, price sixpence," said Pat.

And, showing her Press card, she left him in cheerful mood, feeling that he had played some part in breaking a flying record and that he might even see his name in the paper.

Arrived at the aerodrome, Pat saw that the machine had not taken off, that the crowd had increased, and that every preparation for the flight was being made.

There were people entering and leaving the hotel, and this time she managed to enter unobserved, for the porter was busy on the telephone and the doors were wide.

Pat ran up to the second floor, found a chambermaid, and asked for Miss Linmore's room, only to be told that she was gone. But, showing the mascot—



"A message from Miss Linmore," said Pat, as she handed over the letter. Commander Locksley read it and then gasped. "Great Scott! She's not making the trip!" he exclaimed. The girl pilot had backed out.

"One thing more, though," said Pat, as Chris engaged gear. "I know I oughtn't to offer advice, but still, if I were you I'd stop at the first phone box you can find and telephone your mother."

"Why?" "She'll think you've flown off perhaps. If she hears your voice she'll be relieved and happy."

Chris thanked her for what seemed an excellent idea, and did not guess the real reason why Pat had suggested that call; but Pat, watching her go, nodded to herself.

"And when you do put that call through you'll have the shock of your life," she told herself grimly. "I'll bet anything your mother hasn't collapsed and that that call was just a clever trick of Oliver Hyrel's."

She turned to the taxicab, which still stood waiting.

"The nearest shops—quickly as you can!" she said.

Three minutes later Pat jumped from the taxicab, ran along the line of closed shops, and halted outside a stationer's. The shop was shut, but she hammered on the door, until at last a man looked out of the window.

"Urgent!" said Pat. "Something

removed from the card—Pat impressed the girl that she had a reason to go to the room, for the loss of that mascot had been reported to the chambermaid, who herself had spent several minutes hunting for it.

On the bed lay Chris' overalls, flying helmet, and thick flying coat, goggles, and sponge bag in which she had packed a few necessities.

"When is the aeroplane taking off, have you heard?" Pat asked the chambermaid, as she put down the mascot on the table.

"Fifteen minutes, they say. Mr. Hyrel's flying it. I do think it'll be a disappointment."

Pat, agreeing, followed the girl to the door, into the corridor, thanked her, and made as though for the stairs; but as soon as the chambermaid had turned the corner, Pat slipped back to the girl pilot's room.

There, whipping off her own coat and frock, she stepped into the overalls, put on the helmet, and wrapped the coat about her. Then she tied the bright red scarf that was Chris' constant flying companion, and put the little mascot in the flying-coat pocket.

Next, she whipped the receiver off the telephone.

"Hallo! Porter?" she asked. "Get me my mother on the telephone, please, quickly—"

"Miss Linmore? I thought you'd left! Yes, miss, certainly. Kingsworth something or other, wasn't it?"

"Yes," said Pat daringly. "My memory's gone wagga—you must have a note of the number somewhere. Call me back, please."

Pat waited, shaking with excitement; and as the phone bell rang, she gave a violent start. Snatching off the receiver, she heard a shaky voice.

"Hallo, hallo! Yes?"

"Mrs. Linmore?"

"Has anything happened? Oh, don't say that—"

"Nothing has happened, except that Chris has received a telephone call to say that you collapsed. Did you send one?"

"Why, no, of course not. I wouldn't do anything to stand in her light, and that would be untrue. I haven't collapsed. What a thing to say!"

Pat assured her that Chris was well; then, calling the porter, asked to be put through to the police station. Remembering writing a report how a criminal had been stopped on the road, Pat gave the police another similar task. Describing the red car, and giving the number, she explained the urgency, and that Chris was to phone the Kingsworth number at once. As Chris would be driving along the Kingsworth road, the police task would be easy.

But—could Chris get back in time? That was the problem—and that was why Pat had put on the flying kit. With a large handkerchief concealing her face, Pat scurried downstairs, dropping the goggles half over her eyes.

"Chris Linmore!" she heard amazed voices exclaim.

Over the aerodrome Pat ran. Reporters and photographers were around the machine, the door of which was open, a small ladder leading to the cockpit. At the foot, posing, was Oliver Hyrel.

Pat rushed through the crowd too quickly for anyone to see her face, mounted the ladder, and closed the door, holding it grimly.

A roar came from the crowd; Oliver Hyrel wheeled, white-faced; Commander Locksley moved forward.

"It's Chris! She's making it!"

"Good girl!"

Spontaneous cheers rose, and Hyrel jumped for the door to tug it open; but Pat, stooping so that her face should not be seen, clung to the handle with all her strength. After a moment Hyrel let go, realising that his behaviour would seem peculiar, perhaps suspicious.

He stepped back, baffled, puzzled, and, as his expression showed Pat when she peeped out, alarmed. There was good reason for his looking alarmed now that the young "air-woman" had returned.

Pat, however, had achieved her object. Oliver Hyrel had not taken off!

But there was a shock for Pat, too, in this moment of triumph; for a voice shouted "contact," a mechanic standing on the off-side plane put a hand through the window, and next moment, as another mechanic swung the propeller, the engine roared.

A cheer came from the crowd, and Pat, white as death, felt her heart sink down to her boots. For the engine was roaring, and how to stop it she did not know. Just as though the machine was about to take off, the crowd fell back, making a wide avenue, and everywhere Press photographers jumped about with cameras.

The sun was well up; the sky was bright and clear, and the machine was headed for its take-off. A wide-open

throttle, removal of the chocks—and away it would go.

Pat put her hand to the door, drew it back, held it tentatively over the switches and controls.

The mechanic who had switched on, now put his arm through and moved a lever that made the engine's roar increase. He moved it the other way, and the sound died. Then he left it half-way, gave a grin and a salute, and jumped down.

"O.K.!" he said.

Men held the wings; the chocks were removed, and Commander Locksley held up a handkerchief to Pat, then lowered it—the signal to start.

Pat felt the machine quiver, and the roar of the engine was deafening. There was only one thing Pat knew about aeroplanes—that the faster the engine ran the faster the aeroplane went. And therefore, to avoid being taken up with it, she had to move that lever that the mechanic had moved; had to make the engine's roar a mere rumble.

But which way? Pat touched it, moved it. A mighty roar came from the engine, and the machine moved forward. It seemed to race over the ground, and Pat saw the trees at the far end of the aerodrome grow larger and nearer. She had moved the lever the wrong way.

"Oh golly! Now for it! Oh golly!" she groaned.

A SCOOP FOR PAT

PAT touched the joystick, and the machine rocked, swerved, and swung towards the road, along which cars were moving. She could not hear the wild shouts of the crowd; but their alarm was as nothing to hers.

It was natural that the unexpected forward movement should have paralysed Pat momentarily; but now, with danger so close, she calmed herself.

Since moving the lever one way had set the engine roaring, she told herself, then she should move it the other. She moved it back, and the engine was lulled, although the machine tipped in an unpleasant manner.

Slowing, it still ran towards the road, and Pat held her breath as she saw a small red car swing through the entrance gate and arrive with a roar of fast-moving engine.

Chris Linmore had arrived! Running the car on to the grass Chris jumped out, and the mere fact that she now wore overalls was enough proof that she intended to fly.

Pat hurled open the cabin door, jumped, slipped, rolled over and picked herself up.

"THE WORST CAPTAIN AT CLIFF HOUSE!"

You'll meet her in conflict with Barbara Redfern & Co., those world-famous chums of Cliff House School, in Hilda Richards' superb story in this week's issue of

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"I wasn't trying to fly; it just happened! I—I was keeping things going until you came," she said.

Chris smiled, and pressed her arm.

"You're a brick! You were right all along. I see it now. Mother's quite well—eager for me to go. That fortune telling was a fake. But it made me believe it when I heard about mother—"

The crowd was scurrying up now, and Pat whipped off her helmet and coat, pressing them on to Chris Linmore.

"I'd better go before the crowd gets me," said Pat anxiously. "I've broken two hundred flying regulations, I'm sure; and I didn't mean to do anything but sit in the machine."

"I'll hold the crowd—get your own things on. I'll keep back my start until you're there," said Chris.

She ran to the crowd, which was prepared to think her the girl who had flown the machine; and Pat, thus released, fled into the hotel, up to Chris' room, and changed into her own things.

When she reached the flying field again she passed Oliver Hyrel, his ears burning, his head down. He gave her a look in passing and paused.

"So you're responsible for all this?" he demanded.

"Not I—you!" said Pat evenly. "If I hadn't got into the machine when I did, you'd have been on your way by now, I suppose?"

"I certainly would have—"

"Then I did the right thing," said Pat, and hurried on to where Chris was speaking into a microphone, and smiling at photographers.

"I've only one touch of alarm," said Chris. "I've lost my mascot, and that means a lot to flying people—"

Pat signalled to her, patting her pocket and pointing. Understanding, although surprised, Chris groped in her pockets, found the mascot, and with a cry of delight pulled it out.

"I haven't lost it—it's been found!" she exclaimed, her eyes sparkling. "And that's a good omen!"

Pat smiled to herself; for so far as she could see it was the confidence a mascot instilled that mattered, and if this little black cat was not Chris' own, it was a twin.

Pat Lovell was the person whose hand Chris shook last as she climbed into the cockpit.

"Thanks a thousand times," she said gratefully. "And you shall have the best story of all, and telegrams when I land. You deserve it, you; you alone have made it possible. Good-bye!"

"Au revoir!" said Pat. "And happy landings!"

Then off went the gallant little machine, with Chris Linmore handling it perfectly. It grew smaller, smaller, until at last Pat could not see it at all; Chris Linmore was on her way.

IT was a splendid account Pat wrote of the take-off, but for fear of libelling Hyrel, his part was not mentioned, although the loss of the mascot was, and the dramatic summoning back of Chris—a report the "Gazette" alone was able to publish in full detail.

True to her word, Chris sent telegrams, exclusive to the "Gazette"—and Pat, too, sent a telegram the moment she heard that Chris had landed at her destination, in two hours less than Oliver Hyrel's record for the flight!

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

There will be another equally delightful story about Pat Lovell, dauntless girl reporter, in next Friday's **GIRLS' CRYSTAL**. Make sure you don't miss it—it is a brilliant story by a brilliant author!

HER UNKNOWN ENEMY AT School



By
GAIL
WESTERN

STEPHANIE STIRS UP TROUBLE

OLIVE FRENCH and Letty Johnson, of St. Kit's School, were highly excited; for elections for Form Captain were due to take place—and Olive was a candidate.

Then they met Jess Grant, an orphan. She was expecting to meet a Miss Dalton, who had befriended her; but Miss Dalton had vanished, and Jess was now homeless.

The chums discovered that Miss Dalton had arranged for Jess to go to St. Kit's. They found her luggage, and took the new girl to school.

Jess was nearly forgotten in the thrill of the election, but it was her deciding vote that made Olive captain. This infuriated Stephanie Warner, the unsuccessful candidate.

Olive, as captain, started a Form Sports Fund. Everyone contributed, except Jess—Miss Dalton having sent her no money. Then Olive received a great shock.

The money vanished from the cash-box, though only she, Letty, and Jess had known where the key was kept. Stephanie Warner suggested that Jess was the thief, but Olive and Letty could not believe it. They wondered if Jess had some unknown enemy at St. Kit's.

Going into the deserted class-room, before lessons, they had another shock. On the blackboard was chalked an anonymous message, saying that the missing money would be found in Jess' luggage!

IN blank amazement Olive and Letty stared at that sensational message on the blackboard.

Who could have written it? And how had the unknown person gained entrance to the class-room? It was always kept locked when not in use, and Olive had only just obtained the key from the matron.

"It's a knock-out!" Olive declared, turning to her fat chum. "It looks as if you're right, Letty. Jess must have an unknown enemy in the school."

"Unknown, you call her!" Letty gave a grim laugh. "I'm pretty certain I know who she is—that cat Stephanie!"

But Olive shook her head.

"I can't believe it, Letty. Stephanie is spiteful, and it's true she's got her knife into Jess, but she'd never do a rotten thing like this. Anyway, we'd better not let anyone else see this message," Olive added. "You know what chumps some of the girls are. Why, some of them might really believe what it says."

"Too true, old scout," nodded Letty.

It was characteristic of them both that never for a moment did they doubt the new girl's honesty. They liked her and had implicit faith in her, and having given her their friendship, they meant to stand by her through thick and thin.

They looked around for a duster to wipe off the insulting message, but even as Olive found one and turned back to the blackboard there came a rush of feet and the door burst open.

The rest of the Fourth had arrived for lessons. It was plain from their flushed cheeks that they had heard the news. Excitedly they hailed their Form captain.

"Is it true what Stephanie says?"

"Has someone really pinched our cash?"

Olive did not reply. She was frantically scrubbing at the blackboard. Most of the girls thought nothing of this. They thought Olive was cleaning the board in readiness for lessons, but Stephanie quickly noticed Olive's agitation, and her gaze went suspiciously to the board.

"Hallo, what are you up to?" she

Loyally Olive and Letty had stood by the mysterious new girl, determined to find out who was her secret enemy at school. But now it looked as though they had been deceived—that Jess Grant was not the girl she pretended to be!

demanded. "What's that you're—Why, it's something about Jess Grant!"

As she caught sight of the new girl's name chalked there she darted forward but Olive was too quick for her. Before she could read the rest of the message the Form captain had smudged it with a desperate sweep of the duster.

Stephanie glared angrily.

"What's the big idea?" she snapped. "Why were you scared to let me read it? What did it say?"

"Nothing that concerns you," retorted Olive; but her rival refused to let the matter drop.

"I don't know so much about that," she cried. "If you ask me, it's jolly suspicious. I believe you're trying to shield that precious pal of yours."

"Rubbish!" retorted Olive.

"It isn't rubbish! If you've got nothing to hide, why are you so secretive? Come on, tell us what was written there!"

"Yes, come on, Olive!"

"Don't be mean!"

Olive flushed as the rest of the Form crowded curiously around.

"If you must know," she said reluctantly, "what I rubbed out was a beastly anonymous message about Jess Grant!"

"An anonymous message—about the new girl?"

"But what did it say?"

"And who could have written it?"

It was Letty who answered that last question. Her cheeks aglow with indignation, she glowered at Stephanie.

"Better ask her," she snapped. "She's the only one here who's got a down on Jess!"

A startled gasp arose, and Stephanie went white with rage as she found everyone looking at her.

"How dare you!" she gasped, striding up to Letty as if she intended to strike her. "If I've got anything to say, I say it to a person's face. I don't go in for anonymous messages. You've no right to say such a thing."

"Sorry," muttered Letty, realising she had gone too far.

Stephanie tossed her blonde head.

"So you ought to be," she said, with a sniff. "But it's that interloper Jess Grant who's really to blame. It's she who's been putting these ideas into your head. If you ask me—"

She broke off, and they all turned as they realised that the girl under discussion had entered the class-room. There was a sparkle in Jess' eyes, and excitedly she was flourishing a pound-note above her head.

"Hallo," exclaimed Olive, "who's the fairy godmother?"

Jess shook her head. "I don't know, though I suppose it must have been Miss Dalton. I found this when I was unpacking. It was tucked in the pocket of my blazer. Oh, isn't it a bit of luck! Now I can pay you my sub—"

Her voice trailed away and she swung round in bewilderment, for from Stephanie had come an unpleasant snigger.

"What's the joke?" asked Jess.

Stephanie patted her blonde waves with a disdainful hand.

"Joke?" she drawled. "Well, I should hardly call it a joke. But it certainly is lucky. Yesterday you were broke, and now you're flush—and in the meanwhile the Form Fund has gone astray!" She chuckled again, and gazed at the staring Jess in mock inquiry. "I suppose you only found one note—not five?" she asked.

For a moment there was a horrified hush. There could be no mistaking the significance of Stephanie's words. But Jess seemed too dazed to reply. Her face white, her lips quivering, she stood there. It was Olive who sprang to her rescue.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself, Stephanie!" she gasped. "You've no right to say such things."

Stephanie scowled.

"I'll say what I like!" she retorted.

"Not while I'm Form captain!" flashed Olive. She looked stormily at the rest of the Form. "Surely you chumps don't think the same as Stephanie?" she cried. "Why, it's absurd, and jolly unsporting into the bargain! Stephanie was quick enough to take Letty up when she accused her, but now she flings out wild accusations herself. It's a shame! There's not an atom of evidence against Jess. There's no more reason to suppose she took the money than to suppose I did!"

"Hear, hear!" echoed Letty, and most of the girls looked uncomfortable. Plain it was that their Form captain's spirited defence had impressed them. But Stephanie only gave another disdainful toss of her head.

"I don't care tuppence what the rest of the Form thinks," she snapped. "I still say it's jolly queer. What's more—"

She broke off, for at that moment an irate voice came from the doorway.

"Why aren't you girls at your desks? Go to your places at once, and—Olive, why aren't my books placed out for me?"

It was Miss Charters, their fussy, fidgety Form-mistress, and the Fourth Formers scattered in confusion. Only Jess, uncertain where to sit, stood her ground. Miss Charters' frown of annoyance disappeared as she noticed the new girl.

"Ah, you must be Jess Grant!" she said, with a smile. "I am pleased to meet you, Jess. I hope you will quickly make friends with everyone here."

"I—I hope so, too," stammered Jess, though not too confidently.

The Form-mistress pointed to a vacant desk between Stephanie and Iris Watts.

"Perhaps you'd like to sit there," she said.

Gathering up her books, Jess obediently made for the empty desk. Both Stephanie and Iris scowled, and hardly had lessons started than Stephanie got to her feet.

"Excuse me, Miss Charters," she said, "but do you mind if I move? It's very stuffy in this corner."

Unsuspectingly the mistress nodded. Stephanie, walking with exaggerated

care so as to avoid touching Jess, collected her possessions, and shifted her position. Hardly had she gone than Iris popped up from her seat.

"I'd like to move, too," she announced. "I don't know whether it's the radiator, or what it is, but it's very unpleasant sitting here."

But it wasn't at the radiator she looked, but at the new girl. Jess flushed, while Olive and Letty, guessing the motive behind this sudden desire to exchange desks, glared in helpless indignation. Miss Charters, however, guessed nothing of the undercurrent in the Form-room.

Rather curtly she nodded, and Iris also departed, leaving Jess conspicuously sitting there in the corner—alone!

THE NEW HOCKEY STAR

"SOMETHING'S got to be done about Stephanie. We can't have her upsetting the whole Form like this. If she isn't squashed, she'll turn more of the chumps against poor Jess."

It was Olive who spoke. It was morning break, and Jess having gone to collect some new school books she would need, the two chumps were walking thoughtfully up and down the gravelled quad.

Letty nodded. She felt as keenly about the unpleasant situation that had arisen as her chum.

"It's a jolly good beginning to the term—I don't think," she commented. "I only wish I knew who it was behind that anonymous message! If we could only find that out! Golly, an idea!"

Excitedly she broke into a run, heading for the class-room windows. Olive followed curiously.

"What is it?" she asked.

The fat girl, bent double, was peering down at the gravel beneath the windows.

"I've just thought how that wretch might have got into the room," she explained. "Through the window. They're never kept fastened, and—Yes, by gosh! Look—footprints!"

She pointed, and Olive drew in a sharp breath. Under the window were two deep shoe marks that looked as if they had been made by someone who had jumped down from the high sill.

"Good for you, Letty!" she cried, clapping her plump chum on the back. "But I wonder if there are any clues under our study window? Don't forget our door was locked, so whoever took the money may also have got in and out via the window."

"Golly, that's an idea!" whooped Letty, her cheeks aglow with excitement. "Come on, let's go and see!"

She went rushing round to the wing where the Fourth Form studies were situated. Olive, following more sedately, heard her chum give another triumphant whoop.

"Yes, there are footprints here, and I—My giddy aunt!" Letty finished with a startled gasp. "The writer of that anonymous message and the thief must be one and the same!"

"Wh-aa-t!"

Olive stared incredulously; but Letty, dropping to one knee beside the marks in the gravel, pointed to the star-shaped pattern left by the unknown's heels.

"It's true! I'm certain it is!" she panted. "The wretch wore rubbers on her heels, and the pattern's the same in both sets of prints!"

Wonderingly they looked at each other. The same thought was in both

their minds. Jess Grant had an unknown enemy in the school. The cash-box had not been robbed for the sake of the money it had contained, but in order to bring disgrace on the new girl!

"This proves it," declared Letty. "The whole thing was a frame-up—a trick to throw suspicion on poor Jess. Well, of all the despicable tricks!"

Olive nodded, her eyes full of bewilderment and anger.

"We'd better not mention this to Jess," she said. "The poor girl's worried enough as it is. We must keep this to ourselves. But, Letty"—her face becoming unusually grim, she caught the fat girl by the arm. "We've got to clear up this mystery. We've got to find out who this unknown enemy is!"

Letty's face was as determined as her own.

"You bet we have, old scout," she agreed.

Further talk was interrupted by the clanging of the school bell. It was time to resume lessons, and afterwards there was little time to investigate the mystery further, for it was a half-holiday, and the Fourth had arranged to play a practice hockey match.

Immediately dinner was over, Olive went to the Junior Common-room, and rallied the players.

"Come on, girls," she called. "No slacking. We'll have to find a really strong team if we're to beat Trilton College on Saturday."

Collecting their sticks, the Fourth Formers made for the door, but Jess Grant, who was sitting quietly by the window, reading, did not get up. Olive, crossing over to her, clapped her across the shoulders.

"Come on," she urged cheerily, "surely you play hockey?"

Jess nodded rather shyly.

"A bit," she admitted. "I used to turn out for the Secondary school at home."

"Good!" exclaimed Olive. "We can do with some new blood. What's your position?"

"Inside-right."

"Better than ever! We can do with a substitute for Stephanie. She's so unreliable. Anyway, you can show us what you can do this afternoon. Come along. It's Possibles against Probables, you know."

Jess smiled and walked with Olive across to the junior sports field.

The rest of the girls were in the pavilion, changing, when they arrived. At sight of Jess, Stephanie looked up with a scowl.

"Surely there are tons to choose from without picking her," she muttered.

Olive's lips set tightly. She had had more than enough of Stephanie's spiteful remarks.

"I happen to be captain this term—not you, Stephanie," she said cuttingly, "so please mind your own business."

Stephanie scowled.

"Well, as long as she isn't on my side," she growled.

"She isn't. She's playing against you; and I warn you, Stephanie, you'd better pull your socks up. Jess is hot stuff."

"Rather! She'll make you pant—take the waves out of your hair," declared Letty with a chuckle.

Stephanie's eyes glittered. As a rule she didn't take hockey very seriously. She only played because she liked to be in the limelight. But to-day she resolved to play the game of her life.

"I'll show up that cat," she told herself, as she groped in her locker for her hockey shoes. Then she uttered an

annoyed shout. "Here, who's been helping themselves to my spare shoes?" she demanded.

And she held up a pair of expensive walking shoes she always kept in the locker. The rest of the girls shook their heads.

"It certainly wasn't me," said Letty, with a grin. "I don't take nines!"

This raised a laugh, for Stephanie, for all her elegance, was noted for her big feet. Stephanie glared harder than ever.

"Well, someone has. When I put them away yesterday they were spick and span. But look at them now!"

And in disgust she brandished the shoes. They were certainly stained with mud and gravel. But it was not that which attracted Olive's attention. It was the fact that on the heels were rubbers.

"Just a tick," she said, and taking the shoes from her rival, she turned them soles uppermost. Next moment she caught in her breath, for, as she had half-expected, the rubber heels had in their centre a star. The same pattern as that left by Jess' unknown enemy! Sharply she looked at Stephanie. "Are you sure you haven't worn these at school?" she asked.

"Of course I haven't. They're brand-new. D'you think I'd be making all this fuss if I'd worn them?"

And snatching back the shoes, Stephanie turned irritably away. Olive and Letty exchanged wondering glances. If what Stephanie said was true, then this proved she couldn't be the anonymous message writer. The real culprit must have borrowed her shoes.

Thoughtfully Olive changed into her sports kit. She had the uncomfortable feeling that this strange mystery was going to deepen. At all costs Jess' unknown enemy must be unmasked. Until that had been done—

With an effort Olive smothered the uneasy fears that crowded in her mind, and picking up her hockey stick, she beckoned to the others.

"Come on, let's get started," she urged.

The two teams filed out and took up their positions on the field. Greta Williams, a Fifth Former, had volunteered to umpire. With a shrill blast of her whistle she set the game going.

Stephanie quickly got possession of the ball, but as she hared down the field with it, she got a shock. Suddenly a stick was thrust under hers, cleverly she was robbed of the ball, and, turning, she saw Jess Grant weaving her way through the halves, heading for goal.

"Pass—quick, Jess!"

It was Olive who shouted, and though Cecily Savage, the best back in the junior school, was boring down on her, the new girl did not get flurried. Calmly she gave the ball a tap; right at the end of Olive's stick it bounced.

Wham!

The Form captain took a quick bang at the goal, but she slightly misjudged it and the ball went over the net.

"Hard luck!" said Jess, as they both went running back.

Olive smiled at her.

"Rotten shot, you mean. But you did splendidly, Jess. Keep it up. I can see we've got a find in you."

The new girl flushed with pleasure, and she soon showed that that first perfect pass had been no fluke. Her control of the ball was amazing, and she had a turn of speed that left Stephanie standing.

But her first real chance came just before the end of the first half. Jess, who had run back to help defend a

strong attacking movement, suddenly saw the ball come volleying high over the heads of a group of players. Leaping up in the air, she stopped the ball with an upflung hand, and as it dropped to the ground, gave it a tap with her stick and went swooping forward.

Before the Possible forwards could get over the shock she was past them. The half-backs came rushing towards her, but skilfully Jess weaved her way through them.

The ball seemed to be tied to her stick. At dizzy speed she rushed it over the white line of the scoring circle, beating both the backs in turn. Then, as the goalie crouched in readiness, she shot.

Wham!

It was a terrific shot. The goalkeeper had no chance. Like a shot from a gun the white ball whizzed past her outflung hand, to thud against the back of the net.

"Oh, well played!"

"Ripping shot!"

There came involuntary shouts of admiration. And then, as the whistle

Olive nodded, and Jess clasped her hands in delight. But Stephanie, who overheard their conversation, now came striding forward, a frown on her face.

"But what about me?" she demanded. "I always play at inside right."

Olive shook her head regretfully.

"Sorry, Stephanie, but I'm afraid you'll have to stand down."

"Stand down!" Stephanie could hardly speak for indignation. Never had she felt so humiliated. "You mean you prefer her in the team to me!" she shrieked. "You're actually going to drop me for her—a girl who hasn't been at the school five minutes! A girl who's under a cloud! A girl who for all we know may be a thief!"

"That's not fair!" It was Jess herself who shouted the protest. "You've no right to keep calling me names. Even if I am poor, that's no reason why you should say I'm dishonest!"

"Hear, hear!"

"You shut up, Stephanie!"

"You ought to be jolly well ashamed of yourself!"



"You mean you prefer her in the team to me?" Stephanie shrieked. "A girl who hasn't been in the school five minutes. A girl who's under a cloud! Who may be a thief for all we know!" Jess flushed at these insults, but Olive was not altering her decision.

blew, both teams came surging forward, to gather around the new girl. Only Stephanie hung back. Jess' success made her more determined than ever to outshine her in the second half.

But it was a vain effort. There was no stopping Jess. She was a veritable wizard at dribbling, and her passes were something centre-forwards dream about.

Eventually the Probables won four goals to one, and of those four Jess scored three.

Breathless and flushed, Olive ran to congratulate her as the final whistle blew.

"If they were all like you at the Secondary school, you must have had a tip-top team!" she exclaimed.

Jess, her troubles forgotten, gazed at her with sparkling eyes.

"You really think I did well?" she asked.

"Rather!" Olive laughed. "You'll be in the team on Saturday, don't you worry!"

"You mean I'm to play for the Fourth—play against Trilton College?"

The cries came from all around, and Stephanie flushed with mortification. It was a new experience for her to find herself in a minority of one.

"All right, have it your own way!" she snapped. "But sooner or later you fools will learn sense; sooner or later you'll find out whether Olive's precious pal is really all she claims to be."

And, with a scornful toss of her head she strode away. An uncomfortable silence followed her departure; then, with a smile, Olive eased the tension.

"Don't let what Stephanie said worry you," she urged. "She's only mad because she's not playing on Saturday. Anyway, I mustn't stand gassing here. I've got to pop along to Stanley's to see about that new gear."

Stanley's was the local sports outfitters. As soon as she had changed, Olive beckoned to Letty, then turned to Jess.

"Would you like to come with us?" she asked. "It won't take us long to do our shopping, then we can go for a stroll."

But the new girl shook her head.

"Sorry; but I promised Miss Bramleigh I'd do a bit of private swotting this afternoon. You see, we didn't do much French, or any Latin at all, in my old school, so I'm miles behind the rest of you."

"O.K.! But don't overdo it," Olive said, with a smile, and she and Letty departed.

As the crow flies, St. Kit's was less than a mile from the village of Fenleigh, but it took the best part of an hour to walk there, for this was the heart of the Fen country, and the road twisted and turned to avoid the dreaded marshes.

Though Olive and Letty had done the walk scores of times, they never felt really at ease on that lonely road. The countryside was so desolate; so eerily still. The only signs of life were the mournfully shrilling curlews wheeling above the rustling bullrushes.

There were no houses—nothing but soggy fields, vast plantations of reeds, broad streams, and an occasional stone watch-tower—relics of the wars of past ages.

The chums were not sorry when the grey roofs of Fenleigh loomed into view, and the first thing they did when they reached the village was to pop into Mrs. Wiggs' tuckshop, and regale themselves with hot tea and some of her famous home-made cakes. Then they set out for Stanley's. Having done their business there, they were on the point of leaving, when Letty suddenly gave a gasp of surprise.

"Why, there's Jess!" she exclaimed. "Why, I thought she said she was going to do some swotting."

In the shop doorway the chums stood and stared at that slim figure on the opposite side of the street; then Olive grabbed the fat girl by the arm.

"Perhaps she's looking for us?" she suggested. "Hi, Jess!"

She called, but the other girl did not seem to hear. She went striding on, to disappear into a near-by jeweller's. Olive and Letty, hurrying after her, gave another astonished gasp, for the shop Jess had entered was terribly expensive. What could the new girl want in there?

Without intending to spy, they looked through the glass door. Their bewilderment increased, for Jess was examining a collection of handbags that were arranged on a stand on the counter. Olive gave an amazed whistle as the price-ticket caught her eye.

"Three pounds!" she exclaimed. "Surely Jess isn't going to buy one of those! Why, she's practically broke! Apart from that pound note she found this morning—"

She broke off, and an awful feeling of uneasiness mingled with her surprise, for not only had Jess selected one of the bags, but now she had produced a purse from her pocket.

Olive and Letty stood as if petrified. For from that purse Jess had taken a sheaf of pound notes, and, with a careless gesture, she tossed three of them down on the counter.

Olive fought hard to suppress the horrifying suspicion that suddenly flashed into her mind; but though she tried to smother it, she could not forget what that anonymous writer had chalked on the blackboard that morning—she could not forget what Stephanie had said.

INTO A TRAP!

THIS puts the tin hat on everything!" In consternation Letty gasped out the words. "We've been properly led up the garden!" she added, with a groan,

"Jess must have taken that money!"

"Oh, I can't believe it—I can't!"

There was a note of anguish in Olive's voice. She had taken a real liking to the new girl. Implicitly she had trusted her. But now—

Desperately she peered into the shop again, seized by the wild idea that the girl inside was not Jess Grant, after all. It was misty; they had not really seen her close to, so perhaps they had made a terrible mistake.

The glass door was steamy, and it was difficult to see clearly. Nevertheless, there could be no mistaking that slim figure in the school hat and blue raincoat.

Olive's face went white, and Letty, seeing how distressed she was, clapped her on the back in silent sympathy.

Then they both stiffened.

Her purchase tucked under her arm, Jess was making for the door. She did not see the two girls standing outside until she had actually opened the door; then she stopped dead, a startled gasp escaping her lips.

"Jess—" began Olive; but she got no time to finish, for the new girl let the door swing to, and darted back into the shop.

For a moment she stared frantically about her; then she made a dash for another door—one that gave access to a side street.

In blank dismay, the chums watched her disappear. Then Olive made as if to race to the corner, but Letty caught her by the arm.

"It's no use, old scout!" said the fat girl quietly. "That settles it! Let her go. She obviously doesn't want to explain."

Reluctantly Olive nodded. It seemed as if Letty were right.

"Come on! Let's get back to school!" urged Letty. "We'll be late for roll-call if we don't buck up."

In silence they made their way along the wide High Street. The mist was thicker than ever. Never had the road through the marshes seemed so desolate and so eerie. But neither Olive nor Letty had any thought for their surroundings. Both of them felt almost dazed by what had happened.

Wretchedly Olive sighed. Her mind was in a whirl. It was not only their discovery just now that worried her. It was the whole mystery that surrounded the new girl. Who was Miss Dalton, for instance? Why, after sending Jess to St. Kit's, had she failed to get into touch with her? And who was Jess' unknown enemy?

Olive gave another sigh, noticing that they had reached a little hump-backed bridge that spanned a dyke. As she stepped on to it she gave an excited cry.

"That looks like Jess ahead. Yes, it is! Well, I'm going to question her! Whether she wants to or not, she's got to explain! Come on!"

And, her lips setting determinedly, she broke into a run, hailing the dim-seen figure that was striding energetically up the road.

"Jess, just a minute, please! Jess!" The other girl turned and stopped. But, as Olive shouted again, she broke into a run, and went plunging down a narrow path through the rushes.

"Jess, come back! Don't be a chump! You'll run into trouble if you leave the road! The marshes are dangerous!"

There was alarm as well as wonderment in the Form captain's voice. But the other girl ignored the warning. Blindly she went charging on. Olive clutched at Letty's sleeve.

"We must go after her—bring her back!" she gasped. "Oh, the chump! She's asking for trouble! If she falls into one of those quagmires—"

Her only thought now the danger into which Jess was running, she went racing down the narrow path herself. Letty followed reluctantly. She knew how treacherous the Fens could be on a misty night.

But the fugitive did not stop. On she plunged, twisting and turning, her shoes squelching in the soggy ground. Then suddenly she took a wild, sideways leap. Jumping over a narrow dyke, she went haring across a rising strip of ground. Olive gave an amazed gasp.

"Why, she's heading for that old tower!" she exclaimed.

Through the mist could be seen one of the ancient stone towers that were a feature of this part of the Fens. Like some ghostly finger, it jutted above the reeds. The two chums stared in bewilderment as they saw Jess go running towards it.

Even as they pulled up and stared, the whirling mist swallowed up the other girl. Olive, indignation replacing her mystification, gave a grim snort.

"We've got her bottled up now!" she declared. "This time she'll have to face us! She'll have to explain what she's up to!"

And, resolved to secure an explanation at all costs, she led the way forward.

The black oaken door of the tower was ajar, and footprints in the mud proved clearly that Jess had entered it, so determinedly Olive strode through the arched entrance.

"Jess!" she shouted. "It's no use you trying to hide! Come on out!"

There came no reply. The tower was as quiet as a tomb, and as dark. Olive took another step forward, and shouted again. Eerily her voice came echoing back to her; from somewhere above her head something stirred. That was enough for her. She grabbed Letty by the arm.

"Come on!" she said, and half-led, half-dragged the reluctant Letty to the foot of the crumbling steps that led up to the top of the tower.

Blindly they groped their way upward. But they had ascended only three or four steps, when—

Bang!

The silence was shattered by a dull, thudding noise, followed by the clang of a heavy bolt being thrust home.

The two Fourth Formers swung round in alarm.

"Someone's shut the door!" Olive gasped. "It must have been Jess! She wasn't hiding upstairs at all. She was behind the door. Oh crumbs! She's locked us in!"

Frantically she went charging down the steps, to fling herself at the door and tug madly at the rusty iron handle. But the door refused to open. It had been bolted on the outside.

"Jess!" she shouted. "Jess! Don't be a rotter! Let us out—let us out!"

From outside came a shrill, malicious laugh, followed by squelching footsteps as the other girl went running back towards the path through the marshes.

"She means to leave us here!" Olive gasped. "Oh, but she can't! No one would be so mean! It'll be time for roll-call soon; and if we don't turn up— Jess! Jess!"

Again she shouted, but only the echoes of her own voice answered her. From outside came an ominous silence. With a groan of despair, Olive had to recognise the truth.

She and Letty were helpless prisoners! The girl they had befriended had no intention of coming back and releasing them!

What developments will follow in this grand school story now? You'll receive new surprises in next week's instalment. Order your copy of the **GIRLS' CRYSTAL** to-day!



Mystery ON THE NIGHT EXPRESS

By PETER LANGLEY

THE PROFESSOR VANISHES

"HALLO! Wonder what that girl's playing at?"

Noel Raymond, glancing up from an idle examination of the papers on the station bookstall, found his attention riveted on his solitary companion.

She was slim, dark-haired, and elusively attractive. To the casual onlooker she would have passed as a rather tired-looking girl engrossed in an illustrated magazine.

But Noel, with his trained observation, noticed something else.

The girl was tensely on the alert. Her slender hands trembled slightly as she gripped the magazine, and inserted between the printed pages, reflecting the stream of passengers hurrying to catch their trains, was a small handbag mirror.

The young detective was keenly interested. His own train—the night express for Glasgow—was due to leave in ten minutes; he had been feeling a trifle bored till this moment.

He realised that the girl was studying the stream of people, while anxious not to be seen herself. The concealed mirror was an old trick. Noel had used the device himself many a time.

He was turning over in his mind a dozen possible theories to account for the girl's curious action, when he saw her stiffen suddenly, almost dropping the magazine.

Noel turned quickly, observing a slight stir in the crowd.

A tall, distinguished-looking stranger was making his way through the crush, followed by a porter trundling an unusual amount of luggage.

The newcomer was of sufficiently striking aspect to cause passers-by to turn and stare after him.

His bushy red beard and flowing moustache alone were enough to rivet attention; his gold-rimmed pince-nez, inverness cape, and broad-brimmed black sombrero added to his unusual appearance.

He walked with a quick, jerky step, and turned every now and then to snap out some irritable remark to the breathless porter.

"Hurry, man! I can't afford to lose that train! There's a fortune at stake—a fortune, I tell you!"

Noel, a puzzled gleam in his eyes, was racking his memory. Where had he seen that striking figure before?

In a flash he recollected. He had come across a photograph in an illustrated paper some weeks ago.

"Professor Storrington, the renowned Egyptologist!" he breathed.

His interest quickened as he glanced at the white-faced girl. She had left the bookstall and was mingling unobtrusively with the crowd.

On a sudden impulse, Noel followed her—at the risk of missing his train.

But, to his surprise, the professor made towards the platform where the Glasgow express was waiting, and the girl followed like a shadow.

A station official hurried forward deferentially.

"Your private compartment is ready for you, professor. This way, if you please!"

He led the way to a first-class saloon coach, the window blinds of which were drawn.

The distinguished passenger's luggage was taken aboard, and the professor followed, jealously carrying a bulky leather portfolio. The door was locked behind him; then Noel saw the mystery girl detach herself from the crowd on the platform and hastily enter a third-class compartment in the adjoining coach.

The compartment was empty except for herself, and the girl hastily closed the door, sinking into a corner seat.

Noel whistled under his breath. There was a mystery here, unless he was very much mistaken; his detective instincts were fully aroused.

Lighting a cigarette, he waited, conscious of a curious thrill of expectancy.

His journey to the North might, after all, prove more interesting than he had anticipated.

The station official emerged, bidding the distinguished passenger a pleasant

Noel was amazed when he learnt that one of the passengers aboard the speeding Night Express had disappeared. But an even bigger shock was in store for him. The Mystery Girl he wanted to question also vanished!

journey. Noel observed that he locked the outer door of the coach.

A few minutes later the guard's shrill whistle rang through the station. Amid a deafening sound of escaping steam, a slamming of doors, and last-minute good-byes, the night express moved slowly out of the station.

At the last moment Noel sprang forward, and, jerking open the door of the third-class compartment, leaped in, with a murmured apology to the startled young passenger.

The girl stared at him almost resentfully as he sank into the corner seat opposite, and removed his hat, with a boyish smile.

"Gosh, I nearly missed it!" he declared. "You don't mind my intrudin'?" Rest of the train looks pretty full up."

He leaned back, taking consent for granted, and drew out his cigarette-case.

The girl had not spoken. She was sitting bolt upright, her face very pale, her hands nervously twisting a dainty lace handkerchief.

Noel watched her covertly as he struck a match. She was scared—he was certain of it—and there was a curious, almost desperate gleam in her dark eyes.

His mind was working swiftly. What was the reason for her agitation? Why had she trailed the renowned Egyptologist?

He determined to draw her into conversation.

"Mind my smoking?" he asked pleasantly.

The girl shook her head, murmuring some barely audible reply. Noel could see that she was watching the corridor. From where she sat she had a clear view of the door communicating with the private coach.

"We appear to have a distinguished passenger on board," he went on conversationally. "I'm almost certain that I recognised that fellow with the red beard, though I can't place him for the moment."

The girl stiffened slightly. "I'm afraid I don't know who you're talking about!" she replied coldly, and picked up her magazine.

Noel grinned faintly. "Snubbed!" he thought. "I suppose I asked for it. Dash it, though, I wish I knew what was in that girl's mind! She's a bundle of nerves."

After a while he rose to his feet and

strolled out into the corridor, ostensibly for a breath of fresh air. He stood with his back to the compartment, apparently staring out of the window, but actually he was watching the girl's reflection in the glass.

He saw her rise quickly and take down an attache-case from the rack. With a hurried glance over her shoulder, she opened it, taking out something that looked like a bunch of keys.

Just then the train gave a momentary lurch, and the lights were unexpectedly extinguished. Noel grabbed at the rail to support himself. There came several startled cries from adjoining compartments.

Someone bumped into Noel, with a murmured apology.

"I beg your pardon, sir!" remarked a pleasant voice. "I hope I didn't hurt you. I understand there has been some slight trouble on the line—owing to the recent storms. Ah—that's better!"

The lights flashed up. The tall, fair-haired young man who had collided with Noel, grinned at him in a friendly fashion. He was dressed in plus-fours and carried a suitcase.

"I say," he added, with sudden eagerness, "haven't I seen you before? I've got it! You're the detective Johnny who's so much in the papers—Noel Raymond!"

Noel admitted the fact; but at the moment he was not in the mood for the talkative stranger.

With some polite retort, he turned to re-enter his compartment, and then he halted, his eyes narrowing.

For the mysterious girl was no longer in her seat; the compartment was deserted!

Noel stared round sharply. She might easily have slipped past him in the darkness—but which way had she gone?

From where he stood, he could see the whole length of the corridor—but there was no one in sight.

To the surprise of the talkative stranger, who was obviously eager to make the acquaintance of the famous detective, Noel turned and strode quickly down the length of the coach, pausing to glance into each compartment.

But there was no sign of the mystery girl.

With a puzzled, rather uneasy frown, Noel returned to his compartment.

The young man in plus-fours had ensconced himself in a corner seat, putting his bag on the rack.

"Y'know," he remarked, "I've always hankered to be a detective—but I haven't got the brains. Must be a jolly exciting profession. I was reading about that last case of yours—"

Noel nodded a trifle impatiently. He crossed to the place where the girl had been sitting. Her attache-case was still on the rack and her magazine lay on the seat. Noel picked it up, casually turning the pages.

Then his eyes narrowed.

Scribbled in one of the margins was a jumble of apparently meaningless letters, but the young detective recognised it as a code!

The mystery surrounding the girl was deepening with every moment.

Noel sat down and studied the code, attempting without success to decipher it. Just then footsteps sounded in the corridor and a Pullman car attendant looked in.

"Did either of you gentlemen ring just now?" he asked.

"Not me," declared the young man. Noel shook his head.

The attendant hesitated.

"Then it must have been the gentleman in the reserved coach," he said.

"But he gave strict orders that he wasn't to be disturbed. I'd better see what he wants, though."

He stepped to the communicating door and knocked; there was no reply. He knocked more loudly and tried the handle; the door was unlocked and he pushed it open.

"Beg pardon, sir—" began the attendant, and broke off, a startled ejaculation escaping his lips.

Noel reached the corridor in a bound. "What is it?" he demanded.

"He—the gentleman's gone, sir!" "Gone?" echoed Noel incredulously.

His vague premonitions returning with a rush, he stepped into the reserved coach, followed by the attendant.

It was deserted—and in a state of confusion. The meal on the table was untouched, but a pair of gold-rimmed pince-nez lay near a pile of papers.

A suitcase lay open on the floor, its contents scattered.

"The other door's bolted, sir!" gasped the attendant.

"I know!" snapped Noel. "Better inform the guard; my name's Noel Raymond—I'm a detective."

The man scuttled away. Noel swiftly pulled up the blinds, examining the windows. They were all securely fastened—as was the outer door.

And the train was racing through the night at a speed of something like eighty miles an hour!

What did it mean? What could it mean?

Noel bent suddenly, picking up a small white object that lay on the floor. A low, significant whistle escaped his lips.

A few minutes later there came a sound of hurrying footsteps—and the attendant returned, followed by a white-faced, agitated guard.

"You're a detective, sir?" panted the latter.

"Yes," snapped Noel. "Any news?"

The guard gulped, regaining his breath.

"It's amazing, sir," he panted. "I've had the entire train searched, but—but he's not on board! The professor's vanished!"

Noel caught in his breath sharply, incredulously; his fingers closed on the dainty lace handkerchief he had picked up from the floor.

It was the handkerchief that had been carried by the mystery girl of the book-stall.

ANOTHER STRANGE DISAPPEARANCE

"WAIT a minute!" said Noel tersely. "This is utterly fantastic! At what speed is the train travelling, guard?"

"Close on eighty, sir," replied the official.

"And you say that Professor Storrington is not on board? Dash it all, man—think again! We've not stopped once since leaving London! He must be on the train!"

"But I tell you he isn't, sir!" protested the guard. "Do you think I wouldn't recognise him if I saw him? Why, he'd stand out in a thousand! I've questioned the attendants—and some of the passengers. No one has seen the professor since we started."

Noel paced the floor of the saloon, his keen eyes staring round him. Suddenly he halted.

"I suggest you have another search, guard," he said. "Question every passenger—and let me know the result."

The guard departed, followed by the attendant.

Noel closed the door, and lit a

cigarette; there was a rather grim expression in his blue eyes.

In a corner of the saloon was piled the professor's luggage and travelling-rugs.

Noel strolled across to the pile—and with a sudden movement snatched off one of the rugs.

There came a stifled cry.

"Come out of there, young lady!" snapped Noel.

Crouched in the corner, behind the luggage, was the mystery girl!

Her dark eyes were wide and terrified as she rose to her feet.

"What—what are you going to do?" she breathed.

"That depends," replied Noel grimly. "Sit down." Obediently she sank into a chair, her lips trembling. "Now," demanded Noel, "what are you doing in here—and what do you know about Professor Storrington's disappearance?"

"I don't know anything about it!" gasped the girl. "Honest I don't!"

Noel bit his lips, convinced in spite of himself by her tone and manner.

"You've not answered the first part of my question," he said. "What are you doing here in the reserved coach?"

The girl's lips tightened; she made no reply.

Noel glanced significantly at the open suitcase.

"It looks," he said grimly, "very much like attempted theft; if I wished I might arrest you on suspicion."

The girl shrank back, her face deathly pale.

"You could prove nothing," she replied unsteadily.

"I'm not so sure," Noel fixed her with his glance. "You admit coming in here to steal?"

"No! That—that's not true."

"But you opened that suitcase," persisted Noel, "with the keys I saw you take from your own case."

The girl caught in her breath.

"You don't understand!" she burst out. "Please—please let me go—"

She sprang to her feet, but Noel barred her way.

"Just a minute!" he said sternly.

"You must answer my questions first. If you're innocent, there's no need to be afraid. You say you didn't come in here to steal? Yet you seized your chance to slip in when the lights were accidentally extinguished. The door was unlocked?"

"Yes!" breathed the girl.

"And the professor?"

"I—I didn't see him; I swear he wasn't in here!"

"You know him by sight?"

The girl nodded, her hands clenched.

Noel regarded her in a puzzled fashion.

"I'm half-inclined to believe you—but I doubt if anyone else would. You realise that this is a very serious affair, young lady? A distinguished passenger has vanished from the train—his luggage appears to have been rifled—and I find you in the reserved coach. You must admit that your actions are suspicious, to say the least of it."

A stifled sob was torn from the girl's lips.

"You don't understand," she breathed. "You can't prove anything—and there's nothing I can tell you; nothing!"

With a sudden, unexpected movement she dived under his arm and raced out of the coach.

Noel made to follow her—and then halted, with a slight shrug.

The girl could not escape from the train; she would be safe enough, till they reached the first stop—and that would not be for half an hour or more.

Meanwhile the baffling mystery of

the professor's disappearance remained to be solved.

How had he vanished from the private saloon, with the windows shut and doors locked—excepting one door leading into the corridor? And if he had emerged from that door Noel would have seen him! As the guard had said, the professor was unmistakable!

A shower of sparks flew past the window as the express thundered on its journey to the North, its terrific speed unslackened.

A baffled expression in his eyes, Noel prowled round the saloon. He examined the professor's luggage—but it was impossible to say whether anything was missing.

Then he turned his attention to the papers on the table.

They were documents relating to certain excavations, written in the professor's own almost illegible handwriting.

Noel gave up the attempt to read them, and picked up the pair of gold-rimmed pince-nez.

They had surprisingly thick lenses, and had obviously been made for someone with very weak eyesight. Noel, looking through them, found that everything was blurred.

His expression of puzzlement deepened. Why had the professor removed his glasses? Obviously he would be almost helpless without them.

Noel tried them on; the clip on the nose was unusually tight—uncomfortably so. The glasses could hardly have fallen off accidentally.

Noel wrapped the pince-nez carefully in his handkerchief; he had a feeling that they might prove a valuable clue.

Finally he took from his pocket the magazine that the girl had been reading, and examined the curious code scribbled in the margin.

He felt convinced that it had some bearing on the mystery; that the girl knew more about the professor's disappearance than she would admit—though it was absurd to suspect her of having had any hand in it.

With more leisure to examine it, the young detective quickly discovered the simple key; every third and fourth letter was to be read—and the others ignored.

He jotted down the result of his discovery.

"Papers relating to Huntley Carver will. Urgent. Travelling 7.30 train."

Noel started. This was the 7.30 express; so the girl had known that the professor was travelling on the train—and had kept watch for him!

He glanced at the note again, his eyes narrowing.

"Huntley Carver?" he muttered. "Where have I heard that name before? Ye gods! That's the American millionaire who died recently, leaving a huge fortune."

He commenced to pace the apartment, his brow furrowed in thought.

Here was another link in the chain of mystery—if only he could connect it!

How was the will of an American millionaire associated with the disappearance of the eccentric Professor Storrington? And what part had been played by the mystery girl?

Noel's active brain endeavoured to sort out the puzzle. Apart from the girl's cryptic note, he possessed one slender clue. The professor's pince-nez

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Noel suddenly.

A startling, fantastic theory had flashed into his mind.

For a moment he was tempted to discard it as incredible—but the more his imagination played with it, the more likely it appeared.

Then abruptly he stiffened, spinning on his heel. From the direction of the corridor came the sound of a violent scuffle.

In one stride Noel reached the door, jerking it open; a surprising scene met his gaze.

The talkative young man in plus-fours was holding firmly to the collar of a pale-faced, rather scared-looking individual who wore a bowler hat and a black overcoat.

The stranger was struggling to free himself.

"What's wrong here?" snapped Noel.

The young man turned, still keeping a hold on his captive; he grinned broadly.

"I caught this fellow spying on you,

trifling mistake, and he fired me on the spot."

Noel's eyes narrowed. "How do you happen to be travelling on this train?" he demanded.

The valet shrugged deprecatingly. "I hoped, sir, that the professor might change his mind—and would require my assistance when he reached Glasgow."

The young man in plus-fours shook his head doubtfully.

"Sounds a tall story to me, Mr. Raymond," he muttered. "The fellow's up to no good."

Noel's mind was working swiftly. "Just a minute," he said. "Who was this nephew your master was expecting? You know him?"

"Not by sight, sir; his name is Eustace Carver, and he recently returned from abroad."

"Carver?" he ejaculated. "Any relation of Huntley Carver, the American millionaire?"



There came a stifled cry as Noel snatched off one of the rugs. "Come out of there, young lady!" he snapped.

Mr. Raymond," he declared. "The guard told me there'd been some trouble—and I thought I'd take precautions."

"Thanks," said Noel. He turned to the rather furtive-looking stranger, who was nervously adjusting his collar.

"What's the idea?" he asked.

"If—if you please, sir," gulped the man, "I wasn't doing any harm. I heard that something had happened to Professor Storrington, and I came along to offer my assistance."

"Who are you?" demanded Noel, regarding him keenly.

The other drew himself up with some dignity.

"I'm Professor Storrington's confidential valet, sir."

"The dickens you are!" ejaculated Noel in surprise. "Then how came it that you weren't travelling with your master?"

The valet coughed. "As a matter of fact, sir, the professor gave me notice yesterday, sir."

"Why?" demanded Noel.

The valet shrugged.

"The professor is a trifle—ahem—eccentric, sir. He is apt to fly into tempers over trifles. He was expecting a visitor—a nephew of his—and he seemed rather put out. I made some

"A distant relative, I believe, sir," replied the valet. "The professor was also related to the late Mr. Carver. He was on his way to Glasgow in connection with Mr. Carver's will. Unless the professor establishes his claim to-morrow I believe he loses his legacy."

Noel whistled softly. Here was yet another link to the chain—and it fitted in with his amazing theory.

"Just one more question," he said. "There's a young lady on the train—a slim, dark-haired girl. You don't happen to know her, by any chance?"

The valet looked up quickly, his eyes rather furtive.

"Yes, sir; that is Miss Joan Lester. She is the professor's late secretary. He fired her, I believe, for meddling with his private papers."

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Noel, under his breath. "All right—that's all I want to know. You can go back to your compartment."

"Thank you, sir."

The valet sidled away with obvious relief; Noel turned to the young man in plus-fours.

"Thanks for catching the fellow," he said. "You did me a good turn. You know what's happened, I suppose?"

The young man nodded eagerly. "This professor Johnny has vanished, hasn't he? It's as good as the pictures.

Do you think that valet chap had anything to do with it? Or the girl?"

Noel shrugged.

"It's possible; as a matter of fact, I've got a theory—and I may need your help."

"I say, sir—really?"

Noel nodded.

"I want you to keep an eye on the valet—while I find the girl and cross-question her. Let me know if the chap acts suspiciously in any way."

"Rely on me, sir! This is just the chance I've always wanted."

They parted then—Noel hurrying to find the guard.

That worried individual greeted him lugubriously.

"No sign of the professor, sir; it beats me! It's uncanny—that's what it is."

"Never mind that," put in Noel tersely. "There's a young lady on the train—a dark-haired, pale-faced girl. I want to question her. Do you happen to have seen her?"

The guard stared.

"I'll say I have, sir. She ran into me, just now, in the corridor. Seemed scared out of her wits. She was making towards the end of the train."

"Come on," said Noel. "Let's find her."

Together they hurried down the swaying corridor, staring into every compartment; but there was no sign of the girl.

They reached the luggage-van, and stared at each other blankly.

"She—she's gone, sir!" gasped the guard.

"Impossible!" exclaimed Noel.

A scared-looking attendant came hurrying up.

"If you please, sir—there's a door in one of the empty first-class compartments wide-open! I'm afraid there's been an accident."

His face paling, Noel reached up and pulled at the alarm-cord.

With a hissing and screeching, the express was brought to a standstill.

"Better search the track!" snapped the young detective.

He raced back along the corridor, discovering the empty first-class compartment, its door swinging wide.

With a swift glance round, Noel sprang out on to the track; he could hear the voices of the guard and the other officials as they ran along on the other side of the train.

Whipping out his torch, Noel approached the bushes that bordered the steep embankment. He was puzzled and uneasy—almost dreading what he might find, yet disinclined to believe that the mystery girl would have taken that reckless leap.

He bent over to examine the ground, oblivious of the shadowy figure that crept up behind him. Noel, hearing a faint sound, spun round—but too late to avoid the murderous blow aimed at his head.

Half-stunned, he crashed headlong into the bushes.

How long he lay there it was impossible to surmise; there was a vague, distant rumbling in his ears as he struggled dazedly to his feet.

Then a horrified groan escaped his lips as he saw the red tail-light of the express vanishing round a distant bend.

NOEL'S DRIVE AGAINST TIME.

FIVE minutes later Noel was running unsteadily along a lonely country road that skirted the embankment.

The only residence in sight appeared to be a solitary farmhouse. The young detective hammered at the door.

A surprised-looking farmer appeared, lantern in hand. He stared suspiciously at the dishevelled caller.

"Are you on the phone?" demanded Noel breathlessly.

"No, mister," rejoined the other, half closing the door.

"Where's the nearest call-box?" asked Noel.

"That be two miles away, mister—in the village."

Noel made a rapid calculation.

"How far are you from Eldington?" he asked, naming the station where the express would make its first stop.

"About fifteen miles, I reckon, mister."

"Well, I want a car," snapped Noel. "It's urgent. Know where I can hire one?"

He pulled out his card, revealing a glimpse of a well-filled wallet.

The farmer's expression changed.

"Well, mister," he replied cautiously. "I've got a car—a pretty good 'un—but I'm that bad with lumbago I can't get out—"

"I'll hire it!" snapped Noel. "Name your figure. This is my card; it's a police matter."

The farmer's eyes gleamed shrewdly. He named a figure, an exorbitant one—but Noel had no time for haggling.

A few minutes later he was at the wheel of the car, swerving out into the narrow country lane.

He realised that it would be a race against time. A glance at the map showed him that the railway wound on a devious course, avoiding the hills; by following the road he would gain an advantage of something like eight miles. But the train had the start—and it was travelling at over sixty miles an hour!

The wheels of the car screamed on the road as Noel pressed his foot on the accelerator—and kept it there.

The miles flashed past.

He came in sight of the railway track again—and a level-crossing! The gates were closed. From the distance came the warning scream of a train's whistle.

The night express must have been delayed on the line, for it was only just approaching round the distant bend.

Noel swerved the car to a stop a few feet from the crossing. He sprang out and hurled himself at the gate, vaulting on to the track.

A startled signalman advanced towards him, carrying a lantern.

"Here," he began, "look out! You can't—"

"That train must be stopped!" snapped Noel. "It's a matter of life and death!"

"You're crazy—" began the signalman.

Noel did not stop to argue. He snatched the lantern from the man's hand and, turning it to red, sprang on to the permanent way.

"Come back!" shouted the signalman hoarsely.

Noel stood his ground, waving the lantern above his head.

With a piercing whistle, the express train thundered towards him. The driver was craning out of his cab. There came a loud hiss as the brakes were applied. Slowly the great train came to a stop.

Noel raced towards it, encountering the driver and the guard.

The guard stared at him as though he were seeing a ghost.

"You, sir!" he gulped. "How—how—"

"No time to talk!" snapped Noel. "See to it that no passengers alight from the train; I'll hold you responsible!"

He raced down the length of the train and sprang into the luggage-van.

He glanced round him swiftly. If Joan Lester were still on the train, then she must be hidden somewhere, and what better hiding-place than the guard's van? In one corner of the van were several big packing-cases containing market produce. The boards on one of the cases appeared to have been tampered with.

Noel jerked them back, and a stifled ejaculation escaped his lips.

Lying huddled on a pile of straw was the mystery girl!

His face pale, the young detective bent over her. A sigh of relief escaped his lips, but his eyes glittered sternly.

"Drugged!" he breathed. "I might have guessed it!"

There came the sound of hurrying footsteps in the corridor; the door burst open to admit the guard, followed by the young man in plus-fours.

"Mr. Raymond!" exclaimed the young man in amazement. "What happened to you—"

He broke off, as he caught sight of the unconscious girl. His face paled. The guard gave a startled ejaculation.

"Then—you found her, sir."

"I found her," said Noel grimly. "It only remains to find Professor Storrington; I'm convinced that he's on the train somewhere." He turned to the young stranger. "Will you and the guard carry Miss Lester to the private saloon; also, I'd like the valet brought along there."

The young detective waited until his instructions had been carried out, then he made his way to a certain third-class compartment and cautiously looked through the glass door. The compartment was empty. Noel gave a sigh of satisfaction and, entering, he took down the suitcase that rested on the luggage rack. It was locked, but it did not take Noel long to open it.

"I thought so!" he ejaculated, as he ransacked the contents. Amongst them was an inverness cape and a false beard; also a sheaf of legal-looking documents. After studying them for a minute or two, Noel hurried along to the private saloon, to find that the girl was coming slowly round out of her swoon. Noel applied restoratives, and she opened her eyes dazedly.

"All right, Miss Lester," said Noel quietly. "Don't talk until you feel like it. I've got a little surprise for you."

He shut the door and turned to the guard, the valet and the young man in plus fours who stood at the far end of the saloon, talking in whispers.

"I'm going to try a little experiment," said Noel quietly. "In a moment I shall put out the light; no one must move. Don't be scared, Miss Lester—you'll be all right."

The girl stared at him dazedly.

Noel crossed to the switch, and the saloon was plunged into darkness.

"Wait!" he said. "When I give the signal, guard—you can switch on the light."

"Very good, sir."

There was a tense silence—broken only by the sound of the door opening and the sound of stealthy footsteps. Then again Noel's voice rang out.

"Now!" he snapped.

The guard switched on the light.

There came a faint scream from the girl—a startled shout from the valet.

Standing in the doorway, a menacing gleam in his eyes, was a tall, red-bearded figure in an inverness cape!

"The professor!" shouted the guard.

The bearded figure took a step forward.

"You scoundrel!" he exclaimed—and he pointed an accusing finger at the

young man in plus fours. "You thought to kidnap me, and get away with my fortune—but you were just a little too clever, Eustace Carver!"

The young man's face had turned a sickly white; his eyes goggling, he backed towards the door.

"It's impossible!" he gasped. "I shut you in a cellar in my London house—"

"I thought as much!" rapped the "professor," as he whipped off his beard and hat—revealing the stern features of Noel Raymond. "Hold him, guard! That's the idea!"

A pair of handcuffs snapped on the young man's wrists.

His face convulsed, he glared at Noel; there came a convulsive sob from the girl.

"It's all right, Miss Lester," said Noel gently. "You needn't explain. That's my job."

He turned to the amazed officials.

"Professor Storrington," he said dryly, "did not disappear from the train—because he never came on board! His place was taken by this young scoundrel, his nephew."

"Eustace Carver called on his uncle last night—and I fancy there was a quarrel. He attacked his uncle and locked him in a cellar."

"The quarrel concerned a fortune that had been left to the professor by a distant relative—to further his good works. In the event of the professor not claiming it by to-morrow, young Carver would inherit."

"I think that the professor's valet will confirm these details. I gathered the facts from what he told me and from certain other discoveries I made. The rest is surmise on my part—but can easily be checked."

"Carver realised that, in the event of the professor's disappearance, suspicion would fall on him—as the professor had visited his house."

"So he masqueraded as his uncle—who is a striking figure, and took his place on the express. Locked in the private saloon, he changed quickly into his own things and, aided by a momentary failure of the lights, slipped out into the corridor."

"It was cleverly done; but he had counted without the intervention of a certain young lady—the professor's late secretary—who had come on the train in the hope of discovering among the professor's papers something that would enable her to prove her innocence of a certain theft."

"I fancy that theft had been committed by young Carver—who must have stolen certain papers from his uncle, to gain a knowledge of the fortune."

"Realising too late that the girl might be dangerous, young Carver attacked her—and opened a door to suggest that she had leaped out on to the line."

The girl gave a little choking sob. "Mr. Raymond," she breathed, "how did you know all this?"

Noel smiled grimly.

"I suspected your motive," he said, "from the coded message scribbled in your magazine. I suspected that this young man was the trickster by a stupid slip he made. He forgot to hide the professor's pince-nez in his suitcase luggage, with the beard and cape."

"The pince-nez have a very powerful clip; on the bridge of young Carver's nose I saw a reddish mark—an indentation left by the pince-nez! Even the most cunning rogue is bound to make one mistake."

SOME days later Noel received a letter from Joan Lester—thanking him gratefully for what he had done,



FROM ONE GIRL TO ANOTHER

Cheery Chatter and Helpful Hints by Penelope

enough to have a new winter coat this year? There have been some beauties for schoolgirls in the winter Sales.

One I saw was trimmed round the neck, and down the front—in the smartest grown-up manner—with softest squirrel fur.

That one, I confess, was not cheap—for fur never is.

But it did make me think how easily you yourselves could make your own tweedy winter coat look like this little "model."

If you are quite wealthy, you could buy squirrel fur in the strip.

But if you're not—and that applies to most of us, doesn't it?—then what about buying some fur-cloth edging instead? It costs only

sixpence for half a yard, you know, and it looks so luxurious.

Two yards of this would make a lovely trimming to your coat going round the neck, down the front, and probably leaving over enough to make a trimming to your favourite little hat.



A GROWING QUESTION

There is often quite a great deal of discussion as to when a girl or boy stops growing.

Some say at eighteen, some say at twenty-one.

Actually there is no hard and fast rule, but, generally speaking, a girl does not grow after nineteen or twenty. But a boy will often continue to shoot up until he is twenty-three.

Also, you may be interested to know that girls grow most between the ages of eleven and fifteen.

So if you think yourself too tall at the moment, that should console you. It should also cheer you if you think you're on the short side, for there's lots of time yet.

Your own,

PENELOPE

HALLO, EVERYBODY!—I suppose you're all back at school now, wondering why multiple fractions were ever invented, and why Christmas doesn't come at least twice a year.

Are you managing to keep your diary—that is, if you had one given you at Christmas?

Year after year I've resolved to keep one, but have never managed to do so yet.

This year, if you please, I was presented with a five-year diary. The sight of so much blank paper—up to the year, 1943—so terrified me that I hid it away in a drawer, and I'm quite sure that I shall never look at it again.

WHEN SILENCE FALLS

Do you ever find that you sit around the fire in the evenings, all chatting gaily, when suddenly there is a hush, and everyone is quiet?

When this happens, there is a saying that the time is either twenty-past the hour, or twenty-to.

Once or twice I have actually noticed this happen at one of those times—but then, quite often, it wouldn't surprise me in the least if our family clock were wrong.

Anyhow, next time a lull like this occurs, whatever the time, here's a question to spring on the family.

Ask them which is the greatest waterfall in the world.

I expect they'll all hurl "Niagara" at you.

But surprisingly enough it isn't. In fact, there are eleven waterfalls that are actually bigger than Niagara. And by bigger, I mean higher.

You all know that the highest mountain in the world is Everest—but did you realise that the longest tunnel is through Ben Nevis, in Scotland—fifteen miles long? (It is actually a pipe-line for an electric scheme—not a train or passenger tunnel.)

Now here's a teaser.

Which is the largest island in the world? The answer to that one is—Greenland.

A LUXURY TRIMMING

I wonder if you have been lucky

and informing him that Professor Storrington had reinstated her as his secretary, at an increase of salary.

In addition to this, the professor had successfully laid claim to the fortune, which he proposed to use for furthering his scientific work.

Noel smiled, as he folded the letter.

"And that," he murmured. "com-

pletes the Mystery of the Night Express."

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

THE CLUE OF THE PINK SHELLS—that is the title of next Friday's enthralling mystery story, and, in addition to Noel Raymond, it features June Gaynor, the famous detective's schoolgirl niece.

Kaye of the Kennels

You'll love every word of this delightful, complete story, featuring Kaye Chalmers and that grand dog of hers, Brutus, the St. Bernard.

By IDA MELBOURNE



THE DOGS THAT VANISHED

"IS Toto, the Peke, ready yet, please?"

Kaye Chalmers, of Chalmers' Kennels, looked round quickly at the middle-aged lady in the dark blue winter coat who had come up the drive to the kennels.

"Toto?" she repeated. "Oh, yes, he wanted a manicure, didn't he? Will you come this way, please. Miss Jones, isn't it?"

The woman acknowledged her name with a smile.

Kaye had asked the question, not being sure if it were Miss Jones or not. For she herself had not taken Toto, the Peke, in, being out at the time; the boy who assisted her had seen Miss Jones and taken charge of the Peke.

"He'll be glad to see you," Kaye said, leading the way.

She quickened her step, told the Dalmatian to stop barking, reproved the spaniels, and then stopped outside the Peke's kennel. There were two Pekes, but Ming Wu was staying there for some time while his mistress was abroad, and, as she had been taken ill, he seemed almost a permanent resident.

The new dog had the next kennel to his, and sat up, bright-eyed, expectant, but not with wagging tail, as Kaye expected. She opened the kennel, lifted up the Peke, and smilingly held him out to the woman. But Miss Jones stared in bewilderment at the little dog.

"But this isn't Toto," she said. "Not Toto?"

Kaye stared at her, amazed. "No, of course not. You've taken me to the wrong dog," said the woman.

Kaye stood with a blank expression. There was good reason for her amazement, too. Since there were only two Pekes in the kennels, and one was Ming Wu, then the other must be Toto.

"But this—but this is the dog you brought in. It's the only other Peke besides Ming Wu," she exclaimed.

"I brought in that dog?" the woman cried. "That I never did!"

"But—but—" faltered Kaye.

Then she turned and shouted for the boy who helped her. He was a bright,

intelligent lad, and came hurrying up with his usual broad grin.

"Is this the Peke you took from this lady yesterday?" asked Kaye.

"Eh? Oh, yes, miss! It's the only one," he said.

"There!" exclaimed Pat. Bewildered, she faced the woman, whose face was now red.

"But that dog isn't Toto!" cried the woman. "My goodness, I know my own dog! What does all this mean, pray? Have you lost my dog? Has my dog been stolen? If so, let me tell you," she went on, her voice rising, "there'll be trouble—serious trouble! Toto's very valuable!"

She went then to some of the other kennels, looking inside; then she faced Kaye. Her face was quite white now, and never in her life had Kaye seen anyone in such a state; she bordered on hysteria and her hands trembled, her lips quivered.

But considering that she had lost her dog in a most amazing manner, her emotion was only natural.

"I'm terribly, terribly sorry," said Kaye. "I—I just can't make it out. I really can't. I'll search—I'll make every possible inquiry."

The woman looked at her fixedly.

"There'll be trouble about this!" she said fiercely. "It won't rest here—I shan't rest until I have my Toto back."

Then, turning on her heel, she went down the drive.

Kaye made a step to follow her, and hesitated. She turned to the boy.

"You are sure—positive—that this is the dog, or like him? Don't be afraid to own up if he isn't," she said earnestly. "I shan't blame you. If there's a clever dog thief lurking here, he was too clever for Brutus even."

The boy opened and shut his mouth, scratched his ear, frowned, and then shook his head.

"Miss—honest, I swear it's the same little dog," he said. "Unless it's got a double. Why, I wasn't gone away for more than a minute before you came in! I was only filling buckets from the tap round the corner."

Kaye breathed hard and shook her head.

"Well, it's a mystery—a deep, staggering mystery," she said. "But the long and the short of it is—that we'll be accused of stealing Toto."

"Stealing him?" quavered the boy. "But—"

"Stealing, yes—stealing by a trick," frowned Kaye worriedly. "Toto was brought here, and disappears. Where is he? We're responsible, or I am; and if he isn't found it's going to look as though we deliberately changed the dogs over."

After pondering a few moments Kaye went into the house and telephoned the police.

Knowing so much about dogs, she could describe an animal accurately, and she gave the strange Peke's description as a dog found.

But there was no need to go into detail. The Peke in the kennels had already been reported missing.

"Reported lost this morning, miss," said the station sergeant. "Wait a bit. I can give you the owner's name and telephone number. She was in a frightful state, I don't mind telling you. Just a schoolgirl, crying her eyes out. Here we are—Mabel Anderson, telephone number 468."

A minute later Kaye was talking to a tearful girl.

"Oh, you've found Ti Lung!" she cried, in joy. "Oh, how wonderful! How is he? Is he all right? Where was he?"

"If you come to my kennels, you can have him now—at once," said Kaye. "And he's perfectly all right."

Kaye, hooking up the receiver, heard a deep bark. It was her faithful St. Bernard, Brutus. With an odd growling noise, he came rushing to the house, and Kaye went out.

Just in front of the door Brutus halted, wagging his tail, and put something on the ground.

Stooping, Kaye picked it up. It was a piece of blue material, and, turning it over, she suddenly recognised it.

"Brutus, what have you been up to?" she gasped. "You tore this from Miss Jones' coat. Oh, Brutus, as though she isn't cross enough with us already!"

In grave alarm, Kaye hurried down the drive, wondering what the indignant woman would say. But before she reached the gate she realised that the woman had gone.

"Gone; and without a word!" she exclaimed. "How odd!"

She went through the gates, and looked up and down the lane, but saw no one.

Kaye was still standing, bewildered, at the gate, when a blue saloon car drew up, and an excited, rosy-cheeked girl with shining eyes jumped out.

"Ti Lung—where is he?" she asked. Kaye forgot her trouble for the moment, and shared the girl's joy.

"In his kennel," she said. "But goodness knows how he got here! Call him by name, and you'll hear him bark."

"Ti Lung!" cried the girl, running forward excitedly.

There were barks and whines, but not the bark of a Peke.

"Where is he?" the girl asked, looking right and left at the kennels, where Dalmatians and spaniels and Scotties could be seen, almost every breed of dog.

"Why, there——" Kaye raised her hand to point, and then dropped it.

Ti Lung's kennel was empty; the door swung agape. He was gone!

WHAT DID BRUTUS MEAN?

KAYE stood rooted to the ground; for a minute she could not move. Then she tottered rather than walked forward, opened the kennel door and looked in. But the Peke was not hiding. And the mere fact that the door was open was proof that someone had released him.

"Where is he?" asked the girl fretfully.

"He—he was there a moment ago," said Kaye blankly. "I—— My goodness, what does it mean?"

Mabel Anderson's father, who had driven her in his car, came up the drive, and, sizing up the situation, hurried forward.

"You say that he has gone? That he was here a minute ago?" he exclaimed. "But who let him out?"

Again Kaye called the boy; and his jump of surprise alone proved that whoever had opened the kennel, he had not done so.

Kaye turned to Brutus, who was dogging her steps, and then unclasped the hand in which she held the blue material.

Next she looked on the ground near the kennels.

Brutus barked excitedly, and, jumping up, slammed the kennel door with his feet. Next, he snatched back the blue material, dropped it, and barked.

"Miss Jones—she let him out?" cried Kaye, in wonder. "She took him, you mean?"

Poor Brutus could not explain in words; he barked, he moved to and fro, went to the cage, back, moved towards the gate, and picked up the blue material again.

"What is he trying to tell you?" asked Mr. Anderson.

"That the woman who came here, Miss Jones, opened the kennel door," said Kaye, frowning. "And he tried to stop her. That's what he must mean."

"Then she stole Ti Lung?" Mabel Anderson asked, in dread.

Kaye knew that the whole truth had to be told. Starting at the beginning, she explained what had happened. Mabel's amazement and alarm grew, while her father did not deny that the thing baffled him completely.

"Our one hope is that Miss Jones has your Peke," said Kaye, with more hope in her tone than she really felt.

Mabel's father turned.

"Give me the address, and I'll drive to her house at once," he said.

Kaye groaned.

"I don't know her address," she said. "She only left her dog for a manicure."

"Then we'll never find Ti Lung!" gasped Mabel, her face white.

"Mabel, my dear child, don't take it to heart so," murmured her father tenderly, slipping an arm about her. "We'll find him—of course, we will."

"We must," said Kaye, in deep concern. "My goodness, we must——"

But she hardly knew at the moment which way to turn, where to search, what to do. Two dogs were missing—Toto, and Ti Lung. In another minute another dog might disappear.

With a shiver of dread, Kaye began to think that some clever thief was lurking still—either that, or, incredible though it seemed, the place was haunted.

"Wait here," she said to Mabel. "Just in case there is someone to track. I'm taking Brutus with me. He's got brains."

Brutus was standing now by Kaye's cycle, looking at it and barking.

"All right, I'm coming," she said. But as she took the machine, he did not run towards the gates. He barked again.

Kaye studied him, thought hard, and then, as he put the material down, she understood.

"Miss Jones was cycling," she cried. "Mr. Anderson, can you give me a lift in your car? If she's cycling, she can't have ridden far."

Leaving the boy in charge, warning him to keep marching up and down in front of the kennels, armed with as heavy a stick as could be found, Kaye went down the drive with Brutus, Mabel, and her father.

If Miss Jones was cycling, she might not be far away, and if she had Ti Lung he could be recaptured. For there was a chance, as Kaye realised, that Miss Jones had taken Ti Lung as hostage, to keep until her own Toto was returned. If so, it would explain why Brutus had gone for her and torn her coat, and also why she had not complained about him.

But whether Toto was found or not, Ti Lung had to be restored to Mabel.

THE MYSTERY SOLVED

"THERE she is!"

Kaye gave that excited shout as, ahead of them, in the road, they saw a cyclist wearing a dark blue winter coat with a fur collar. They had driven a mile, and Brutus had made it clear in which direction the woman had gone.

The car went beyond her and stopped and the woman dismounted as Brutus jumped from the car. She drew back with a little scream of fright.

"It's all right," said Kaye, running forward and taking Brutus by the collar.

"All right?" exclaimed Miss Jones sharply. "See what your dog has done to my coat!"

And she showed the place whence the material had been torn.

"I'm sorry," said Kaye quietly.

"With every reason. You shall have the bill and be sorrier."

Kaye did not argue.

"Did you see what happened to the little Peke?" she asked. "The one in our kennels that you saw?"

The woman shook her head.

"I certainly didn't. I was hustled off the premises by that dog. Chased off! If I hadn't been so scared of him, I'd have gone back."

Kaye's hopes sank. The woman's story was reasonable enough, and——

But Kaye suddenly saw Brutus' strange manner. He was lifting up his great head and sniffing at the woman's coat—and his sniffing drew Kaye's attention to something she would not have noticed otherwise.

On Miss Jones' coat were some light brown dog's hairs, silky and fine. A glance was enough to tell that they were hairs from a Pekinese's coat.

Kaye opened her mouth to comment, and then said nothing.

"Oh, very well! But the other little Peke is missing now," she said.

"I'm not surprised. If Toto was lost, why not another? You have no right to have kennels."

With that, Miss Jones mounted her cycle and pedalled forward.

Mabel, in despair, looked at her father, and he shook his head; for they were no nearer finding Ti Lung than ever.

But no sooner was Miss Jones riding again than Kaye turned to Brutus.

"Follow," she said softly—"follow——"

Brutus looked at her, looked at Miss Jones, and then, tail swinging, followed her, dogged, determined, relentless.

"But—why follow her?" asked Mr. Anderson staring after Brutus. "Do you think she took Ti Lung? If so, where is he now?"

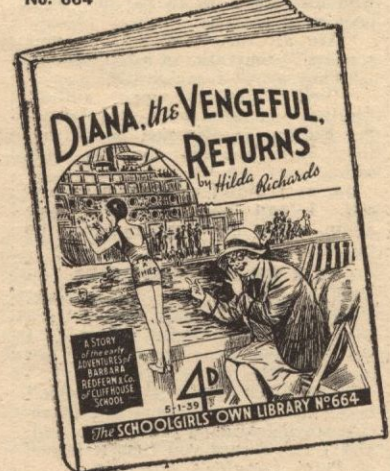
Kaye smiled.

"There was some of his fur on her coat, on the inside of her sleeve, and just where he would leave fur, if she had carried him. He's moulting a little, and she hadn't reckoned on that."

Mabel gave a little gasp. "What did she do with him?"

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"Somewhere between here and the kennels, she must have put him down," said Kaye. "If we go back slowly there's a chance we'll find him."

She looked back at Brutus. He was loping along behind Miss Jones. She rode fast on her cycle—but Brutus kept her in sight all the way. A long way it was, too.

She swung round bends, left, right, and finally swept through the fine entrance gates of a large house.

And as the door was opened to her and she hurried in, Brutus trotted through the gates, tongue lolling, chest heaving a little.

And then Brutus sat down and waited.

For ten minutes he waited, and then, in solemn mood, he retraced his steps. It was a long trek, and by the time he reached the kennels he felt tired. But Kaye was at the gate, waiting for him. Mabel and her father were not there, however, being busy hunting the district for Ti Lung.

"Well? Follow her?" asked Kaye. He wagged his tail and looked pleased.

"That means you did. Good fellow!" said Kaye delightedly, and she patted him, thumped him, and kissed his nose.

She hurried in for her cycle, returned with it, and then, giving him the drink he needed, she let him rest a while. But Brutus did not want to rest. "Strike while the iron is hot!" was apparently his motto. With a steady jog-trot he led the way.

Kaye followed him, and at the large house dismounted when he went confidently through the gates.

"My goodness, what a lovely house!" she murmured, surprised that Miss Jones, who had not seemed very wealthy, should live in it.

Having made up her mind what to say, Kaye went up to the door. She intended asking if Toto had returned, if the police had been informed, and if she herself could be given a description of him. That Miss Jones was still in the house was made evident by her cycle, which leaned where she had rested it when she had hurried in.

Answering Kaye's knock, a maid appeared in the doorway.

"Is Miss Jones in, please?" Kaye asked.

"Miss Jones? There is no Miss Jones living here," said the maid. "There's Miss Watson, who's just come in."

"Miss Watson? Is that her cycle there?" asked Kaye quickly, pointing to the machine "Miss Jones" had ridden.

"Yes. Why? May I ask your business, miss?" said the maid.

"Certainly. I am inquiring about Miss Watson's dog Toto," said Kaye.

"Mrs. Hargreaves', you mean; it's her dog," said the maid in surprise. "Miss Watson is her personal maid."

"Oh!" Kaye gasped; and then she made a quick recovery. "Can you describe Toto to me?"

"You think you've seen him?" asked the maid. "My word! That'll be a load off Miss Watson's mind—and no mistake! What Mrs. Hargreaves won't say if he's still missing when she comes back doesn't bear thinking about. Those people at the kennels ought to be prosecuted, losing him that way!"

But Kaye's quick mind had suddenly seen light in the darkness.

"Will you please tell Miss Watson that I am putting the matter in the hands of the police, as the small Peke she saw at the kennels was stolen this morning from outside his house by a middle-aged woman in a blue coat."

The maid gaped a little, turned, took

the message; and, finally, came back with "Miss Jones."

The lady's maid, for such she was, had gone as white as chalk, and, instead of asking Kaye in, she walked out on to the porch and shut the door behind her.

"You can't put it in the hands of the police!" she gasped in horror. "Oh, no—"

Kaye eyed her grimly and with some scorn.

"You stole that little Peke this morning," she said. "You brought him to my kennels—"

"Oh, no, that's wrong!"

"Why did you steal Toto?" demanded Kaye.

"I didn't steal it. It's not missing; it's in the lane! It's not true to say I stole it!" cried the lady's maid.

That settled it. Kaye had heard all she needed to know.

Your Editor's Corner



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

MY DEAR READERS,—Do you know, I have only just decided that it really is time I stacked up all the Christmas cards you sent me.

They have been making a wonderful show on my office mantelpiece, along all the shelves of my bookcases containing bound copies of the GIRLS' CRYSTAL, and even on the table that Penelope likes to keep clear for making tea.

Artists, authors, and other editors who have been in to see me, have been most envious.

"Are all these really from your readers?" they ask, in astonishment.

"They are!" I say firmly.

"Well," retorted one author, "either you must be a very popular Editor, or else you bought all those cards and sent them to yourself."

So, as I didn't send them to myself, I can only conclude, once again, that my readers are the nicest in the world.

SIX SPLENDID STORIES

On consulting my detail-book, which tells me what stories are coming in the GIRLS' CRYSTAL, I see we have some particularly fascinating titles for next week.

"The Clue of the Pink Shells" is the title of the mystery and detective story featuring Noel Raymond, and I can assure you that it is one of Peter Langley's very best.

Our youthful girl reporter, Pat Lovell, will feature in a story entitled, "Back to School for a Day"—a complete tale that will endear Pat to you more than ever.

Kaye Chalmers and her pets will also appear in another of Ida Melbourne's charming stories, and our three serials will continue as exciting as ever.

Your sincere friend,

YOUR EDITOR.

"You must tell me just where you put that little Peke when you sneaked it from the kennel," she said; "and then the best thing you can do is to confess to your mistress that you have lost her dog. And another time be straight enough not to try to get other people blamed for your faults—"

Brutus came hurrying up. He had wandered off; and now he came back, barking excitedly, looking at Kaye eagerly. Understanding that he wanted her, she followed him round the house into the large garden at the back and down to the end of it.

Brutus came to a halt at a spot where some boards covered a hole in the ground that had a foot of brickwork round it.

"A well!" exclaimed Kaye. She looked down and heard a faint sound.

Kaye tugged at the boards, levering them free, looked down, and then rushed back to the house.

"Quick! Quick!" Here's Toto—in the well! The poor thing must have swum around and found a ledge. Quick!"

A gardener came forward; a long ladder was fetched; and twenty minutes later he and Kaye between them brought up a shivering, wet, sorry-looking, bedraggled Pekinese which had been perched on a ledge where the water lapped at the bottom.

Brutus tossed his head.

"Yes, darling," smiled Kaye, "it takes a dog to solve these riddles!"

Toto, given a hot bath and dried, was taken into the house; and Kaye, knowing that she had the whole solution to the mystery, went back to the kennels.

"That woman should be prosecuted," said Mr. Anderson when he heard the story. "The cunning of her! She picked up poor Ti Lung when he wandered into the street—"

"And brought him here," nodded Kaye. "Then she pretended that it was the missing Toto she had brought, and we had changed them over. It was a wicked thing to do. I might have blamed the boy and sacked him; we might have been prosecuted—and all to cover her own carelessness in losing Toto for four hours, so it appears, without looking for him."

But Ti Lung had still not been found. They hunted the fields, they hunted the front gardens of houses; and not until tea-time did they give in. Weary, despondent, and unhappy, they returned to the kennels; and Brutus loped ahead, worn out, longing only to flop down in his kennel.

But something had forestalled him. A scrap of Peke lay just on the threshold of his large kennel and snarled at him.

Ti Lung had walked in a circle, smelled the other dogs, returned to the kennels, and, entering by the hole in the fence, had chosen the best available bed—Brutus'. And there he had been for two hours asleep.

But there was nothing sleepy about him when he met his mistress. At her call of his name he barked, yapped, yelped, danced, fell over, rolled off, scampered.

"Good!" sighed Kaye. "At last!"

Brutus took advantage of Ti Lung's vacation of his kennel and flopped down with a grunt. And if he could have spoken he, too, would surely have grunted "At last!"

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

Don't miss the charming story of Kaye and her lovable charges which appears in next Friday's issue. Order your GIRLS' CRYSTAL as soon as you can!

The GIRL WHO HAUNTED GREY GABLES



AN UNEXPECTED RESCUER

NORMA ROYSTON, living in the Cornish village of Clovellyn, looked after a small shop, whose owner, Ben Tregellis, had mysteriously disappeared, leaving his small grandchildren, Elsie and Martin, in her care.

Norma believed that Grey Gables, a large house near by, contained a secret connected with her dead father.

The owner, Mr. Penhale, was her enemy; but Gerald Graham, a boy who lived there, was very friendly to her.

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

She was given an important order for her shop by Squire Guthrie, but the goods were stolen. Norma believed Mr. Penhale was responsible for the theft.

She discovered the goods in a cave, where they had been left to be washed away by the tide. She managed to load them into a boat, but this became wedged against a rock.

Norma realised that she was trapped in the cave—and the tide was rising rapidly! Desperately she shouted for help.

A CHOKING cry was torn from Norma's lips as she lost her hold on the rock and slipped back into the sea.

"Norma!" The startled shout, magnified by the echoes, seemed to come like some part of a fantastic dream.

A shadowy figure swung itself from the vaulted roof of the cavern, sprang on to a narrow ledge, and thence into the foaming surf.

Norma felt a strong hand close on her wrist. An arm encircled her shoulder, lifting her out of the water.

"Norma!" It was Gerald's voice, husky with anxiety. "Norma, are you all right?"

Norma clung to him instinctively as she opened her eyes. Dazedly she stared up into the pale, boyish face of her rescuer.

"Gerald!" she breathed. "But how—where—"

Even in her relief and gratitude, a bewildered question flashed into her mind.

How had Gerald appeared so opportunely? He could not have reached the cave from outside without a boat; he could not have swum; for though his flannels were soaking wet where he had waded through the surf to her rescue,



By RENEE FRAZER

the upper part of his attire was quite dry.

A broad grin of relief crossed the boy's face as Norma spoke.

"I say, you gave me a turn!" he exclaimed. "What's the idea—playing at mermaids?" He stared at the boat, now half-filled with water, and at the heavy bale lying across the seats. "Or smugglers?" he added, as an after-thought.

Norma smiled wanly. It was typical of Gerald to joke at a moment like this.

She struggled to her feet on the slippery rocks, holding to the boy's strong arm.

She felt shaken and dazed, and conscious of her soaked and bedraggled appearance.

"You—you saved my life, Gerald—" she began unsteadily.

"Oh, rot!" The boy flushed. "Just a bit of luck that I happened to turn up. But you've not answered my question—that is, don't answer if you'd rather not. It's no business of mine, but I'm no end curious. What on earth are you doing round here in the dewy dawn, so to speak? And how did you come to be caught by the tide?"

He was staring curiously at the half-submerged boat and its strange cargo.

Excitedly Norma opened the parcel containing the fancy dress she was to wear. Then suddenly her face paled. For that parcel contained the old-time costume of Lady Rowena—the ghost of Grey Gables.

Norma followed the direction of his glance. Her heart gave a bound of relief as she saw that the precious bale was practically undamaged by the sea-water.

"I—I came to collect some goods," she replied, with a faint smile.

"Some what?" demanded Gerald, staring. "You're not joking?"

Norma shook her head. Briefly, and without mentioning her suspicions, she explained how she had been robbed, and how she had trailed the stolen goods to the cave.

Gerald whistled softly, a look of anger on his boyish face conflicting with amazement.

"I say, it sounds incredible!" he exclaimed. "Why should anyone pinch ten pounds' worth of provisions, to dump them in the sea? Fellow must have been crazy!"

"Unless—unless it was someone who disliked me," breathed Norma.

The boy's expression hardened.

"It was a caddish thing to do, anyway; might have wrecked the kiddies' party, as well as put you in bad with Squire Guthrie."

"Perhaps that's why it was done," said Norma.

Gerald glanced at her swiftly, his eyes questioning.

"But surely you haven't any enemies here? Who'd want to do a thing like that, unless—Gosh!" He slammed a fist into his palm, and his eyes glittered as he turned to her. "I have it! It's that scoundrel, the Phantom!"

Norma's heart gave a violent jump as she encountered the boy's excited glance.

"What—what makes you think that?" she asked unsteadily.

"Well, it's the kind of thing that precious trickster would do," declared Gerald, with conviction. "I don't know exactly what its game is in the village, but it's obviously out to make trouble all round. But one of these times it'll go too far," he added darkly. "As it happens, I'm on the trail—"

He broke off, and Norma's heart missed a beat.

"What—what do you mean?" she breathed.

Gerald was staring at her in the dim light of the cave.

"Never mind now," he put in briskly. "You'll catch your death of cold if we stand here talking. Wait a sec!"

He disappeared into the shadows of the cave, to return a moment later carrying an overcoat.

"You slip this on," he added, as he wrapped it round her shoulders. "I shan't need it for a bit. Nothing like exercise to keep one warm. Watch me."

Cheerfully he scrambled over to the tilted boat, and commenced to bail out the water with a can he discovered under one of the seats.

Norma, hugging the greatcoat round her shoulders, looked on gratefully.

Something seemed to give Gerald cause for amusement.

"Know who this boat belongs to?" he asked, with a grin, as he paused for a moment in his exertions. "Uncle! He keeps it down here, but he doesn't often use it. Funny you should have borrowed it!"

Norma caught in her breath quickly. It was a strange coincidence that she should have borrowed a boat belonging to her enemy to help to counter his spiteful schemes!

"You won't tell him?" she asked quickly.

Gerald glanced at her curiously, bail in hand.

"Rather not. He's a queer card—a bit touchy at times; and he's been worse since that elusive Phantom started to haunt Grey Gables. In a way I can sympathise with him, and I mean to bowl out the trickster, whoever it is!"

He spoke grimly as he bent to resume his task. Norma bit her lip, her face rather pale.

It was a strange position that Gerald, her one real friend in the village, should be the ward of her enemy.

Anxious to change the subject, she offered to take a hand at bailing out the boat, but he waved aside her offer.

"I've nearly done," he declared cheerfully. "Luckily, there's no real damage—only a bit of paintwork chipped. I'll have her launched in no time, and I'll row you along to the bay. We'll find someone with a handcart to push the goods up to the Hall."

"You're awfully kind to me!" breathed Norma gratefully, feeling almost guilty at accepting his help in the circumstances.

"Fiddlesticks!" rejoined Gerald. "I'd be a pretty poor sort of pal if I couldn't lend a hand now and then. Here, grab hold of the stern and push, while I pull at the bows."

Where Norma's unaided struggles had failed, their united efforts succeeded. With a harsh, grating sound, the dinghy was dislodged, to float on an even keel.

"Jump in!" ordered Gerald cheerfully, as he took her arm. "That's the idea. Don't worry about the oars; just grab the tiller and steer for the opening."

He sprang in after her, and, taking the oars, sent the boat skimming out of the cave with a few powerful strokes.

Though heavily laden, the little dinghy rode the waves bravely, none the worse for its adventure.

Leaning back in the stern, in the sparkling sunshine, Norma glanced gratefully at the boy who had rescued her.

Gerald was rowing with a will, his face healthily tanned beneath his close-cropped, curly hair. He grinned at her quizzically.

"A penny for your thoughts."

Norma started slightly; she was wondering how Gerald had come to her rescue so unexpectedly. She ventured to put the question that was puzzling her.

Gerald grinned mysteriously, resting for a moment on the oars.

"I bet you'll never guess," he declared. "I meant to keep it a secret, but I know I can rely on you to keep it dark." He spoke confidentially, though there was no one to hear, except the gulls. "Remember the black statuette the Phantom pinched from

Grey Gables, and then brought back again?"

Norma caught in her breath sharply, her hands clenching.

"Well?" she breathed, trying to appear composed.

"Well," said Gerald eagerly, "it's puzzled me ever since, and I was determined to get to the bottom of the mystery. There's another statue in the house, almost identical—a life-sized figure in armour. I believe you've seen it? Last night, after uncle met with his accident, I was searching the house, and I stumbled on a secret opening behind the statue. Guess where it led."

"Where?" whispered Norma, her heart beating almost to suffocation.

"To that cave where you were trapped by the tide!" declared Gerald triumphantly. "I've not told anyone yet, except you; but there's a whole chain of underground passages below Grey Gables, and I mean to explore 'em and solve the mystery once and for all."

AT THE NEW YEAR BALL

NORMA sat motionless in the stern, her hand clenched on the tiller; she dared not meet the boy's eager gaze.

Her thoughts were racing. Gerald had stumbled accidentally on the secret for which she had searched in vain—the secret hinted at in her father's diary.

There was something hidden in those subterranean passages that concerned her destiny, and the destiny of the two children who had been left in her care.

It was a strange, ironic twist of Fate that the discovery should have been made by the ward of her bitter enemy, the man who wanted to hound her out of the village!

Strange, too, that the discovery should accidentally have led Gerald to her rescue.

But, in spite of her gratitude, she dared not breathe a word of her thoughts, her hopes, and fears.

Gerald was a Penhale, though only distantly connected. His loyalty must be on the side of his uncle; and he shared the latter's anger against the elusive Phantom, while scorning his relative's superstitious fears.

If anything, he might be an even greater danger to her plans, owing to his boyish curiosity and reckless disregard of danger.

"I say, you're looking pale," put in Gerald remorsefully. "Here I am wasting time jawing, when I ought to be getting you back home. Sorry!"

He plied himself more vigorously to the oars.

Norma forced a quick, rather tremulous smile.

"It's all right," she said unsteadily. "I'm awfully interested really. I wondered how you found your way into the cave. Where—where is the opening?"

Even as she spoke she wondered uneasily whether Gerald would sense the anxiety that prompted her question.

But evidently the boy had no suspicions; he was all agog with his exciting discovery.

"In the roof of the cave," he explained. "There are some rough-hewn steps leading up to it, and it's quite invisible from the ground. I've been in that cave a dozen times without spotting it, and so has uncle. I've not told him yet; I'll spring it on him as a surprise when I've done a bit of exploring on my own."

Norma's hand tightened on the tiller

as she formed a certain secret resolve of her own.

But her troubled thoughts were interrupted as the boat grounded on the shingle. Gerald sprang out, assisting her to alight.

A group of local fishermen were swapping yarns on the beach, and Gerald hailed one of them—a strapping, rather dark-featured young man, whom Norma had heard spoken of as Ted Gaspard.

It appeared that young Gaspard had a pushcart; and he and Gerald between them lifted the heavy bale of goods out of the dinghy and carried it to the cart.

"You can leave it to me now, Norma," declared Gerald cheerfully. "You bunk home and get changed as quickly as you can. I'll see you at the party to-night."

He did not wait to be thanked, but, with a merry wave of his hand, set off with the young fisherman, trundling the cart up to the Hall.

Norma returned to the little shop, her mind torn by conflicting feelings.

Gerald was a sport; there was no gainsaying that. Yet his natural loyalty to his uncle put him in the enemy's camp.

She would have to fight a lone battle in order to clear up the dark mystery that surrounded her.

Meanwhile, she had little time to dwell on her secret plans.

It was the day of the party, and in between attending to the shop Norma had to get the children's clothes ready—washing and ironing Elsie's party frock and mending a tear in Martin's best suit.

Not till the children were fitted out to the last necessary detail of brightly polished shoes, clean handkerchiefs, white starched collar for Martin, and a new ribbon for Elsie's hair, did Norma give a thought to her own attire.

Her party dress would suffice; but the lovely Cornish gown in which she was to repeat her song, at the squire's request, needed certain alterations.

The two children, all ready dressed, faces washed and hair brushed till it shone, stood by to watch her as she sewed.

The charming old-world gown became more attractive under her skilful fingers. Soon it was altered to her satisfaction, and, wrapping it carefully in a parcel, she placed it for safety in the big cupboard while she hurried upstairs to change.

She had not left herself much time, for the walk to the Hall would take at least twenty minutes.

She had just slipped on her coat over her dainty frock, when there came the tooting of a horn outside.

She heard a scamper of feet downstairs, and then young Martin's voice, shrill with excitement:

"Norma—be quick! Gerald's come in his car to fetch us to the Hall!"

Norma hurried downstairs, and Gerald greeted her with a grin.

"The carriage awaits, fair lady!" declared Gerald, gallantly holding out an arm. "We will hie us to the baronial hall—where the festivities are e'en now commencing."

Norma laughed, and followed him outside. It was not till she was actually stepping into the car that she remembered her Cornish gown. In her confusion at Gerald's unexpected arrival, she had almost forgotten it.

Martin offered to fetch it, and darted back indoors, reappearing with the large parcel, which he dumped on the seat beside Gerald.

They drove off in high spirits, and Norma herself felt more light-hearted

than she had done since the night of her arrival in Cornwall.

The Hall was lit up brilliantly; peals of youthful laughter came from the direction of the ball-room, where the village children were engaged in party-games.

Squire Guthrie himself came out to greet the newcomers.

"Well, well!" he exclaimed heartily, as he shook hands. "Glad to see you here, Miss Royston—you, too, Gerald! And how are young Martin and Elsie? All ready for the festivities, I'll be bound! I've arranged for your song to take place half-way through the evening, Miss Royston; you've brought the costume?"

Norma nodded, blushing a trifle nervously.

"Splendid! Everyone is looking forward to hearing you. Now come in and join in the fun!"

Gerald took Norma's arm, and the two children raced ahead.

A gay and colourful scene greeted them. The lofty ball-room was decorated with paper streamers and balloons; dozens of light-hearted youngsters were romping to their hearts' content.

For most of them this was the big evening of the year—an occasion to which they had looked forward for weeks.

Young Martin and little Elsie lost no time in joining the merry throng, while Gerald and Norma looked on smilingly with a few of the other guests.

Norma's problems and worries seemed a thing of the past; even the dark cloud of mystery that overshadowed her life in Cornwall was temporarily thrust from her mind.

She joined whole-heartedly in the laughter and gaiety; and she shyly agreed to the squire's suggestion that she and Gerald should organise the games.

Gerald suggested charades—and the excited children divided up, Norma leading one side, while Gerald took charge of the other.

The game was in full swing, and Norma's little company was giving a spirited representation of an old Cornish fair, when, unexpectedly, a curious hush fell on the room.

Norma looked round, and her heart missed a beat.

For Mr. Penhale and his daughter had just entered through the big doors, and were standing on their own, watching the lively scene.

Their presence had the effect of a chill, ill-omened wind.

Mr. Penhale, a thin smile on his darkly handsome features, was leaning heavily on a stick. Ethel Penhale, attired in a gorgeous frock, was looking on with a lofty, supercilious stare—a stare directed chiefly at Norma.

Squire Guthrie hurried to greet them. "Glad you managed to get along, Penhale!" he exclaimed heartily. "We're enjoying ourselves, as you can see. Thanks to Norma and Gerald, the children are having the time of their lives!"

"Indeed?" inquired Mr. Penhale heavily; and Ethel gave an audible sniff.

"And how's the ankle?" inquired the squire, in good-natured concern.

"As well as can be expected," Mr. Penhale replied. "It's causing me considerable discomfort, and someone is going to pay dearly for the trick. If the Phantom is human, as you suggest, Guthrie—I mean to catch the scoundrel, if it costs me my last penny!"

The squire coughed. "Quite, quite!" he agreed. "As you say, Penhale, the trickster must be

brought to book. But—let us forget the unpleasant topic now. Come and have some refreshments: Miss Royston!"

He beckoned smilingly to Norma.

"Would you care to get ready for your song? Everyone is here now, and I fancy that the children could do with a rest from their exertions!"

"Of course!" replied Norma, flushing slightly under Mr. Penhale's cold scrutiny. "I'll go and change right away."

"Want any help with the hooks-and-eyes?" inquired Sybil Guthrie, the squire's niece, in her good-natured, if rather rapid way. "I'm afraid I've got to see about the refreshments—but perhaps Ethel would oblige?"

"Jump to it, Ethel!" chuckled Gerald, grinning at his cousin. "Dresser-in-chief to the star of the evening; thank goodness I haven't got to top up!"

He sat down to the piano, and executed one or two fancy flourishes on the keys.

Ethel Penhale bit her lip, regarding Norma with obvious jealousy.

"Oh, all right!" she said off-handedly. "I'll be along in a minute."

She turned her back, and commenced to talk airily to one of the other girls.

Her eyes wide with horror, she stared at the costume she had brought with her, for it was not the old-world Cornish gown.

Shimmering in the dim light of the dressing-room were the spectral robes of the Lady Rowena—the Phantom of Grey Gables!

ETHEL PENHALE'S ACCUSATION

FOR an instant Norma stared transfixed at the incriminating robes, too stunned to realise how the ghastly mistake could have occurred.

Then she remembered the last-minute rush, and young Martin's offer to fetch the parcel.

He must have taken the wrong parcel from the cupboard! It was a natural mistake, but the possible consequences were almost too dreadful to contemplate.

What could she say or do?

Just then Norma heard footsteps approaching the dressing-room.

Her mind worked swiftly, sharpened by desperation.

Feverishly folding up the incriminating costume, she thrust it out of the window into the shrubbery; then, her heart thumping painfully, she made a



"Look, everyone!" cried Ethel. "This is part of the headdress worn by the phantom figure that's haunting Grey Gables! And I found it under Norma's coat!" Immediately every eye in the room turned to Norma.

Norma, her face rather flushed, hurried out to the dressing-room where she had left her parcel.

She felt flustered and uneasy. Ethel's contemptuous manner she could have borne. She had learnt to expect it from that girl, and she realised that it was due to jealousy.

But Mr. Penhale's presence, and his talk about the Phantom, had shaken her badly.

She made an effort to pull herself together. This would never do! The squire was expecting her to sing, and so were the assembled children.

And Gerald was waiting for her at the piano. She mustn't let them down!

Her hands shaking, she commenced to unwrap her parcel, humming the words of the song under her breath.

Almost unthinkingly she tossed aside the brown paper and shook out the folds of the costume.

And then a startled, incredulous gasp escaped her lips.

parcel of an old woollen jumper that she had worn under her coat for extra warmth.

Only in the nick of time. The door opened, to admit Ethel Penhale!

"What!" ejaculated the girl. "Not started to change yet?"

"There's been a mistake," Norma faltered. "I've brought the wrong parcel with me. Look!"

She unwrapped it, revealing the old woollen jumper.

Ethel sniffed scornfully.

"A fatheaded sort of thing to do," she drawled. "You'll have to explain to the squire. I wouldn't care to be in your shoes."

Norma could hear Gerald playing the opening accompaniment to her song. Her face rather pale, she walked to the door, expecting that Ethel would follow her.

A burst of applause greeted her entrance into the ball-room—applause

that died down as the audience realised that something was wrong.

Norma, with an apologetic glance at Gerald, hurried across to Squire Guthrie.

Unsteadily she explained that she had left her costume at home.

The squire looked a trifle annoyed, but only for a moment.

"Well, well, it can't be helped," he said. "Mistakes will happen. Don't worry, Miss Royston. I suppose your song can be managed without costume, though the children will be a bit disappointed."

"I say," cut in Gerald, who had joined the group, "let me bunk back for it in the car. I won't be five minutes. How about it, Norma?"

Norma glanced at him gratefully.

"If you wouldn't mind—"

"Splendid idea!" put in the squire cheerfully. "And perhaps Miss Royston could entertain us with a few impromptu songs while we're waiting."

The children were clapping impatiently.

Norma, her face rather pale, managed to summon up a tremulous smile as she sat down at the piano and played her own accompaniment to a few haunting old melodies she had learnt as a child.

Gradually a complete silence fell on the hall, broken only by the sound of her clear young voice.

Norma was trying to fix her thoughts only on the words of her song; it was not easy. She realised how narrow had been her escape from ignominious exposure. Gradually the first unpleasant effects of the shock faded, and Norma found herself regaining confidence.

As it happened, all had turned out well; she had managed to cover up

her fatal mistake, and no one suspected.

A rousing encore brought a flush of pleasure to her cheeks; she turned to bow smilingly to the enthusiastic young audience—but abruptly the smile faded from the lips.

For the door was thrown open abruptly, to admit Ethel Penhale, her face white with suppressed excitement.

With a malicious glance at Norma, that girl strode across the room to where the squire and his older guests were standing.

"Wait!" she exclaimed breathlessly.

There was a sudden, surprised hush. Norma's fingers were poised over the piano keys; her face had turned deathly pale.

She could see what Ethel was holding in her hand.

"Look!" went on Ethel, holding up a white gossamer object that fluttered in the faint breeze from the open door. "Everyone! Do you know what this is? It's part of the headdress worn by the phantom figure that's haunting Grey Gables—and I found it in the dressing-room, under Norma's coat!"

An almost uncanny silence followed the dramatic words.

Every eye in the room was turned towards Norma, seated, pale as death, at the piano.

"What—what is this?" burst out Squire Guthrie agitatedly. "What are you saying, Miss Penhale?"

"I'm saying," repeated Ethel, her voice rising shrilly as she pointed an accusing finger at the white-faced young pianist, "that Norma knows more about the Phantom than she'll say—that she's been deceiving us all along!"

A horrified gasp greeted her words; an astounded murmur rippled round the ball-room.

There came a broken cry as little Elsie darted from among the crowd of startled children and clung to Norma's hand, looking appealingly up into her face.

Young Martin, not to be outdone, sidled up on her other side and stared aggressively at Ethel Penhale.

"You can't go talking to Norma like that!" he declared indignantly.

The children's action caused a momentary diversion, and gave Norma time to collect her thoughts.

"I don't know what you mean, Ethel," she declared quietly. "That—that is an old scarf of mine; what makes you imagine that it has anything to do with—with the Phantom?"

"Yes, explain yourself, Miss Penhale!" cut in the squire.

Ethel, her face crimson now with excitement, held up the scarf.

"I know it's the same!" she exclaimed. "And father will tell you so."

"Most emphatically that is part of the Phantom's headdress!" declared Mr. Penhale harshly.

Norma's heart sank; she felt that the net was closing round her, without a chance of escape.

And just then, with dramatic unexpectedness, the door burst open—to admit Gerald!

Gerald, his boyish face crimson with excitement, his hair awry.

"Uncle—Mr. Guthrie—guess what I've seen?" he panted. "The Phantom of Grey Gables! It's in the grounds, I saw it flitting through the trees, in the moonlight—and with any luck we'll be able to catch the scoundrel!"

Further chapters of this enthralling mystery serial appear in next Friday's **GIRLS' CRYSTAL**. Order your copy early, to make sure of reading them.

coats. Doreen, pausing just for a moment, grabbed at one of the coats, at one of the hats.

"Come on!" she jerked. "Up to our room!" She flew on up the stairs, the hat and coat trailing over her arm.

"Sylvia, I've an idea—"

Swiftly she spoke as they raced upstairs and flew along landings.

Downstairs, the hotel echoed to the clatter of running feet and shouting voices. The gendarme appeared, puffing breathlessly, moustaches bristling.

"A man in a red jersey—wiz trois girls! You have seen them?" he demanded excitedly of an hotel servant.

The servant nodded, indicated the stairs.

Up charged the gendarme, cape flying over his shoulders. Again he made inquiries—again he was directed. Doreen & Co.'s headlong flight had been too conspicuous to be missed.

Now the policeman had reached the landing of the second floor. He had been told the number of the girls' room. Up to the door he clattered, knocked loudly.

"Open zis door in ze name of the law!" he bellowed, and turned the handle.

Next moment he had halted on the threshold, blinking into the room in amazement.

In the centre of the room stood the three girls. There was no sign of the youthful fugitive who had been wearing the colours of the Corvish skating team. But with the girls was a very elderly looking man, bearded, and well muffled up in a thick overcoat, with a soft hat pulled down over his forehead.

"Oh dear!" Doreen gasped. "The police, grandpa—"

THEIR QUEST AT THE WINTER SPORTS

(Continued from page 348.)

The gendarme advanced grimly into the room.

"A man I hunt—I am told he came here," he said. "Where is he?"

Doreen gave another gasp, looked quickly over her shoulder at the open french windows which led on to the balcony outside.

"Ha, you not so clever!" the gendarme cried. "He escape zat way, eh?"

Over to the balcony he hurried. Doreen winked.

"And now you must come for your walk, grandpa," she said, taking the "old man's" arm.

Escorted by the three girls, "grandpa" moved towards the door. The gendarme turned suspiciously.

"Hey, where you going?" he demanded.

"Just for a stroll," Doreen replied innocently. But inside her, her heart was thumping. Would they get away with it—or would the gendarme realise that this "old man" was Douglas Drake?

Like lightning the girls had worked. The beard which disguised his face was the one that, days before, Tony had worn when impersonating Jules Leroux, the St. Lauritz guide. In a moment of inspiration Doreen had remembered it as she was racing into the hotel.

Through the doorway they went, conscious that the gendarme was still eyeing them. Then down the passage.

They reached the stairs, began descending.

"It's working!" whispered Sylvia. "We're not out of the wood yet! Oh, golly, there's another gendarme waiting in the vestibule!" Doreen groaned. "Keep up the acting, for goodness' sake!"

Palpatingly, they descended the last stairs and reached the vestibule. Outside Doreen saw a crowd of onlookers, but the gendarme had ordered them to keep back.

Doreen's heart thumped inside her. The gendarme was eyeing them. His gaze swept up and down Douglas.

The gendarme raised one arm, then waved it towards the doorway.

"Passez-vous, m'selles," he said.

Doreen thought she would have to shout aloud with the relief that flooded her. He was telling them to pass.

They passed—as quickly as they dared, without giving the game away. Down the steps they went, Doreen tugging at Douglas' arm and leading him to the side of the hotel.

Hearts hammering, they slowly made their way forward—with maddening slowness, when all the time they wanted to run, run!

"We'll do it!" Doreen gasped. "Only another few yards, and then you must bolt. Get a sleigh—get away anyhow. Where can Sylvia see you—"

But even as she spoke there was a shrill cry behind them. A cry in the voice of Irma Ross.

"That's him! That's him in disguise! Don't let him get away!"

What further exciting adventures are to happen to the chums? Where will the strange mystery about Sylvia lead them? You must read next week's long instalment of this fine story. Order your **GIRLS' CRYSTAL** to-day!

G.C.W. 13

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