

"HER UNKNOWN ENEMY AT SCHOOL"

Early chapters of
a splendid mystery
serial—inside.

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EVERY FRIDAY.

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GIRLS' CRYSTAL ^{2^D} WEEKLY



**"THE PHANTOM'S
COSTUME!"** Gerald cried.

And he held up the robe
which had enabled Norma
to carry out her secret
search.

(See "The Girl who Haunted
Grey Gables"—inside.)

The GIRL WHO HAUNTED GREY GABLES



GERALD'S BOMBSHELL

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.

At a New Year's party given by Squire Guthrie, Ethel Penhale, Mr. Penhale's unpleasant daughter, discovered part of Norma's "phantom" dress, and accused her of being connected with the Phantom.

In the tense silence that followed, Gerald appeared.

"The Phantom is in the grounds!" he said excitedly. "With any luck we'll be able to catch the scoundrel!"

IN the stunned silence that followed Gerald's dramatic statement Norma stood motionless, her face deathly pale, her bewildered gaze fastened on the boy.

According to Gerald, the Phantom had been seen in the grounds, and was lurking there at this moment.

Yet that was fantastic—impossible. Gerald must have been deceived by some trick of the moonlight or the shadows; for Norma alone knew the real identity of the Phantom, though she dared not speak.

The elusive wraith—the spectre of Grey Gables—had been created by herself.

Of course, Gerald had allowed his imagination to run away with him; yet his mistake was fortunate for her.

For it cleared her completely of Ethel Penhale's malicious accusation.

In the loud buzz of excitement that followed the momentary silence Norma saw Ethel and her father exchange baffled glances; Mr. Penhale's face was white with chagrin and something akin to fear.

"It's a trick!" he declared harshly.

"Of course it's a trick, uncle!" agreed Gerald. "Someone's playing ghost—as I said all along. But we'll catch him—or her—this time. The spectre was making towards the terrace; I chased it, but it gave me the slip. It can't have gone far. I



By RENEE FRAZER

came back to get my torch. Any of you chaps want to join in the hunt?"

"Rather!" came the eager chorus from a number of Gerald's own chums.

There was a rush for the door. The squire himself snatched up a lantern and announced his intention of joining the search party.

But he paused for a moment to speak to Norma.

"Of course, Miss Royston," he said gruffly, "this completely clears you of the charge that was just made against you. I must apologise—on behalf of all present."

He raised his voice slightly for the benefit of Ethel Penhale; that girl looked furious and discomfited as she turned away.

A few minutes later Norma and Ethel were alone in the room with the excited children.

The youngsters, led by Martin, had raced to the window, and were peering eagerly out into the dusk.

Dancing lights could be seen flashing among the bushes as the guests carried out their search.

"Norma, do you think they'll catch the ghost?" demanded young Martin eagerly. "I wish I could join in!"

Little Elsie edged nearer, her hand sliding confidently into Norma's.

"I—I don't like ghosts, Norma," she

confided. "I think they're horrid! There are no such things—really?"

"Of course not, dear!" replied Norma unsteadily. "It's just—just a stupid trick."

She felt uncomfortably guilty as she spoke, hardly daring to meet the little girl's trustful glance.

Supposing the children ever discovered the part she was playing in secret!

Norma shrank from the thought. They must never know!

A sudden uneasy thought came to her.

Her phantom costume! In order to hide it from Ethel she had slipped the costume into the shrubbery outside the cloak-room window.

What if the searchers came across it?

Norma was filled with sudden panic; though the costume might not be associated with her, she could not afford to lose it now, just when she was on the brink of fresh discoveries.

Gerald's tale of the secret passage, connecting Grey Gables with the caves, was still vividly clear in her mind.

Somewhere in those underground labyrinths might lie hidden a clue to her father's secret, and she would need the costume if she were to carry out her reckless plan.

Yet how could she slip away—with Ethel watching her as a cat watches a mouse, and the excited children plying her with questions?

Norma passed a hand unsteadily across her forehead.

"I—I feel rather faint," she declared—and her statement was partly true.

"If you don't mind watching the children, Ethel, I think I'll go out and get some fresh air."

Ethel shrugged ungraciously, but did not trouble to reply; she was obviously fuming under the rebuff she had received from the squire.

Norma left the ball-room and stole out through the conservatory into the grounds.

She could hear the searchers calling to one another as they beat the bushes.

The irony of the situation might have been laughable—were it not so serious.

Quickening her steps, her heart beating quickly, Norma reached the clump of bushes outside the cloak-room window.

Peering beneath them, she could just see the precious bundle caught up in the foliage.

With a sigh of relief, she reached out to grasp it; but at the same instant another hand appeared, whisking the bundle out of sight.

There came a triumphant shout from the other side of the bush.

The costume which was so necessary to enable Norma to carry out her secret task was in Gerald's possession. And he was keeping it in order to trap the person who was playing the ghost!

"Hallo there! This way! Look what I've found!"

It was Gerald's cheery voice.

Norma's heart sank as she heard a rush of footsteps; to attempt to conceal herself would be useless. Anyway, the harm was done; the very thing she had feared had come about.

The precious costume had fallen into the hands of the searchers!

In the general excitement Norma's appearance on the scene was practically unnoticed; everyone was clustering round Gerald, examining his "find."

"The Phantom's rigout—or I'm a Dutchman!" he declared. "What a find! Wonder how the rascal came to discard it? Hallo, Norma!" He caught sight of her and waved his hand cheerily. "Come an' take a squint at this. It's not every day you'll get a chance of seeing the full-dress outfit of a pukka spook!"

Norma approached, her hands clenched at her sides; she tried to appear as excited as the others, but it was a difficult pretence.

"Ever seen anything like it?" demanded Gerald, as he held out the shimmering gown. "It's the genuine stuff—and no mistake!"

But, though he spoke jokingly, his eyes were rather grim.

"What—what are you going to do with it?" faltered Norma.

The question escaped her lips in spite of herself. Gerald glanced at her quizzically, while his companions offered joking suggestions.

"I don't know," he said thoughtfully. "I'll have to think it over. One thing—it's going to queer the trickster's game for the time being. Hallo! Here's Mr. Guthrie! I say, sir, look what I've found!"

The squire himself appeared at that moment, a rather worried frown on his bluff features.

"What's this—what's this?" he demanded. "Bless my soul—the Phantom's costume! The scoundrel must have discarded it in order to escape. And that brings me to a rather serious matter; I've discovered that the window of my study has been forced, and my desk rifled—during the last half-hour. Luckily, nothing of value has been stolen—but it's quite obvious that this Phantom was the culprit!"

Norma felt the blood drain from her face as an angry murmur went up from the group.

What could be the meaning of this startling new development? Only one thing seemed possible. Someone must have taken advantage of the "ghost" scare in order to break into the house!

This was something she had not foreseen!

Everyone was discussing the attempted burglary—and making plans for catching the trickster.

Norma, though guiltless, was conscious of a sinking at her heart.

Supposing that she were ever suspected of playing the Phantom—then she might even be accused of theft!

Yet there was little chance that she would ever be suspected, now—after the events of this evening. Unless—

She glanced at the costume slung carelessly over Gerald's arm—and into her eyes sprang a sudden gleam of horror.

There was something she had forgotten!

In one of her nocturnal excursions she had slipped her handkerchief into an inner pocket of the phantom gown; and now, with a sharp stab of dismay, she recollected that the handkerchief was still there—and that it bore her initials!

NORMA'S STARTLING DISCOVERY

THE recollection of that incriminating handkerchief came as a final, stunning blow.

If Gerald or the squire discovered it, it would mean the end to everything!

Her heart in her mouth, Norma watched Gerald as he shook out the robe—revealing its shimmering lining.

"I'll take charge of this, sir—if you don't mind," he said. "I've an idea I may be able to lay a trap for the Phantom."

"By all means, my boy," replied the squire. "The sooner the elusive scoundrel is caught the better for all concerned. And now—let us rejoin the youngsters. I'm afraid this affair has rather upset their party."

For the next two hours the squire forbade any further mention of the Phantom. It was the children's big evening, and their fun was not to be spoiled.

The time passed rapidly—all too quickly for the youngsters; Norma, busily helping to entertain them, tried to forget the deepening cloud of trouble that threatened her.

But when at last the party over, and the last good-byes were being said, Norma thought of the fateful costume—and made a final desperate attempt to gain access to it.

She had seen Gerald place it in his car before returning to the porch to say good-bye to the squire.

Mr. Penhale and his daughter had taken their leave early, and Norma and the two children were waiting for Gerald to join them.

Martin and Elsie were chasing happily round the car—and Norma seized her chance to slip into the driving-seat and grasp the parcel.

She had some reckless idea of substituting its contents—but even as she bent over it, she heard Gerald's brisk footsteps crossing the drive.

She straightened hurriedly, a guilty look on her face, as he appeared at the door.

"Hallo!" he remarked cheerily. "All ready? Come on, kiddies—jump in behind! Norma's going to ride in front with me this journey."

Norma bit her lip as he picked up the

fateful parcel, thrusting it under the seat.

Gerald drove more slowly than was his wont, and was evidently inclined to talk.

"It's a queer thing about that Phantom, Norma," he said thoughtfully. "Hasn't it struck you—it must be someone living in the village—and someone who's acquainted both with Grey Gables and the Hall? That narrows things down a bit; I mean, it rules out a lot of the villagers who've never had a chance to visit either place."

He glanced at her keenly, as though anxious that she should follow his train of thought.

Norma swallowed hard, her hands clenched tightly on her lap.

"Yes," she breathed. "I—I suppose you're right."

"Of course I'm right!" declared Gerald eagerly. "Now—who does that leave us with? The members of the two households—including the servants; but I think we can rule them out. Then there are friends and neighbours—like Dr. Burton and yourself, for instance." He grinned at her boyishly. "I'm not casting aspersions—but you get the idea?"

Norma nodded, not trusting herself to speak; her heart was thumping almost to suffocation.

Gerald's smile faded as he brought the car to a standstill beside the shop and helped Norma to alight.

"I've a shrewd idea that the Phantom's got some secret motive that none of us suspect," he went on. "So far the purpose has got me beaten—but I'm convinced I'll get a line on it before long. Meanwhile—I've got the costume!"

Norma forced herself to speak.

"What—what are you going to do with it?" she asked.

Gerald grinned mysteriously.

"I've got that all cut and dried," he said, "but don't breathe a word to anyone! I'm going to arrange a trap—on the night that the Phantom generally appears; that's to-morrow night. I'm going to leave the costume in the library—and keep watch. I've an idea the spectre may return for its robes, and I'll be ready for it!"

Norma's pulses were racing. Gerald



"What—what are you going to do with the costume?" Norma asked. Gerald grinned. "I'm going to arrange a trap. I've an idea the spectre will return for the robes, and I'll be ready for him—or her!"

was all unsuspecting of the fact that he was speaking to the Phantom itself!

"And—and supposing it doesn't turn up?" she asked, trying to steady her voice.

"Then I'll have to think out something else," Gerald smiled grimly. "I'll get it somehow—never fear!"

Though Norma knew that she was treading on dangerous ground, she could not remain silent.

"But—but what will you do with the costume in the meantime?" she inquired, endeavouring to speak carelessly.

"Oh, I'll find some place for it," declared Gerald cheerfully. "I'll shut it up somewhere where the servants won't find it—in the old oak chest in the lumber-room, maybe. The servants are scared to go in there after dark; they don't like the black statue."

Norma's heart gave a violent jump, but she dared say no more. Gerald accompanied them to the door of the shop and bade them a cheery good-night.

He glanced quizzically at Norma as he shook hands.

"I hope you're not bored stiff with me," he said. "I've been jawing about the Phantom and clean forgetting my duties as an escort. But I'll make up for it some other time. I want you and the two youngsters to come out exploring with me along the cliffs one day; there are some quaint old ruins near Grey Gables. What about it?"

The two children clapped their hands delightedly, and Norma nodded, forcing a quick smile.

"I'd love to!" she declared.

But her thoughts were not on his cheery invitation; they were concerned with a certain reckless resolve that was taking shape in her mind—a decision on which her whole future might depend.

After Gerald had taken his departure, Norma busied herself in seeing the two children into bed.

They seemed particularly reluctant to leave her. Little Elsie, tired out, but flushed with excitement, clung tenaciously to her hand and demanded a bed-time story. Martin eagerly seconded the request.

There was nothing for it but to comply.

Sitting on the edge of the bed, Norma tried momentarily to forget her own desperate problem while she told them a story of bygone days—of mystery and thrilling adventure.

"And now—that's all for to-night, dears," she added firmly, as she rose to her feet. "I want you to go to sleep quickly, as—as I've some important work to do."

Little Elsie sighed, as she snuggled under the bedclothes.

"Do 'ventures like that happen these days, Norma?" she asked.

"Course not, silly!" declared young Martin, with a superior smile. "That's all in the olden times. There aren't any treasure-ships now—nor pirates; only sailors, like grand'ad!"

Elsie looked up wistfully.

"I wish grand'ad would come home," she said. "When do you think he'll come, Norma?"

Norma bit her lip as she turned to pick up the candle.

It was the question she always dreaded; the more so as the days wore on and there was no word nor sign from the absent Ben Tregellis.

"Very soon now, dear," she returned brightly. "We'll be hearing from him any day to say that his ship is coming home. And then won't we have great times together!"

Both children agreed—though Norma believed that she detected the faintest shadow of doubt in young Martin's boyish eyes.

For how long could she keep up this pretence?

After the last good-nights had been said, Norma hurried downstairs—and across the road to a kindly neighbour of hers, Mrs. Fowey, wife of the village cobbler.

Mrs. Fowey had a daughter of Norma's own age—a strapping country girl who was in service in the village. Winnie had frequently offered to take care of the two children should Norma wish to go out.

She was at home now, and she willingly offered to go across for an hour or so.

Norma gave the excuse that she had to make a call, which was true—though it was not the kind of call that her friendly neighbour imagined.

Ten minutes later she was hurrying along the lonely cliff path that led to Grey Gables.

But to-night she did not approach the house directly; instead, she made her way down the steep slope that led to the beach!

The tide was out, and the wide stretch of sand and shingle glistened under the light of the moon. The silence was unbroken except for the distant murmur of the sea.

Norma's heart beat quickly as she approached the cave—the cave in which she had met with her perilous adventure.

It had been gloomy enough in the day-time, but by moonlight it was indescribably eerie.

Norma was glad that she had brought her torch with her; its brilliant beam helped to dispel something of the gloom.

Standing on the pile of loose rocks where she had found the missing bale, Norma flashed her torch up into the dark, vaulted roof.

She could not see the concealed opening mentioned by Gerald, but she saw the flight of rough-hewn steps that led to it.

Thrusting aside her momentary fears, she cautiously made the ascent. In a few moments she saw the dark opening of a tunnel gaping above her.

She required every ounce of her courage to squeeze through that dim opening into the narrow passage beyond.

The passage had probably been used by old-time smugglers, and was supported in places by crumbling brick-work.

The air was quite fresh, and evidently there was an outlet at the other end.

The tunnel grew narrower as she proceeded, and Norma was forced to walk in a stooping position, flashing her torch in front of her.

Her fears now were almost forgotten in a thrill of excitement.

Though she had come with a definite purpose—to recover the phantom costume from Grey Gables—that was not the sole reason that had prompted her reckless venture.

Gerald's story of the Black Knight—and the chain of subterranean passages below the house—had added to her determination.

She was convinced that the secret hinted at in her father's diary was concealed in or beneath Grey Gables!

And she must find it—before it fell into the hands of her enemies! For sooner or later Gerald was bound to tell his uncle about his discovery, and once the secret got into the hands of

Mr. Penhale and his daughter, Norma felt convinced that it would be lost to her for ever.

The narrow passage seemed to wind interminably, and Norma was beginning to lose hope when, unexpectedly, the tunnel grew wider, and opened into a gloomy cave or cellar!

As Norma stared round at the mildewed brick walls and the heap of old lumber piled in a corner—barrels, empty crates almost crumbling with age, coils of tarred rope, and rusted chains—her pulses quickened.

She was convinced that she must be in one of the cellars beneath Grey Gables itself!

She quickened her steps across the gloomy cavern, hardly daring to listen to the eerie echoes. In her haste, she tripped over a loose coil of rope and fell heavily, bruising her arm.

Luckily, her torch had escaped damage, though it had rolled out of her reach beneath a pile of crates and tarpaulin.

Feeling rather shaken by her fall, Norma groped for it; inadvertently, she pulled something else out with the torch—a seaman's cap, dusty and torn.

She was about to toss it aside when some vague stirring of memory caused her to glance at it more closely.

There was a name written on the lining; it was barely legible, but Norma contrived to pick out the faint lettering.

Then a stifled cry escaped her lips, and the blood drained from her face.

For the name inside the battered cap was: "Ben Tregellis"!

THE PHANTOM CAUGHT!

NORMA felt momentarily stunned by her strange discovery. What did it mean? What could it mean?

This was the cap that the old sailor had worn on the night of his disappearance! But how came it to be here—in a cellar beneath Grey Gables?

The startling discovery sent Norma's thoughts racing back to that unforgettable night when she had first arrived in Clovellyn.

She remembered her meeting with the old sailor who had been her father's bo'sun. His strange warning regarding her visit to Grey Gables; his anxiety to speak to her again before she made her decision.

She had waited for him in vain on that night of howling storm, trying to comfort the two frightened children who had been left in her charge.

And then had come the news that he had gone to sea—on some supposed smuggling expedition.

But who had brought that news?

Mr. Penhale, and his daughter Ethel. Apparently they had received the information from some unnamed friend. But she only had their word for it.

No one else had seen the old sailor after he left her at the station.

Norma's face was deathly pale; her thoughts were racing.

The Penhales had lied to her. Ben Tregellis could not have gone to sea—or how came his cap to be here?

What did it all mean?

Norma thought of the old sailor's two young grandchildren, trustfully awaiting his return, wondering at his long absence.

A choking lump rose in her throat, and her hands clenched at her sides.

She must find out the truth, somehow—at all costs!

She was convinced that Mr. Penhale

(Please turn to the back page.)

Back to School for a Day



Pat Lovell only went to the big girls' school to find out what the headmistress thought of the Modern Girl. But she very quickly realised that she simply must do something to help a mistress who was in danger of being dismissed!

WHO SLAMMED THE DOOR?

By ELIZABETH CHESTER

THE bell for morning lessons had rung fully fifteen minutes before Pat Lovell sauntered through the gates of Maunsley College; but as Pat was not a schoolgirl, but a girl reporter, naturally it was a matter of complete indifference to her whether she was late for lessons or not.

"So this is Maunsley College?" said Pat, halting in the large archway that gave entrance to the drive.

The school porter surveyed her through his glasses.

"Yes, this is it, miss. Have you an appointment?"

Pat nodded and showed him her Press card.

"Midshire Gazette," she said.

"I've an appointment with Miss Carson, the headmistress."

"Reporter, eh?" said the porter, with interest. "You'll find Miss Carson in the main building, straight ahead."

"Thank you," smiled Pat. "And watch out for Miss Carson's views on the modern schoolgirl in to-morrow's Gazette."

She strolled up the drive, admiring the lovely old lawns and flower beds and thinking what a lovely school it was. Walking through the main doorway, she halted in the Hall and looked about her. It was an impressive place, decked with oil-paintings, books, silver cups, shields, and other school trophies.

Pat wandered about for a few minutes in the silent Hall in reminiscent mood, and then, glancing at the clock, saw that it was time for her appointment. Crossing to the bell-push, she pressed it. A trim maid answered, and took Pat's card to the headmistress.

Two minutes passed, and then a faint sound at the other end of the Hall made Pat turn. At that moment she was beside a bookcase, studying a small picture, and had been hidden from the view of anyone at the far end of the Hall.

Thus it was that the middle-aged woman who tiptoed from a side corridor had not seen her. But Pat, attracted by a slight creaking sound, turned in time to see the woman.

Quite startled, Pat stood and stared, for the woman looked as though she was a mistress, yet she might have been a burglar, so stealthily did she enter another side corridor.

Perplexed, Pat watched her, and then a sound came that made her jump

nearly out of her skin. A door slammed violently, and glass shivered and fell with a crash.

Thinking that something serious might have happened, Pat crossed the Hall swiftly, entered that side corridor, and came to a halt as she saw a shower of glass on the floor, and caught a glimpse of that mysterious woman disappearing round the far bend of the corridor.

The door that had been slammed was opened, and a fair-haired young woman—evidently a mistress—looked out.

"Oh, did you open and slam this door?" she asked Pat, her voice trembling.

"I? Why, no!" said Pat.

"Well, someone flung open the door, slammed it, and broke the glass," said the young woman worriedly.

Inside the room was commotion and uproar, and now a dozen or more girls crowded forward, smiling merrily.

"I saw someone hurry down the corridor," said Pat. "And—"

At that moment the strange woman she had seen appeared in sight, approached the scene, and halted. She had a sour-looking face, and her presence was enough to end the girls' laughter and to send them scurrying back to their desks.

"Miss Pusey, what is this?" she asked. "I suppose someone threw a book?"

"Nun-no, Miss Symes. Someone opened the door and slammed it."

"Nonsense! Why should anyone do such a thing, and who should do it, pray?"

Pat saw Miss Pusey, the fair young mistress, looking at her accusingly.

"This girl was standing near the door," she said.

"I was; but I only came on the scene after the crash," said Pat; and then, looking at Miss Symes carefully, knew that she was not mistaken. Miss Symes it was who had tiptoed into the corridor and hurried round the bend. "But I saw someone walk into this corridor," Pat added grimly.

Miss Symes gave her a quick look, and her anxiety was ill-concealed.

"In—indeed! Who?" she asked.

"You," said Pat candidly.

"I? I? You suggest that I slammed the door and broke the glass?" cried Miss Symes, a pink spot in either cheek.

"Good gracious!" gasped Miss Pusey. "Really! What a thing to suggest! I'm afraid that cannot be true."

"Of course it isn't true!" snapped Miss Symes. "And I should like to know who this person is, what she is doing, sneaking about the corridor? If anyone slammed the door she did!"

The maid-servant walked into the corridor and approached Pat, looking in surprise at the broken glass.

"The headmistress is ready to see you," she said.

Miss Symes turned to her.

"Ask Miss Carson to come here, please. It is a matter of great urgency," she said.

Pat's mind was in a whirl, for she was positive it was Miss Symes she had seen walk into the corridor and hurry off.

She said nothing, however, waiting for the headmistress to appear. Miss Carson presently hurried on to the scene, white-haired and dignified, some fifty years of age.

"Good gracious, what is this?" she asked. "Miss Pusey, has there been another uproar in your Form-room? Does this mean there has been book-throwing again—with this result?"

Miss Pusey coloured deeply, and Pat felt sorry for her; the mistress was young, pretty, and it seemed obvious that before now the girls in her Form had taken advantage of her youth and inexperience.

"I—the door was slammed, Miss Carson," she said, and explained what had happened.

"And this young person accuses me of doing it," said Miss Symes, with a short laugh.

Pat met the headmistress' puzzled glance.

"I only came into the corridor when I hear the crash of the glass, Miss Carson," said Pat.

The headmistress shrewd eyes measured her, glanced at Miss Pusey, and then at Miss Symes.

"I think we had better adjourn to my study," she said. "I will ask Miss Lanchester to take charge of these girls."

Then, turning, she led the way, and Pat Lovell, who had fancied that she could walk into the headmistress' study coolly, without a tremor, found that she was wrong.

She was innocent, just as she had been in her schooldays—sometimes—when summoned to the headmistress's study. But, with deep dismay, Pat began to see that her innocence might avail her nothing—that, on the face of things, it would seem more likely that she had slammed the door than Miss Symes.

And if the headmistress believed that, then, quite obviously, she would wish Pat "Good-morning!" and say not one word about the modern girl.

Pat was on the carpet, and if things went badly she would be on the editor's carpet later. For a reporter who so misbehaved herself that she was forbidden an interview was the very last thing Pat wanted to be—a failure.

MISS PUSEY IN DISTRESS

PAT LOVELL did not intend to be "sat upon," and by the time she reached the headmistress's study she had mastered her qualms.

Head up, she followed the mistresses into the study, and calmly took stock of it—the school pictures; the books, flowers; litters of papers on the mahogany desk; the presentation clock. She was a reporter again, and not a rather scared schoolgirl.

Miss Carson seated herself at her desk, and then heard the two mistresses state exactly what they had seen. Then came Pat's turn.

"I was in the Hall, Miss Carson," she said quietly, "when a slight sound caused me to turn, and I saw Miss Symes tiptoe into that corridor. Almost instantly I heard the slam of a door and the crash of glass. Running to the corridor, I was in time to see Miss Symes hurrying round the far bend."

Pat spoke coolly, and Miss Symes stood with hands clenched, lips tightly drawn; but, as the headmistress glanced at her, she arched her brows, and gave a little mocking, contemptuous toss of the head.

"You state this on your word of honour?" Miss Carson asked Pat.

"Yes," said Pat.

"Very well, then; I must accept it as what you believe you saw, although, naturally, I do not believe the person you saw was Miss Symes. Amazing though it may be, the only reasonable inference is that someone impersonated Miss Symes. And there the matter for the while must end; but I would ask you to make no mention of this in your paper."

Pat heaved a sigh, and gladly gave her word that no mention would be made.

"That is all, Miss Symes," added the headmistress. "You are quite cleared, of course; but you, Miss Pusey—"

Miss Symes went out of the room, and Pat, understanding that the headmistress wanted a word alone with the younger mistress, followed.

"Undoubtedly," said Miss Symes, out in the corridor, "some girl played a prank on Miss Pusey. They are always doing it. She should be dismissed, and doubtless will be soon. She is too young; has no idea of keeping order. But for your story, I should have believed it was a book thrown by an unruly girl that broke the glass. Lucky for Miss Pusey it was not, or it would have meant her dismissal."

Pat listened, her eyes fixed on Miss Symes, who did not meet her eyes.

"Poor Miss Pusey!" said Pat gently, and was more than ever convinced that it was no impostor she had seen, but Miss Symes herself.

The door of the headmistress's study opened, and Miss Symes moved away.

Through the part-open doorway the headmistress' words came:

"You understand, Miss Pusey? Any further indication that you cannot keep order in your Form-room, and I shall expect your resignation! You are a brilliant scholar; but if you cannot keep order you must go!"

Pat stood aside, and tried to seem as though she had not heard as little Miss Pusey came out, her face deathly white and tears shining in her eyes.

She hurried past Pat, head bowed, and then at the bend of the corridor stopped. A muffled sob came, and Pat turned, filled with deep pity, and with half a mind to offer comfort. But at that moment the headmistress called her.

Miss Carson made herself affable and agreeable at once, and said that she trusted that if her words had been overheard, no hint of them would be allowed to circulate in the school.

"Why, no!" said Pat. "I am only here to ask for an interview on the modern girl, Miss Carson."

Pat asked her questions then—whether the girls to-day differed from the girls ten years ago, twenty years ago? Were they fond of games, less fond? Were they less respectful, more restless? Did they read less? Had wireless altered their views? Were they fonder of music.

She asked fifty questions, took the replies in shorthand, and then, thanking Miss Carson, rose to go.

"You must see the school," said the headmistress. "I will ask a mistress to show you round during the break if you can return in ten minutes' time. In the meantime, perhaps you would care to stroll round the grounds, or watch the hockey match on the big field?"

Pat said she would love it, and, wishing the headmistress "Good-morning!" left the study, with a faint sigh of relief; for even now she found that a very little headmistress went a long way.

Pat walked back to the Hall, and there paused. From the Form-room where the glass was broken came the sound of merriment, prolonged and artificial. Miss Pusey, despite the warning, had not succeeded in keeping order.

With the door-glass broken, the sounds were easily heard; and Pat, out of curiosity, walked into the corridor and halted there.

When she was at school herself she would have thought it jolly fun creating a rumpus during lessons; but now she was older and she was sorry for Miss Pusey, who would lose her job.

Losing a job meant nothing to school-girls who had no jobs to lose, and these young girls probably did not realise that they were causing their mistress such unhappiness.

"They want it pointed out to them," Pat decided. "Young scamps!"

The door of the room opened, and Miss Pusey emerged, head bowed; she shut the door, put her hands to her face, and stood stock still, fighting with tears, as her clasped fingers and working mouth showed.

Pat walked up to her, deeply distressed.

"Miss Pusey," she whispered, "don't—don't! You mustn't leave them—Listen! Oh goodness!"

It was like Bedlam let loose.

"I—I can't go on! I've tried! I'm a failure!" gulped Miss Pusey. "I—I'd better resign."

Pat walked past her, opened the door, and entered the Form-room. The quick way she opened the door brought a hush, and the surprise at sight of her brought a pause in the laughter.

"To your places!" rasped Pat.

Startled, one or two girls obeyed. Removing her hat, Pat placed it on a chair, and then took off her coat. It was such unusual conduct in a visitor that the girls were silent, puzzled, and intrigued.

"The last girl to sit down will go into the detention-room!" said Pat grimly.

It was hard to tell who was the last to sit down, such a rush was there for seats.

"I am temporarily in charge of this Form," said Pat, walking to the front and surveying the girls with as grim a look as she could manage; and, remembering how she had mimicked a stern mistress at her old school, she played the same part now.

It had its effect, for the girls did not know how to take her at all. One girl, cheekier than the others, leaned forward and whispered:

"Oh, Hector!"

Giggles sounded; and Pat rapped the desk and called the girl out to the front.

"I think you had better report to the headmistress. What is your name?"

"Janet Biggs."

"Well, Janet, you may look rather small in Miss Carson's room," said Pat. "And what, pray, is there humorous in saying 'Oh, Hector'?"

Janet blushed; for she had no wish to be sent to the headmistress.

"It—it's just a joke," she said uneasily. "We pull Miss Pusey's leg about Hector."

"Why?"

"Oh, I don't know!" said Janet, a little ashamed. "Only I think she had a sweetheart named Hector, and when Miss Symes—"

"Go on," said Pat quickly.

"When Miss Symes brought in a postcard one day and—put it on the desk some of us looked at it," Janet giggled. "It was awfully soppy, and signed 'Hector'—with a lot of kisses—"

Pat stared at her.

"Wasn't it rather mean reading Miss Pusey's card?"

Janet wriggled.

"People shouldn't send things on postcards that are secret," she said guiltily. "And, anyway, I didn't read it. But someone did, and started saying 'Oh Hector!' And—and we always put crosses at the bottom of our essays, and—well—"

"In short, you have behaved badly," said Pat sternly. "The next girl who says anything about Hector will go straight to Miss Carson. You are taking a mean advantage of Miss Pusey."

There was silence in the Form-room; and Pat went to the board, took up a piece of chalk, and wrote:

"Why I am proud of my school."

"Write an essay of two hundred words on that subject," she said. "And I may tell you that before I became a schoolmistress I was a newspaper reporter—"

A buzz of interest came then.

"The best essay will be printed in the 'Midshire Gazette' if it merits it," said Pat; "so there's something to work for."

Briefly Pat gave them a lead as to why they should be proud of their school, and then went to the door, passed into the corridor, and walked up to Miss Pusey—who, now in control of herself, smiled wanly.

"You did it, but I couldn't," she said softly. "From the moment that card came they laughed at me. Someone sent the card as a joke, of course. Hector

didn't; it wasn't his writing, and it was posted near here. One of the girls must have sent it."

Pat took her arm.

"Not one of the girls," she said excitedly; "Miss Symes!"

"Miss Symes? Oh, impossible!" gasped the young mistress. "Why—why should she? She and my sister Vera were mistresses at the same school."

"She took the card into the Form-room and left it when you were out of the room. She knew what effect it would have," said Pat intensely.

But Miss Pusey shook her head. She did not think that Miss Symes was her enemy; and she could not forget that her sister Vera was a great admirer of Miss Symes—who, a year before, had been with her at St. Catherine's.

"Well, anyway," ended Pat, "I'm sure I'm right. But I suppose you had better go back to the girls. Be firm, won't you? Any nonsense—straight to the headmistress."

Miss Pusey smiled faintly, then braced herself and returned to the Form-room. There was a murmur as she opened the door, and Pat loitered; there, as no sounds of merriment or frolic came, Pat opened the shattered door.

"Excuse me one moment, Miss Pusey, please!" she said. "But I'd like you to select six girls from this Form to meet me in the tuckshop during break—and I'll take my hat and coat."

Pat took her hat and coat, smiled at the girls, and went, knowing that they would remain on their best behaviour, each one hoping to be the girl chosen to visit the tuckshop.

In thoughtful mood, Pat returned to the Hall, and there almost collided with Miss Symes, who, being free until the first lesson after the break, was idly studying the pictures.

She turned to Pat, eyes glinting.

"By what right do you pretend to be the Form-mistress?" she demanded. "I am making it my business to report this to Miss Carson. And furthermore, I heard you slandering me."

"Oh, you're a reporter, too?" asked Pat coolly. "Well, report away, Miss Symes. I know that you are trying to get Miss Pusey dismissed. I don't know why, but I shall do when her sister Vera comes this afternoon."

It was bluff; and Pat hoped that it would have slight effect, that mention of the sister might reveal why the mistress had her knife in Miss Pusey. But she was totally unprepared for the mistress' panic-stricken, horrified change of expression.

"Her sister is—coming here—here this afternoon?" she asked.

Pat had intended to put a telephone-call through to St. Catherine's School, and to ask Vera to come if she could, to save her sister from dismissal. Now her resolve hardened.

"Yes," she said, and then added, with inspiration, "and don't be surprised, Miss Symes, if Hector comes, too; that postcard incident is serious."

Pat walked on then, out to the drive, and hurried to the gates, where she hoped that she might use the porter's telephone.

Miss Symes watched her go, turned, hurried to her room, and, with trembling hands, took out a small box from her desk.

"If she comes here, if she sees me, it's the end," she muttered. "I daren't risk it. Things have got to come to a head."

And a minute after the bell rang for break she took that box down to the lower corridors, paused outside the door with the broken glass, and then, alert

for the slightest sound, walked into the empty room.

From desk to desk she went, putting in every one a cracker taken from the box. Fireworks for the imps of the Upper Third! And to make quite sure they had fun, there were three boxes of matches distributed, too.

From what she knew of the Upper Third, and Miss Pusey's inability to maintain order, there should be fun during the lesson after the break. One firework would be enough to bring the headmistress to the scene; and the rest being found in the desks, it would seem a plot hatched by the Form.

The girls would be punished, but that was not Miss Symes' most important intention. What mattered most was that Miss Pusey would be asked to resign, would leave the school at once—and her sister Vera, if she called, would not stay, but go to find her.

For Miss Symes had a very important reason for not wanting to meet Vera Pusey face to face.

THE TUCKSHOP TREAT

"Is she there?"

"Who is she?"

"Is she standing treat?"

The high-spirited Upper Third girls looked into the tuckshop, having raced there as hard as they could, six



"Miss Symes?" asked the disguised Pat. Miss Carson indicated the woman beside her, and Pat looked her up and down. Now was her chance to expose her for the impostor she was.

of them chosen by Miss Pusey; and as they were the six ring-leaders in mischief, there would be no deep groaning disapproval after the break.

Pat Lovell was there waiting for them. It was a splendid tuckshop and took her back years in memory. There were sweets, chocolates, cakes, tarts, pies, cold chicken, tongue, everything to delight hungry schoolgirls; and Pat, having counted her money, was prepared to stand treat.

The girls crowded round eagerly, and all together asked Pat if she were really a mistress.

"Me? Good gracious, no!" said Pat, laughing. "I was just pulling your legs. Here, try these tarts. I always wanted to send girls into detention, just to see what it felt like. It was grand fun for me."

The girls blinked in amazement, and then when they had fully mastered the fact that Pat, a visitor, had calmly hoodwinked them that she was a mistress, they yelled with laughter.

"The cheek! What a nerve!"

"And, golly—I really thought I was going to the Head," said Janet Biggs. "Phew! You did it jolly well. Doughnuts, please."

They had what they wanted—tarts, doughnuts, gingerbeer, sweets; it was a merry party.

"We'll have to return this—give you tea in the Common-room," said Janet. "Eh, girls? But, I say, you really are a reporter? That essay-writing wasn't all kid, was it? Because I really took a heap of trouble with mine."

Pat laughed.

"That was genuine. Send the essays to me at the 'Gazette' office, and I'll pick the best—honest." But she became serious then, and beckoned them to gather near.

"Listen—do you kids really like Miss Symes?" she asked.

"Golly, no! She's awful!" said Janet, surprised.

"Well, why play into her hands?" asked Pat. "You'll get poor Miss Pusey sacked if you carry on in this way. I've advised her to treat you all rough—"

"Oh, have you? Thanks," said Janet, taken aback.

"Um, she's rather a dear!" admitted another.

And their intentions were good when they re-entered the Form-room; perhaps they might have been well-behaved for the rest of the morning, at least, had not Janet, opening her desk, found a box of matches on top of her books, and beside it a jumping cracker.

"Golly! Look!" she exclaimed.
"Phew! Light it!" said one of the other girls, who had not been at the tuckshop party.

"No, no!" warned Janet.
"Afraid?" said the other girl—the one who had first read the postcard that had started their fun with the new mistress.

Dared by other giggling girls, Janet struck a match. Footsteps sounded, and she gave a jump. The match touched the fuse, and the firework fizzed.

Janet, with great presence of mind, snatched it, and hurled it out of the window, where it fell to the grass ten yards from Miss Carson, who strolled along the path with Miss Symes.

With a loud report the jumping cracker exploded—jumped, exploded, jumped—and so did Miss Carson and Miss Symes. Then both glanced up at the Form-room window, turned, and hurried into the school.

"This is the finish!" said Miss Carson fiercely. "You're right, Miss Symes; Miss Pusey must go, and go at once!"

A MISTRESS OF MYSTERY

PAT LOVELL, from the school gates, had seen those crackers explode, and her heart sank; for the fifth time she went to the porter, who sat in his lodge.

"Has the messenger arrived yet—ah!" she ended, for even as she asked, a boy wheeled a cycle through the gates, a large bundle under his arm, and a blue winter coat tossed over his shoulder.

"Thank you!" said Pat. And, tipping him, she took the coat and bundle, moving swiftly away to the hockey pavilion.

There, in the privacy of the changing-room, she unfastened the bundle, took out a black wig, a dark, long frock, a pair of glasses, and a tin of make-up.

Pat worked feverishly. Everything that she had asked her friend at the theatrical costumiers to send had been sent, and she herself had forgotten nothing necessary to change her appearance.

Shortly before the girl had arrived in the tuckshop, Pat had telephoned Vera Pusey at St. Catherine's, and then the costumiers. In five minutes, she was a changed person, only recognisable by someone who knew her really well. Thus garbed, Pat walked quickly to the School House, walked boldly in, and to the Upper Third Form Room.

She paused outside the doorway for a moment, hearing every word through the broken door.

"The whole Form will be detained!" said Miss Carson, in anger. "You have become unbelievably unruly, and I do not believe that you found the fireworks in your desks. It was an arranged plot, and until the culprits confess, you will lose your half-holidays."

A groan came from the Form, and the headmistress turned to Miss Pusey.

"I shall have a good deal to say to you in my study, Miss Pusey," she added.

But as she turned to the door it opened, and Pat entered. Without beating about the bush, Pat addressed Miss Carson.

"Miss Symes?" she asked.

"This is Miss Symes," said the surprised headmistress, indicating the short, dark-haired woman beside her.

Pat looked Miss Symes up and down.
"You do not remember Vera Pusey?" she asked.

Miss Symes fell back, a stricken look on her face, but did not speak.

"You are an impostor!" said Pat, in ringing tones. "You are not the Miss Symes who was at St. Catherine's with—"

The Upper Third sat hushed; Miss Pusey stood staring, round-eyed; but Miss Carson spoke up.

"What, what!" she exclaimed. "I

Your Editor's Corner



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

MY DEAR READERS,—It seems hardly possible that we are nearly at the end of January—the first month of a brand new year—already, does it?

I suppose when we start to write Feb 1st at the top of our letters—and you on your Homework—we shan't be thinking of it as a new year any more!

I wonder how many of you will have managed to keep your Christmas-present diaries up to that date.

Now, of course, you'll be wanting to know something about the tales you'll be reading next Friday.

As I peep into my Detail Book—which tells me all about the stories that are coming for you in the **GIRLS' CRYSTAL**—I see some particularly fascinating titles for next week's programme.

SIX GRAND STORIES

"The Golden Finger Print!" sounds very intriguing, doesn't it? It is the title of the complete thrill-and-mystery story featuring Noel Raymond, the young detective.

This story will hold you enthralled from first word to last—so be sure you don't miss it.

How that young reporter, Pat Lovell, does get around! Don't her adventures make you wish you had a job like hers?

"The Fox Cub Pat Protected!" is the title of the story in which this delightful young person features next week, and it tells most enthrallingly how Pat hoaxed a hunt in order to save a girl's pet fox cub.

Kaye of the Kennels will also feature in another delightful complete story—one that all pets-lovers particularly will enjoy.

Our three serials will continue as enjoyably as ever from where they leave off this week—so you're certain of a delightful feast of story reading next Friday.

Remember to order your **GIRLS' CRYSTAL** in advance, won't you?

Your sincere friend,

YOUR EDITOR

have Miss Symes' references from St. Catherine's—"

"Ah, no doubt, and they are excellent," said Pat. "But this person is a fraud; she is not Miss Symes, and that is why she has tried to get Miss Pusey dismissed; because she knew that very soon her sister, who knew Miss Symes would come to the school and expose her."

The impostor moved back, and then suddenly she darted to the door; but Pat barred her way.

"Let me go!" the mistress cried in panic.

"No—not before you confess," said Pat grimly.

Miss Symes, wrenching herself free, ran into the corridor, and Miss Carson, after a stunned pause, followed her, leaving Pat with Miss Pusey and the Form.

"But—but—you are not Vera!" gasped Miss Pusey.

"Nevertheless, it has had the same effect," smiled Pat. "And now—good-afternoon, girls—and be good."

Thereupon, an imp of mischief seizing her, Pat raised hat and wig in one piece. Recognition dawned upon Miss Pusey and the girls, and shrieks of delighted laughter came.

"Order!" called Pat, in alarm.
"Three cheers for Miss Pusey!"

As the cheers resounded, Pat hurried out, and did not stop hurrying until she had reached the pavilion, and changed into her own clothes; then, at top speed, she made for the "Gazette" office with her interview, her account of the Modern Girl's appetite, and the story of the impostor mistress.

But, by special request of Miss Carson, that latter story was not published; though Pat was asked to tea to discuss it. It was not an exciting tea, and Pat ate little. Her chief reason for eating only a little, however, was that a stunning spread had been arranged for her in the Junior Common-room, where she was to be the guest of honour—an honour she shared with Miss Pusey.

A speech was made at that banquet by Janet Biggs, and it incorporated thanks to Pat, and apologies to Miss Pusey. It was a magnificent meal, with kippers, sausage rolls, doughnuts, and other luxuries bought at the tuckshop "on tick." But Pat thought it far better than many a banquet she had attended as a reporter. And because Miss Symes had confessed everything, including the broken door and the fireworks, they all felt like accused persons leaving a court without a stain on their characters. Having confessed, Miss Symes had disappeared, and the only other detail of the imposture that the girls learned was that the real Miss Symes was in America.

The impostor had managed to gain Miss Symes' references from St. Catherine's, and had been given the post at Maunsley College. No wonder she had dreaded meeting Vera Pusey—who knew the real Miss Symes so well! And no wonder she had wanted to get rid of Vera Pusey's sister, at the school.

But for Pat Lovell, the unscrupulous masquerader might have been completely successful.

Thereafter, Miss Pusey was stern with good effect; and Janet Biggs, having had her essay published in the "Gazette," became quite serious-minded in an endeavour to follow in Pat's footsteps, and become a girl reporter.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

Another delightful story featuring Pat Lovell, Girl Reporter, and written by Elizabeth Chester, appears in next Friday's **GIRLS' CRYSTAL**. Make sure you don't miss it!

Their Quest AT THE Sports Winter



THE FUGITIVE DISCOVERED

DOREEN CARSDALE and Jean Hinton had been having a wonderful time at St. Lauritz, in Switzerland, with Doreen's Aunt Elizabeth.

There they met Sylvia Drake, who was staying with Mr. and Mrs. Ross and their daughter Irma. Though the Rosses said that Sylvia was their ward, the chums discovered that they were not legally her guardians at all. The Rosses soon showed themselves to be Sylvia's enemies.

Sylvia's cousin, Douglas Drake, was hiding from the police in a secret mountain chalet. He said that it was vital for Sylvia to win the St. Lauritz skating championships, and Sylvia did win the first part, despite the Ross' schemes.

Douglas Drake then came to the hotel in disguise to see Sylvia, but Irma Ross recognised him. When the hue-and-cry was raised the chums put a false beard on Douglas, and tried to smuggle him past the gendarmes.

They had only a few yards to go to reach safety, when Irma saw the fugitive again.

"Don't let him get away!" she shouted.

"**THAT'S** the man you want! Arrest him—don't let him get away!" Again the voice of Irma Ross rang out, shrill and triumphant.

With a gasp, Doreen quickly looked back over her shoulder. There, among the crowd by the hotel steps, stood Irma, pointing and shouting. And running as fast as he could through the snow came the gendarme who had stood on guard in the vestibule.

"Golly, we've been rumbled!" Doreen cried, staring in dismay at Douglas. "Irma's spotted that it's you. But you can still get away! Run for it—it's too use acting now!"

"Yes, yes! Oh, don't let them capture you!" Sylvia panted.

"They won't capture me!" Douglas Drake's voice was grim; his face, behind the false beard, was set and determined. "I've got to retain my freedom to get proof of my innocence. But thanks for all you've done, girls—"

"Run—run!" Doreen told him frantically. "Once you reach the road you'll be able to dodge—or jump on a sleigh!"

"Yes, there's one just coming along," Jean put in swiftly.

"O.K.! I'll make it all right! See you again soon, Sylvia!" And then, with a wave of his hand, Douglas Drake was rushing on ahead, plunging through the snow in a desperate bid for freedom.

"Arretez! Stop—stop!" came a furious yell from the gendarme.

But Douglas pelted on, making the most of his advantage, some forty yards or more in the lead of his pursuer.

The girls watched tensely. A whistle shrilled out, and they saw the second gendarme appear from the side entrance of the hotel and take up the chase. But he was even farther behind the fugitive than his colleague.

"He'll do it!" Sylvia cried, her gaze fastened on her cousin.

"You bet!" Doreen felt a wave of relief surge through her. "He's nearly reached the road now. Look, he's shouting to that sleigh driver to stop. Oh, thank goodness—"

But even as she said that she stiffened. Her face suddenly paled, her eyes grew wide with alarm.

"Doreen, look!" Sylvia almost sobbed.

For now another figure had appeared—a running, uniformed figure. Another gendarme, who had heard the whistle. From the roadway he came, less than twenty yards in front of Douglas!

"He's trapped—he can't escape!" Jean cried.

Doreen's eyes were agonised now. Trapped Douglas was—with the three gendarmes bearing down on him from three directions. He spun round, raced

To Sylvia Drake the Skating Championship meant everything. She was practising for it in every spare moment. Then fell the blow. If she did not withdraw, her cousin's hiding-place would be given away to the police!

By DAPHNE GRAYSON

off in the only direction remaining to him, then pulled up again.

For now ahead of him was a high brick wall. Impossible to scale it, unless—

Doreen's eyes gleamed. Suddenly she began running, racing for a near-by log cabin. Positive of Douglas' innocence, knowing how vital it was that he should maintain his freedom, she meant to help him to escape.

The cabin was being used as a dressing hut by the men artists taking part in the ice cabaret. Leaning against it was a long wooden pole—Doreen guessed it belonged to the troupe of skating gymnasts who were due to perform later.

Without stopping, Doreen grabbed it up and rushed on.

"Douglas!" she shouted. "Use this—leap the wall!"

And, poising the pole like a javelin, she hurled it through the air to the spot where Douglas was standing.

Huntedly he had been gazing round him, determined to make a desperate effort to climb the wall, but realising he had little chance of success, and that capture would inevitably follow.

Now, with a glad cry, he pounced on the pole as it fell at his feet. One fleeting, grateful smile he flashed at Doreen.

"O.K.! Thanks!"

Then he was rushing towards the wall, the pole poised in his hands.

"Doreen, that was wonderful of you!" Sylvia cried, panting up at that moment.

In an agony of suspense they all watched. They saw the gendarmes drawing nearer and nearer. They saw Douglas suddenly plunge one end of the pole into the snow, and then—

Then, gripping the other end, he was soaring upwards. High into the air he hurtled.

But not high enough!

Doreen's hands clenched. As soon as he began the leap she had had her fears. In his desperate anxiety he had not gone near enough to the wall. And now—

"Oh, he's fallen!" Sylvia shrieked. It all happened in a flash. They saw his legs scrape the top of the wall, heard

an agonised cry, and then limply he fell on to the road.

"Oh, goodness!" Doreen's face had gone ashen. "It's my fault!"

"No, don't say that—"

"Come on! Oh, come on!" Doreen cried.

Frantically they began running to the spot where they could get round to the other side of the wall. The gendarmes raced in the same direction.

In the hearts of the three girls was agonised apprehension—a dreadful fear that was twofold.

Douglas had been hurt; even the thick snow would hardly have saved him from injury, falling head-first from such a height. And now he must inevitably be arrested. There was nothing they could do to prevent it—already one of the gendarmes had gone racing round the wall ahead of them.

They tore after him; then, on reaching the other side of the wall, all three of them pulled up dead.

Incredulously they stared. Doreen pointed a quivering finger.

"Golly!" she gasped, her eyes ablaze with excitement. "Look—look!"

Fascinatedly they looked. And apprehension was driven away, submerged in a wild relief. For there in the distance were two figures, one assisting the other through the snow with feverish haste. And one was the figure of a woman in a voluminous black cloak.

"Madame Marie!" Doreen cried. "And Douglas! Oh, she's rescued him, thank goodness! And, look, she's got a sleigh waiting there in the road!"

Even as they watched they saw the mysterious Frenchwoman reach the road and help Douglas into the sleigh. He had been dragging one of his legs as if he could not walk on it.

Long before the pursuing gendarme had a chance to prevent it she had gathered up the reins and had driven away. At a reckless gallop the horse-drawn sleigh vanished from sight.



"Quickly, dodge behind the hedge," Doreen cried. "Look who's there!" It was Irma Ross. What could she be doing so near the old water mill?

"He's escaped!" Doreen said triumphantly.

"But Douglas—he was hurt!" Sylvia said, anxiety in her voice.

"His leg, by the look of it—nothing worse. Don't worry," Doreen reassured her friend. "Madame Marie will look after him—"

She broke off with a start. For suddenly a hand had descended on her shoulder. Spinning round, she found herself staring into the angry face of one of the gendarmes.

"You will come wiz me!" he declared. "You break ze law. You help beam escape—a man we want ver' bad. To the commissariat de police you come wiz me, mam'selles!"

"The commissariat de police! Golly, he wants to take us to the police station!" Doreen gasped, in dismay.

AUNT ELIZABETH INTERVENES

DOREEN'S heart seemed to give a little lurch inside her. Suddenly she realised the seriousness of what they had done.

"My hat!" she exclaimed.

"Vot're chapeau? Ah, oui, oui!" The gendarme nodded agreeably. "I allow you to get your hat," he said.

"No, I don't mean that. It was just an exclamation," Doreen explained, a faint smile coming to her face. "But look here—"

"I not look here! I not look anywhere!" the gendarme snapped. "You not trick me and then vanish—pouf! You come wiz me."

"Oh crumbs!" "Bless my soul! What is happening here? Where is this gendarme taking you, Doreen?" broke in an agitated voice, and on to the scene strode Aunt Elizabeth.

"Aunt," Doreen gasped, "he—he's taking us to the police station!"

"What?" Miss Hill looked startled, and then indignant. She glared at the gendarme. "What is the meaning of this?" she demanded in French.

The gendarme broke into a torrent of words in his native tongue. He talked non-stop for three minutes, waving his arms excitedly.

Aunt Elizabeth stood silent as he poured out his tale of the three girls' misdeeds, biting her lip, her face becoming serious.

"Doreen, is all this true?" she asked worriedly. "Did you really help a man to escape arrest?"

"But it was Sylvia's cousin," Doreen told her aunt.

Miss Hill gave a start. She had known that Douglas was coming to the ice cabaret in disguise for the special purpose of revealing himself to Sylvia. But, unable to be present at the cabaret, she had known nothing of the dramatic developments that had transpired since.

"I see. But really, Doreen, you seem to have acted most imprudently!"

"But we had to do something!" Doreen broke in desperately. "We couldn't see him arrested. And he's innocent!"

"I appreciate your desire to help him," Aunt Elizabeth said, and frowned. "But the officer tells me he is wanted on the very serious charges of forgery and theft."

"Oh, no, it can't be true!" Sylvia cried, her eyes wide with horror.

"I trust it isn't," Aunt Elizabeth said worriedly. "Nevertheless, the fact remains that you girls have prevented the police from carrying out their duty, and this officer is threatening to make trouble—rightly so, too. This is most distressing."

She turned to the gendarme again.

Earnestly she spoke to him, pleading that the girls were young and had not fully appreciated the seriousness of their actions, pointing out that they were visitors to Switzerland, were in her charge, and that she would take the responsibility, but hoped he would overlook the incident, serious though it was.

The gendarme thawed a little under Aunt Elizabeth's persuasive eloquence, but to her last request he absolutely shook his head.

"I am sorry, mademoiselle, but it is impossible," he said in French. "I will not insist that the girls accompany me to the police station now, but I must have their names—and yours, too. I presume you are all staying here together at the Crestina?"

Aunt Elizabeth nodded and gave him the details he asked for.

"You may be questioned later," the gendarme said, snapping his notebook shut. "Especially the girl who apparently is a relative of the wanted man. Good-day!"

He went off. Aunt Elizabeth sighed.

"I was afraid he wouldn't overlook it," she said, with a frown. "Dear me, I don't know what I shall say to your parents, Doreen—and yours, Jean—if you girls become involved in trouble with the police while we are here. It is most unfortunate. Sylvia, my dear, I don't wish to distress you, but I do hope your cousin really is innocent, as he says."

Sylvia bit her lip. Doreen caught at her aunt's arm.

"He is innocent—I'm sure of it!" she cried emphatically. "You haven't seen him, but we have. Oh, aunt, don't have any doubts! You said you would help Sylvia!"

Aunt Elizabeth smiled.

"And I mean to help her," she said. "But this all seems so serious. Oh, very well, I won't say any more now! I hope I shall have the opportunity of seeing Sylvia's cousin myself very soon now. We simply must get to the bottom of all this mystery!"

"I wonder where Madame Marie has taken him?" Doreen said thoughtfully. "I know, girls! We'll go along to see her this afternoon. We'd better leave it until then, to let this affair blow over a bit. You won't mind, aunt?"

"It is a good idea," Aunt Elizabeth approved. "The sooner you learn the whole truth the better. But please do be careful, Doreen. You've seen already how delicate the situation is. We're anxious to do everything we can to help

Sylvia, but for her sake, as well as for our own, we must act prudently. No good can be done by flouting the law. I hope you understand, Sylvia—"

"Of course I do, Miss Hill," Sylvia said fervently. "You've all been so kind, so wonderful!"

"And now," Aunt Elizabeth said, with a smile, "I suggest you go back and enjoy yourselves at the ice cabaret. And I think I shall come, too, if you'll have me."

"Oh, ripping!" Doreen laughed. "Your boy friends won't mind?" Aunt Elizabeth asked, a twinkle in her eyes.

"They'd get ticked off if they did," Doreen grinned. "Come on, then, let's go!"

Arm in arm they all made their way to the ice rink. The excitement of the chase after Douglas had caused a temporary stoppage of the cabaret, but now it was in full swing again. Someone else had been hastily called in to take his place in the Corvisch team, and the first of the events against the St. Lauritz side had just finished.

Tony Semers and Jack Huntley hailed them with cheers. Tony immediately offered Aunt Elizabeth his chair, perching himself on the table. He glanced curiously at the girls, but said nothing. Other people, too, Doreen noticed, stared across at them. They were obviously quite notorious after that sensational incident.

She looked across to the table at which Irma Ross had been sitting with a party. The others were still there, but Irma was not.

Doreen chuckled grimly. Irma must be a very disappointed girl that Douglas Drake had succeeded in escaping after her frantic efforts to get him arrested. But now Irma would have to be watched more closely than ever, Doreen realised. She must not have another chance of endangering Douglas' freedom. She must not know where he was hiding.

"I say, isn't he clever?" That enthusiastic cry from Jean brought Doreen's thoughts back to the cabaret.

A juggler was performing on the ice now. No doubt about it, he was amazingly clever. Having started off with three coloured balls, he was now juggling with a dozen of them, skating round and round as he did so.

Next he proceeded to open an umbrella, set a top spinning on its surface, and, by careful manipulation of the "gamp," caused the top to travel round and round the extreme edge—and still he went on skating as nonchalantly as if he were walking about on the stage of some theatre.

Then he substituted a plate for the top, and made that spin round the brim of the umbrella on its side.

"Gee! I must have a shot at that some time," grinned Tony.

"Better not practise with the hotel crockery, or you'll ruin yourself trying to pay the bill!" Doreen chuckled.

They clapped vociferously when the clever turn came to an end, then eagerly they waited for the next event.

A man skated to the centre of the rink and held up his hands for silence.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "I hope you'll forgive me interrupting the programme for a few minutes, but I have an important announcement to make. It concerns the St. Lauritz skating championship—"

"Hurrah!" cheered Tony irrepressibly.

Sylvia's eyes sparkled.

"I'm sure I don't need to tell you all that the final round of this world-famous event takes place on Saturday," the



FROM ONE GIRL TO ANOTHER

Cheery Chatter and Helpful Hints by Penelope

But not he. He just yawned again, arched his back, and leaped on to the armchair, as much as to say: "How these humans do love playing about! Excuse me if I snooze, won't you?"

So no more toys for that uppish Sin, I've resolved—for I've come to the conclusion that he is thoroughly spoiled, bless him!

FOR BUSY MORNINGS

This apron in the picture here looks very businesslike, doesn't it?

Perhaps it isn't exactly a glamorous article, but it certainly would be a very useful present for someone.

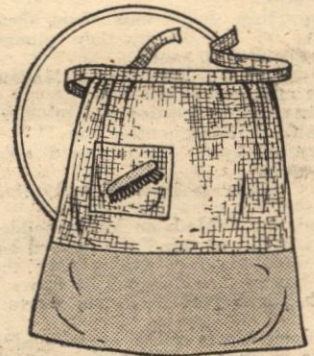
For, you see, it is a working apron and kneeling cushion combined.

A 27 in. square of material (crash or sacking) is required for the apron part, and a piece 7 in. square for the big pocket.

The top of the apron is gathered on to a band, which is long enough to make strings.

Then the pocket is sewn on—and perhaps a scrubbing-brush embroidered there in wool or raffia. It would only require plain stitches for this.

The kneeling cushion is made of part of an old macintosh or some American cloth—which costs sixpence for a quarter of a yard.



You will require a piece measuring 27 in. by 20 in. or so.

This is stitched along the bottom of the apron and then turned under. In the fold are slipped some pieces of blanket or other thick material, to make a comfy padding. Then the American cloth is hemmed to the underneath side of the apron and oversewn at the sides.

As a Saturday morning apron for a grown-up who has to do a spot of kneeling when polishing or cleaning, it would be a boon, wouldn't it?

Bye-bye until next week!

Your own,

PENELOPE.

HALLO, EVERYBODY!—This is your Penelope here, with lots to chatter about—as usual!

First, about myself. I've been letting my hair grow a bit longer just lately. (I've had it slightly shingled for a long time now—not giving way to the shoulder-length fashion at all!)

As I think you know, I'm very lucky, because my hair happens to be naturally wavy—so there are no expensive perms for your Penelope!

But even the curliest hair becomes a bit of a pest when the short ends at the back start to grow. They just stick out like pieces of wire and refuse to "stay put."

So I've been forced to do these ends up twice a week. And, of course, because they were so short, I simply couldn't find a curler small enough for them.

Until I remembered—pipe-cleaners!

So now, two nights a week, I pop into bed with three pipe-cleaners sticking into the back of my neck. But, at least, they are brown ones—so they don't show.

Now I'm looking forward to the time when that hair will grow just a spot longer and will curl up of its own accord.

How some girls sleep with their hair done up in all sorts of tin and lead instruments baffles me. It makes me think that a wooden rest, such as we were told at school the Japanese ladies rested their necks on, isn't such a bad idea after all!

SPOILT CAT!

I didn't tell you about my beautiful black cat, Sin's, Christmas present, did I?

My cousin Kathleen sent him the most amazing toy mouse. You wind it up and it simply streaks across the floor.

When I showed it to Sin, all that cheeky cat did was to yawn in my face and start to wash behind his delicate ears. (Which is said to be a sign that rain is on the way, isn't it?)

"You conceited cat!" I said darkly. "I'll show you!"

So I wound Mr. Mouse up and put him down right under Sin's nose—and away streaked the mouse.

I had expected Sin to be after it like a flash of lightning—all his hunting instincts aroused.

official went on. "As you know, the figure skating section has already been decided, with Miss Sylvia Drake, of England, the winner—"

"Good old Sylvia!" cried Doreen. A volley of applause went up as all eyes switched upon Sylvia. Flushed and rather embarrassed, she sat there, taken by surprise at so unexpectedly gaining the limelight.

The official bowed to her gallantly. "Now, on Saturday, in the speed events, all Miss Drake's rivals will be endeavouring to overtake her in the number of points scored," he went on. "Ladies and gentlemen, it promises to be a wonderful championship meeting—one of the most thrilling ever held in St. Lauritz. It's the great event of our winter season. Already most of the seats in the grand stand have been booked. I advise those of you who have not yet reserved seats to do so before it is too late. In the meantime, between now and Saturday, the lake will be free to all competitors who wish to put in last-minute practice. Thank you. The cabaret will now continue."

"And, talking about practice," Doreen cried, turning to Sylvia, "you've got to get in as much as you possibly can. You're going to win the championship on Saturday—you've got to!"

Sylvia's eyes were dancing, her face was radiant. If only she could win it! But Douglas, her cousin, had said she must win.

"I wonder what Douglas means? I wonder what's behind it all?" she asked now, her pretty brow puckering.

"Something big—something tremendously big!" Doreen laughed. "But we'll soon know now—we'll know as soon as we see your cousin this afternoon. We'll get straight along after lunch, shall we?"

Sylvia nodded, her cheeks aglow with excitement.

They all stayed to the end of the cabaret, then it was time for lunch; afterwards the three girls set out for Madame Marie's little log-cabin in the mountains.

A jingling sleigh took them there. Paying off the driver, they plunged through the deep snow.

In answer to their knock, Madame Marie appeared at the door.

"I have been expecting you, m'selles," she said. "Entrez—entrez vous!"

They went in. Sylvia gazed about her eagerly.

"My cousin—is he well and safe?" she asked.

"Oui, oui!" Madame Marie nodded. "He is well and safe," she assured her.

"He hurt his leg leaping over that wall, but very soon it will be better."

"Oh, thank goodness! But where is he?"

Madame Marie smiled mysteriously. "He is in the Mill Grimelle," she replied softly, as if afraid that even here, in her own cabin, she might be overheard. "Here he was not safe; at any moment the police might come to question me and search. But in the mill no one will suspect. And there he now searches for proof of his innocence."

MR. ROSS' ULTIMATUM!

THE girls felt a thrill shoot through them.

"Searching for proof of his innocence?" Doreen repeated, her eyes gleaming. "But how does he hope to prove it, madame? And why should it be in the mill?"

"Oh, what is the truth?" broke in Sylvia, looking at the woman appealingly. "A gendarme questioned us

this morning because we helped Douglas to escape. He said that Douglas was accused of forgery and theft. That isn't true, is it?"

Madame Marie held up her hands expressively.

"La, la, but all these questions!" she exclaimed. "Do not ask me, m'selles. There is little I know. But I do know that the M'sieur Douglas is innocent. He could be nothing else. I know that in my heart. For, you see, I have known him since he was a petit bebe—I nursed him in his cradle!"

The girls gazed at her in surprise.

"You were his nanny?" Sylvia breathed.

"Yes. He was born here in Switzerland, though his parents, of course, were English," Madame Marie went on, a far away, dreamy look in those black eyes of hers. "And then for many years he lived in the Mill Grimelle. That picture of the sweet-faced lady you saw on the wall—that was his grandmother; your great-aunt, M'selle Sylvia," she added, turning to that girl.

Sylvia nodded, her face flushed. "That was before the cloud descended over him," Madame Marie went on, her voice hardening. "The M'sieur Ross—he was to blame. He it is who has caused so many people such unhappiness. He and his family went to live at the mill—and that is why the M'sieur Douglas believes he will find proof of his innocence there."

"But what happened?" Sylvia questioned eagerly. "What does he hope to find?"

"That M'sieur Douglas will tell you," the woman replied. "He will tell you, too, why it is so important that you should try to win the St. Lauritz skating championship on Saturday. You must go to him now. He is waiting for you," she added softly.

Sylvia's eyes sparkled. "He is?" she cried. "Oh, thank you, Madame Marie. Yes, we'll go now."

"Rather!" broke in Doreen excitedly. "And perhaps we can help him find this proof, whatever it is! He won't mind Jean and I going, too?"

The woman smiled again.

"He wants you to go with M'selle Sylvia," she replied. "Never will he be able to repay you two girls for what you have done for Sylvia and him."

She was showing them towards the door now. She opened it, and thanking her again, the three girls made their way outside.

"Oh, let's hurry," Sylvia cried excitedly. "Isn't this wonderful? In a few moments now we'll be hearing the whole story. We'll know everything."

They hurried on through the snow. The Mill Grimelle was not far away, but as they drew near to it Doreen gave a gasp of dismay.

"Oh golly! Quickly—dodge behind that hedge!" she cried. "Look who's there!"

They swiftly darted behind the snow-covered hedge, for outside the mill was a girl. It was Irma Ross!

"Doreen, you—you don't think she suspects?" Sylvia cried.

"I don't know. Let's watch," Doreen suggested.

They did so, and for half an hour they remained there.

Still Irma stayed, herself crouched behind a ledge of rock which would hide her from anyone in the mill.

"Oh, what are we to do?" Sylvia asked anxiously.

"We dare not try to get into the mill," Doreen told her.

"But we must see Douglas!"

"And run the risk of letting Irma

know he's there," Doreen said, and shook her head. "No, it would be folly, Sylvia. The best thing we can do is to get back to St. Lauritz."

"Oh, Doreen!"

"I know. It's a disappointment, old thing," Doreen's eyes were sympathetic. "But safety first is the watchword. We mustn't give anyone an inkling that your cousin is hiding there. And we can come back to-night—when it's dark, when no one can see us."

Sylvia nodded.

"You're right, Doreen."

"I'm sure I am. And in the meantime—practise, Sylvia! Practise on the lake—skating practice, my girl."

Sylvia smiled.

"Oh, Doreen, you think of everything!"

Cautiously they crept along behind the hedge. Irma was still there.

Taking care to remain unobserved, using all the cover they could find, the three girls gradually made their way back to the road. A regular, if infrequent, service of sleighs ran between Grimelle, the village higher up in the mountains, and St. Lauritz.

And luck was with them, for as they reached the road a sleigh came into view. Hailing it, they were driven back to St. Lauritz.

"My hat, the place seems more crowded than ever it's been," Jean suddenly exclaimed, as they swished along the main, snow-packed road towards the Crestina.

"The crowds arriving for the skating championship," Doreen grinned. "We're in the height of the winter season now, remember."

Sylvia felt herself quivering with excitement. Two days hence, and she would be appearing in the championship.

On returning to the Crestina, Sylvia raced up to their room to fetch her skates.

Then along to the lake they all went. Tony and Jack were already there, skating with a crowd from the hotel.

They reached the bench, had just sat down, when Doreen gave a start.

"My hat, look who's coming over!"

"Mr. Ross!" Jean said, and stared.

There was a queer smile on Mr. Ross' face as he crossed to where they sat.

"Sylvia, I want to speak to you," he said. "Privately!"

Sylvia eyed him coldly.

"These are my friends," she said.

"You can say it in front of them or not at all!"

"Very well, Sylvia, I have a proposition to make," he said.

"What do you mean?"

"I happen to know," Mr. Ross went on, speaking with slow deliberation, "that your cousin is wanted by the police. I happen to know—" He paused.

Sylvia gave a gasp.

"What do you know?"

"I know where he's hiding!" Doreen sprang forward.

"You're bluffing!" she cried.

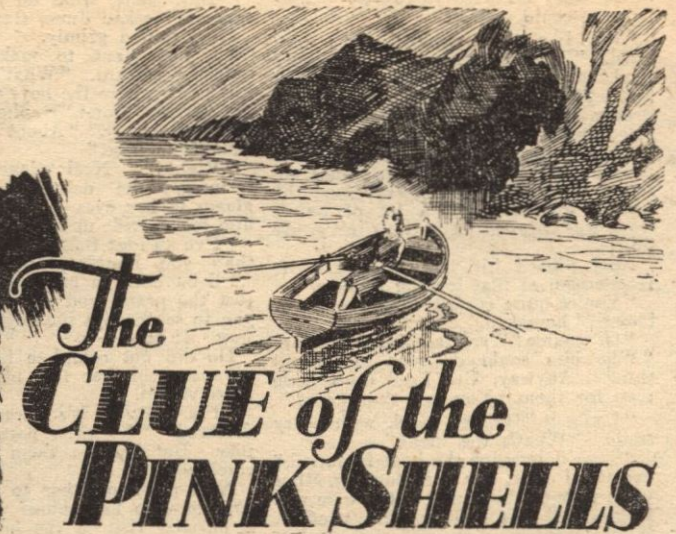
"Bluffing, am I? Oh, no, I'm not! Listen, Sylvia. Unless you do as I tell you the police will learn where he is hiding. His freedom lies in your hands!"

"What do you mean?" Sylvia cried.

"Out with it!" Doreen snapped.

"I mean," Mr. Ross said triumphantly, "that unless you withdraw from the skating championship, your cousin will be arrested. I mean, that unless you obey me and scratch from the championship, I shall tell the police where Douglas Drake is hiding!"

Does Mr. Ross really know where Douglas is hiding? And what will Sylvia say in reply to his ultimatum? See next Friday's thrilling instalment.



The CLUE of the PINK SHELLS

By PETER LANGLEY

THE ALARM BELL

"HALLO! What's happening?"

Noel Raymond halted on the narrow path that skirted the cliff. What had attracted his attention was a white light at the edge of the sea.

His curiosity was aroused. He knew this stretch of coast well—rugged and treacherous, especially in the winter. There was a fishing village a mile away, but fishermen rarely put in their boats at this point.

It was even less likely that anyone would be setting out for pleasure on a night like this.

With sudden determination, Noel turned his steps down the winding slope that led to the beach.

As he strode across the firm sand, picking his way among the scattered boulders, he saw the light again; also saw a furtively moving figure wearing a dark raincoat and sou'-wester.

The figure's activities appeared to be connected with a white-painted boat drawn up on a slipway.

A flight of rough-hewn steps led from the slipway to a cottage built in a sheltered gap in the cliff, partly screened by bushes.

"That fellow's up to no good," decided Noel.

The stranger was evidently tampering with the rope that secured the boat to its moorings. The gleam from a storm lantern balanced on a ledge of rock revealed a stout penknife in the other's hand.

The young detective approached silently, his hand falling on the stranger's shoulder.

"What's the idea?" he demanded sternly.

With a startled cry the other turned, revealing under the shadow of the sou'-wester a pair of rather scared grey eyes set in a youthful and strikingly attractive face.

It was Noel's turn to start, an amazed ejaculation escaping his lips.

"June!" he cried.

Noel's fourteen-year-old niece, June Gaynor, returned her uncle's bewildered gaze with a half-delighted, half-challenging smile.

"Why, uncle," she gasped, "I wasn't expecting you till to-morrow! You wrote to say that you'd arrive in the morning."

Noel smiled gravely, his eyes puzzled.

"I managed to get away from London earlier than I expected," he explained. "I'd no idea your Aunt Clara's cottage was so near the cliff. What are you doing with this boat?"

An evasive expression crossed June's attractive face as she hastily concealed something behind her.

"It's a secret!" she declared, a tantalising twinkle in her eyes. "I promised the twins I wouldn't breathe a word to anyone. This is our boat."

The twins were June's two school chums, Elsie and Jill Morgan. Owing to an outbreak of infection at their school, their holidays had been prolonged, and they had been invited to stay with June at her aunt's cottage on the Cornish coast.

Aunt Clara was something of an invalid; the cottage was run by an old housekeeper and her nephew, who acted as gardener. The three chums, left to their own resources, were having the time of their lives.

"Your own boat—eh?" murmured Noel, glancing with new interest at the dainty yet strongly built little craft. "Then why tamper with the mooring rope?"

June shook her fair head mysteriously; as she turned Noel saw that she held a coil of wire in her hand.

"You'd never guess," she declared, her eyes more serious; "and I mustn't tell you—without the twins' permission. Let's go up to the cottage."

She picked up the lantern, and Noel bent for an instant to examine the severed rope. He could see now that the ends were lightly secured by a length of fine wire, almost invisible at a casual glance.

June Gaynor was determined once and for all to put a stop to the tricks being played on her by the boys from the hotel. But it was as well for June that her uncle, Noel Raymond, was not far off. For the strange happenings on the beach were not boyish pranks.

A puzzled smile crossed his face, but he knew better than to ask questions; June loved a mystery.

Noel turned to follow her; and then abruptly he stiffened, glancing swiftly over his shoulder towards the shadows flung by the cliff.

His keen ears had detected a barely audible sound—like the crunching of shingle beneath a stealthy foot.

With a vague uneasiness he could scarcely have explained, Noel drew out his torch, sending its brilliant beam darting over the rugged face of the cliff and out across the shore.

But there was no sign of any lurking figure.

"Come on, uncle!" called June.

Noel overtook her.

"Any of your friends with you?" he asked.

"No; I'm all alone." June's eyes twinkled. "At least, I was till you sprang out on me. When you grabbed my shoulder I imagined for a moment that—"

"What did you imagine?" demanded Noel.

June hesitated, obviously longing to confide in him, yet bound by her promise to her chums.

"I really shouldn't tell you; but I'm sure Elsie and Jill won't mind. I imagined it was one of those cheeky boys who're staying at the big house you can see from the top of the cliff; it's a kind of private hotel."

"But what about the boys?" asked Noel curiously. "You know them?"

June's eyes flashed; her fingers tightened on Noel's arm.

"I'll say we do! They've been the plague of our lives with their cheeky pranks, and now it's about reached the limit. Come up to the cottage and I'll tell you."

With a hurried backward glance over his shoulder, Noel followed his niece up the flight of rugged steps to the attractive cottage behind its screen of bushes.

Aunt Clara had already retired; but supper was set in the firelit parlour, and Noel was introduced to the twins—Elsie and Jill Morgan.

They were a few months younger than June, and quite obviously they looked up to her with affectionate admiration.

"Of course you can tell your uncle,

June," they declared in chorus. "Perhaps he could help us."

"It's like this, nunky," June confided. "There's been a sort of friendly feud between us and the boys—Jack and Ted Barton. They've played pranks on us, and we've returned the compliment, but just recently they've gone too far. They've actually been pinching our boat at night. Once we found it almost a mile away along the beach; another time a lot of paint-work was chipped off it. It's the giddy limit!"

Noel pursed his lips, with a swift recollection of that lurking shadow.

"You're quite certain the boys are to blame?" he asked.

"Of course!" replied June, staring. "Who else could do such a stupid thing? Anyway, I've fixed up a little trap for them. You saw that wire?"

"I saw it," replied Noel, with a dry smile. "What's the idea?"

"They'll imagine the boat is untied," explained June, her eyes dancing, "but when they try to launch it the wire will ring a bell just outside this window. We'll catch them red-handed, and—"

She broke off with a gasp, for at that minute the alarm bell outside rang.

Noel smiled and helped himself to coffee.

"Hark!" exclaimed June, grabbing his arm. "It's those boys! Come on, twins!"

She raced out of the door, Noel and the twins close at her heels.

"Careful, June!" he exclaimed, fearful that she would meet with an accident.

But June leaped down the treacherous flight of steps with the agility of a young gazelle. Her hands were clenched, and there was the light of battle in her grey eyes.

He heard her startled cry as she reached the slipway; the next moment he reached her side, the twins following closely.

"It's gone!" exclaimed June, her voice choked with chagrin and indignation. "They were too quick for us. Oh, what a hateful trick!"

She picked up a piece of white, splintered woodwork that had formed part of the gunwale.

Noel sprang down to the water's edge, dragging out his torch. But the darkness beyond the range of the darting light was impenetrable.

"Hallo, there!" he shouted, cupping his hands to his mouth. "Come back!"

There was no reply.

June, her face flushed with indignation, darted to his side.

"All right, you boys!" she called breathlessly. "Just you wait!"

The twins were almost tearful.

"Our lovely boat!" choked Elsie. "They—they'll ruin it before they've finished."

Noel was flashing his torch on the slipway; there was a puzzled gleam in his eyes.

He bent suddenly, staring at a footprint on the firm sand—the imprint of a heavy boot.

"How odd are these boys, June?" he asked quietly.

"Oh, about fifteen and sixteen, I should say," replied June.

"Big for their age?"

"Not especially." June stared.

"Why?"

"I was just wondering," murmured Noel. He straightened himself, lighting a cigarette. "Look here, June," he said carelessly, "there's nothing much you can do about this for the moment. I suggest you go back to the cottage—and leave the affair to me."

"But, uncle, what do you think you can do?" asked June, staring.

Noel smiled grimly.

"I just want to make a few inquiries," he said. "What's the name of this place where the boys are staying?"

"Seaview Hotel," replied one of the twins promptly. "About ten minutes' walk from here."

"Right!" Noel glanced at June seriously; he detected the reckless gleam in her eyes—a gleam that made him feel a trifle uneasy.

"I've an idea there's more behind this than you imagine, June," he said. "I'll be back in half an hour. If it's just the prank you imagine, I'll leave you to settle with the boys in your own way. If not—"

He did not complete his sentence. June shook her fair head, obviously unconvinced.

"I'm certain it's those boys!" she declared. "It's their hateful idea of a joke. But just let them wait—till we catch them!"

Noel persuaded her to return to the cottage with her chums while he paid a hurried visit to the hotel. As he strode up the drive, he almost collided with a youthful figure who emerged unexpectedly from the trees.

"I say—dreadfully sorry, sir!" apologized the boy. "My fault for not looking where I was going."

Noel glanced at the speaker shrewdly. He was a cheery-looking boy, with a freckled face and an untidy mop of dark hair.

"Perhaps you can help me," said Noel. "I'm looking for two boys who are staying here—Jack and Ted Barton."

The dark-haired youth glanced at him in swift surprise.

"Why, sir, I'm Ted Barton! My brother's indoors."

"So you're Ted Barton?" Noel said, regarding the other keenly. "You know my niece, June Gaynor, I believe?"

The boy crimsoned slightly, but his eyes did not falter.

"Yes, sir," he replied frankly. "I'm afraid we're rather in her black books at the moment because of some pranks we played."

Noel was watching him closely.

"So I gathered, young man. Rather a low-down trick—stealing the girls' boat and damaging it?"

The boy stared, a look of blank amazement crossing his freckled face.

"I—I don't understand, sir," he gulped. "We haven't laid a finger on their boat."

"Eh?" Noel's eyes glinted. "Is that the truth?"

"On my word of honour, sir."

There could be no doubting the conviction in his tone.

The young detective whistled softly, his suspicions almost confirmed.

"I'm inclined to believe you, young man," he said. "But what gave the girls the idea that you and your brother might have been meddling with their boat?"

A puzzled expression crossed the boy's face; then his expression cleared. He grinned a trifle sheepishly.

"Well, they may have seen us on the beach the other night."

"What were you doing?" demanded Noel swiftly.

The boy reddened slightly.

"We meant to creep up to the cottage for a prank, and leave a note fastened to the door. But we saw someone watching—and we decided to clear off. A big, hulking fellow came out of one of the caves—Why, sir, is anything wrong?"

Noel had started, his hands clenching.

"You saw the man's face?" he demanded.

"No, sir," replied the boy. "He was wearing a sou'-wester, and he stepped back into the shadows when he saw us watching."

"Thanks," said Noel tersely. "That's all I wanted to know, Ted. I'll put you right with the girls. But no more pranks in the meantime, you understand."

"Very good, sir." The boy grinned in obvious relief. "Goodness, you gave me a turn! I thought something serious had happened."

"Nothing serious has happened—yet," replied Noel gravely. "But take my tip, young man—keep away from the beach after dark!"

Leaving the boy staring after him rather blankly, Noel strode away.

When he returned to the cottage, the twins opened the door to him.

"Well?" demanded Elsie eagerly.

"You're all wrong about those boys," said Noel dryly. "I'll have a word with you, June."

The twins exchanged rather guilty glances.

"She—she's gone out," explained Jill.

"Out?" echoed Noel, starting.

"Where?"

Elsie smiled a trifle nervously.

"She's gone out in a boat—to find those boys. We wanted to go with her, but she wouldn't let us."

"Great Scott!" The stifled exclamation was torn from Noel's lips in spite of himself. "How long ago?" he demanded huskily.

The twins seemed to guess that something was wrong.

"About—about five minutes ago," replied Jill unsteadily. "She said she was going to row out to the caves on the other side of the bay—"

Noel interrupted, his voice low and urgent.

"Is there another boat I can obtain round here?" he asked.

The twins looked blank; then Elsie nodded.

"There's a motor-boat," she said.

"It's owned by old Ben Jones, who lives in a cottage about half a mile along the beach—"

Noel waited for no more. With a terse word to the twins, he raced down the flight of narrow steps and sprinted madly along the beach.

DANGER IN THE CAVE

OBLIVIOUS of any possible danger, June was rowing strongly, making for the dark headland on the far side of the bay from the cottage.

June loved the sea, and felt almost as much at home in an open boat as she did on land.

The waves, though a trifle choppy, were not sufficient to deter her from her purpose. The moon had come out from behind the clouds, and its pale, ghostly gleam threw a silvery path across the bay.

There was a slight flush on June's cheeks—due both to her exertions and her excitement.

She was determined, once and for all, to put a stop to the tricks played on her and her chums by the two boys from the hotel.

Reaching the headland, June rested on the oars, listening intently. But the only sound that reached her ears was the dashing of the surf on the rocks.

She started nervously as there came a shrill, eerie screech from overhead; but it was only a seagull flying low over the waves, screaming in defiance of the unexpected intruder.

June shook herself impatiently, forcing a smile.

"The boys must be about here somewhere," she breathed. "I bet they've hidden the boat in a cave!"

She commenced to row again, approaching the dark mouth of one of the caves, unaware of a lurking figure crouched behind a massive boulder near the entrance.

The prow of June's boat scraped softly against the outer side of the boulder as she ceased rowing. Taking a small electric torch from her pocket, she flashed it on the green, slimy walls of the cave.

And then she stiffened, catching in her breath sharply.

Her youthful eyes were swift to detect trifling details—thanks largely to Uncle Noel's past training.

She was staring at certain significant marks on the green sea-moss that clung thickly to the sides of the cave. It had been scraped quite recently, possibly by the prow of a boat.

June examined the marks more closely, her conviction deepening.

The boys must have been here! With a swift stroke of the oars she sent the boat skimming farther into the cave. Kneeling, she flashed her torch into the darkness, and an excited exclamation escaped her lips.

Not only had they been here, but they had left behind them unmistakable traces of their visit. A boathook lay on a ledge, close to a pile of sacking and a mysterious-looking bale.

June's eyes sparkled. She remembered the boys having boasted once that they had a secret meeting-place where they could picnic with their chums. They had defied the girls to discover it.

This was obviously their mysterious retreat.

But where was the missing boat? Perhaps she would find some clue among their belongings.

June manoeuvred the boat till it scraped against the ledge. Springing to her feet, she leaned over to grasp the mysterious-looking bale.

Then a startled cry was torn from her lips as the boat gave a violent, unexpected lurch, flinging her forward. The torch slipped from her hand, rolling under the seat.

June turned, and an icy hand seemed to close on her heart.

For crouched in the stern of the boat was a shadowy, menacing figure, silhouetted against the dim light at the mouth of the cave.

Horried, June stared at the mysterious intruder, fighting against her fears.

It must be one of the boys, trying to scare her!

Pluckily June found her voice. "Jack!" she exclaimed angrily. "Ted! What's the idea?"

The figure made no reply. It crept forward slowly, the boat rocking as it moved. June backed away, her lips trembling.

With a sudden bound the figure reached her, grabbing her by the arm. June's piercing scream was unexpectedly answered by a throbbing roar from the mouth of the cave—a roar that awakened the sleeping echoes.

Her assailant released her suddenly, making a dive for the ledge. A tall figure leaped to encounter him. There was a swift scuffle, followed by an ominous splash.

"All right, June?" shouted Noel's anxious voice.

The gleam from his torch pierced the darkness, shining on June's white, scared face as she crouched in the rocking boat.

"Uncle!" she choked.

The next moment she was supported in Noel's arms, as he lifted her into the motor-boat.

"Who was the blighter?" he panted

"Did you see him?"

June shook her head dazedly.

"I—I only saw a crouching figure," she breathed. "I thought it might be one of the boys—trying to scare me."

Noel's lips tightened.

"You were hurt?" he asked anxiously.

"Oh, no, uncle! Just—just a bit taken aback," replied June, determined not to admit her scare.

But her light-hearted tone was belied by the pallor of her face.

"I'm sure it must be one of the boys," she went on firmly. "This is the hide-away they're always boasting about, and—"

Half fearfully she turned to gaze at the dim, rippling water in the cave.

But there was no trace of her mysterious assailant.

Noel flashed his torch across the water towards the entrance. His forehead was slightly puckered.

The figure he had tackled had dived



"Ahoy there!" a voice cried gruffly. "Are you Jeff Garwyn's daughter?" June started in amazement. For Jeff Garwyn was her aunt's gardener.

to escape him, but in the path of moonlight outside the cave there was no sign of a bobbing head.

"Possibly the fellow swam under water," he commented. "He certainly hasn't come to the surface, or we'd have seen him. What makes you think that this is the boys' hide-away?"

June pointed to the ledge, and Noel whistled softly as he caught sight of the mysterious bale.

"Sailcloth," he commented, prodding the stout canvas.

He took a stout clasp-knife from his pocket, and slit the bale.

Out poured a quantity of sawdust.

Noel thrust his hand and arm into the sawdust, groping round. There was a baffled expression in his eyes as he withdrew it—empty.

"Queer," he commented. "There doesn't seem to be anything else in the bale. What would your japing friends want with sawdust?"

June shook her head in a baffled fashion; then she bent forward quickly, her sharp eyes detecting something

else lying on the ledge—some curiously shaped pink shells.

"A clue!" she breathed.

"Possibly," admitted Noel, with a shrug. "But I don't quite see where it leads us." His eyes were grave as he spoke. "There's one thing I do know, June, and that is that you must keep out of this! There's something far bigger behind the affair than you imagine."

Swiftly he related his encounter with Ted Barton.

June bit her lip, but she was obviously only half-convinced. There was a gleam of excitement in her eyes.

"But, uncle," she pleaded, "I must get to the bottom of the mystery now. We can investigate together, can't we?"

It was hard to ignore the appeal in her eyes, but Noel shook his head firmly.

"I'm sorry, my dear; I can't let you run any more risks," he replied. "You must go back to the cottage, and let me handle this business as I think best."

He remained determinedly deaf to June's entreaties and arguments as he sent the motor-boat skimming back towards the shore.

In the end June appeared to acquiesce; but the half-rebellious pucker of her lips might have warned Noel, had not his thoughts been otherwise engaged.

The boat grounded on the shingle, within sight of the cottage. Noel assisted June to scramble out, and accompanied her as far as the steps in the cliff.

"Are you coming up, uncle?" she asked.

Noel shook his head, and June turned away to hide the dare-devil gleam in her eyes.

"There's something I want to look into without delay," replied the young detective. "I may not be back for an hour or two. Meanwhile you must promise me you won't take out another boat, or do anything rash."

June hesitated for a fraction of a moment.

"Very well, uncle," she said reluctantly.

"Good girl."

Noel watched his niece's slim figure vanish up the steps; then, turning, he hurried down the beach and sprang into the motor-boat, heading it back towards the caves.

A few minutes later June reappeared,

creeping cautiously down the steps. Her eyes were dancing with a half-roguish defiance.

"I promised uncle I wouldn't take out a boat, or do anything rash," she murmured. "Well, he couldn't say it was rash just to explore the beach. I must follow up my clue."

The "clue" was the curious shells she had picked up in the cave.

To most people the shells might have conveyed nothing; even Noel had been unimpressed.

But to June they held a particular significance.

During her stay at the cottage, she and the twins had thoroughly explored every yard of the wild and desolate beach. And one of their happy hunting grounds was a little bay about a quarter of a mile distant, in which the most unusual shells were to be found.

Owing perhaps to the tide and currents, shells of this type seemed to be confined exclusively to the little bay, which the chums had nicknamed "Coral Bay."

With a certain thrill of anticipation, June set out for the bay, hurrying quickly along the moonlit beach.

She realised that she was following a frail clue; but she argued that Uncle Noel had often solved a baffling mystery by working on an even more slender thread.

Almost within sight of her goal, she halted, listening intently, every nerve alert.

From somewhere close at hand came a hollow drumming sound—a muffled thud, followed at intervals by three others.

The sound seemed to come from the direction of the cliffs.

As June turned, her heart in her mouth, there came a curious mournful cry—like the cry of a seagull. A shadowy figure vaulted from a ledge on the cliff, landing on the shingle.

June whipped out her torch, touching the button. The brilliant gleam revealed a boy's somewhat dishevelled figure, and a mop of dark tousled hair crowning a freckled face.

A little gasp escaped June's lips. "Ted Barton!" she exclaimed accusingly.

The boy started forward with a surprised ejaculation.

"Why, if it's not June Gaynor!" June regarded him, her eyes smouldering with indignation.

"You needn't look so surprised, Ted Barton," she remarked. "What have you done with our boat?"

"Your—your boat?" echoed Ted. "Look here, June, you've got hold of the wrong end of the stick. I swear we've not touched your boat! Jack and I have only just arrived here with some of the chaps from the hotel. That was our signal you heard."

June stared at him, half-convinced, in spite of herself.

"You mean that banging sound?"

"Yes," Ted nodded, with a grin. "That's supposed to mean, 'Help!' The cry of the gull means 'Hold tight! Rescue coming!'"

June's face cleared slightly, but the puzzled expression in her eyes became more pronounced.

"Then uncle must have been right," she murmured. "But what can it mean? Who was that figure in the cave?"

"Eh?" inquired Ted, staring.

June regarded him thoughtfully. "Where are the other boys?" she asked.

"Around somewhere," replied Ted. "Why?"

June's eyes were challenging. "If you want to make amends for your stupid tricks, Ted Barton," she

said, "bring the boys along to Coral Bay. There may be some excitement."

"Gee!" exclaimed Ted eagerly.

"What kind?"

June shook her head guardedly.

"I don't know yet. I'm just going along to reconnoitre. You'd better collect the boys, and follow, unless you want to miss some fun."

Nothing loth, Ted darted away, emitting a shrill signal intended to represent the cry of a gull.

June, her eyes shining with suppressed excitement, hurried along the beach towards the little bay.

She had no idea what she expected to find; but by now she was fully convinced that she was on the verge of an exciting discovery.

The disappearance of the boat—the mysterious bale of sawdust in the cave—the shadowy figure—

June shivered slightly at the thought of the latter, and her footsteps lagged as she drew nearer to the bay. She wished that the boys would hurry.

And just then she caught sight of a light flashing, close down by the water's edge.

She halted, her heart beating rather quickly. And just then the moon came out from behind a cloud, revealing the figure of a girl—a girl wearing a shawl, and a red kerchief over her hair.

She was standing close to the surf, waving a lantern.

June's pulses quickened. Here was something really intriguing. Her uneasiness forgotten, she walked softly across the beach, approaching the mysterious girl.

A piece of dry seaweed exploded with a sharp crack under her feet. The girl turned with a startled cry, almost dropping the lantern.

She was good-looking, but her dark eyes held a rather furtive expression.

"Excuse me," June said, watching the girl closely, "but have you seen anything of a small, white-painted rowing-boat?"

The furtive look in the other's eyes became more pronounced.

"No," she replied sullenly.

June did not believe her.

"Just a minute," she said, as the girl made to move away.

The girl quickened her steps, and June grabbed her by her shawl. The shawl came away in her hand, and with it the red kerchief attached to it by a pin.

"Come back!" called June.

But the girl was running quickly towards the cliffs. A moment later she was lost to view.

"Well—what do you make of that?" remarked June as she stared at the shawl and kerchief.

The girl's mysterious attitude confirmed her suspicions; the other knew more about the missing boat than she would admit. But to whom had she been signalling?

A sudden gleam crept into June's eyes as a characteristically daring plan flashed into her mind. While she was waiting for the boys she would try a little experiment.

Hastily donning the shawl and kerchief, she stepped down to the water's edge, flashing her torch out to sea.

For several minutes nothing happened, and then to June's ears came a faint splash of oars.

A boat was pulling in towards the shore—a large fishing-boat, manned by several rowers. A burly figure stood up in the bows.

"Ahoy, there!" he called gruffly.

"You Jeff Garwyn's daughter?"

June started, catching in her breath. Jeff Garwyn was the name of the gardener employed by her aunt!

Apparently the man in the boat took her silence for consent.

He sprang out, catching her by the arm.

"Come on," he said, "there's no time to waste. Your dad said you'd signal us when the coast was clear. Jump in."

June, her breath taken away, found herself lifted into the boat.

The oars creaked in the rowlocks as the boat pulled out to sea.

From the distant beach came the shrill cry of a gull.

June's eyes gleamed desperately. Furtively she flashed her torch—one long flash, three short.

The next moment it was snatched from her hand.

"What are you playin' at, you young fool?" demanded the burly man who appeared to be the leader. "Want to give the game away? You sit still—and await your orders."

The shore receded still farther from view; June, her mind torn between fear and excitement, was launched on the strangest adventure of her life!

JUNE TO THE RESCUE

NOEL, meanwhile, had been far from idle.

Confident that June was safely at home in the cottage, he made a thorough exploration of the mysterious cave in the headland.

And, at length, his efforts were rewarded; he discovered how June's mysterious assailant had vanished!

Close to the mouth of the cave, completely submerged at high tide, was a dark opening, concealed behind a massive boulder.

By stooping low, Noel managed to squeeze through it.

He was confronted by a flight of narrow steps, leading up into the cliff.

Cautiously, he mounted them, flashing his torch as he went.

As he mounted higher, he became aware of an extraordinary perfume—or blend of perfumes—rare and exotic, mingling strangely with the dank smell of the seaweed covered walls.

Abruptly rounding a bend, he came in sight of a lofty cavern hewn out of the rock, and piled high with bales, packages and empty drums.

The young detective whistled softly, his suspicions confirmed. He crossed to the bales and examined them.

"So that was the idea of the sawdust!" he muttered. "I might have guessed it."

He turned to shadow his footsteps—but just then a shadowy figure leaped out from behind one of the bales, aiming a cowardly blow at Noel's head.

With a swift movement, Noel evaded the blow—and turned to grapple with his opponent; but other figures appeared, seizing him and dragging him to the ground. A moment later his wrists and ankles were securely pinioned.

A lantern was flashed into his face. Noel deliberately feigned unconsciousness, working his pinioned wrists behind his back.

"A spy!" growled the leader, peering into the young detective's face. "Well, he won't do any harm for a bit. Keep your eye on him, Seth. The girl's here—and we can get busy with the unpacking."

A light footstep sounded in the cave. From beneath half-closed eyelids Noel saw a slim figure enter, escorted by two men.

The girl wore a shawl, and a red kerchief bound round her hair.

(Please turn to the back page.)



Kaye of the Kennels

Another delightful complete story, featuring Kaye Chalmers, the girl with the wonderful understanding of animals.

By IDA MELBOURNE

THE CRY IN THE NIGHT

KAYE CHALMERS, manageress of Chalmers' Kennels, stirred uneasily in her sleep, turned over, and opened her eyes.

She had been dreaming, and in her dream a dog had been crying out in distress. Now, awake, she suddenly realised that it had not been completely a dream; that in her sleep she had heard a real cry—a dog's howl of pain and misery.

Kaye sat up in bed. It was a cold night, and she shivered a little. As she groped for the light-switch, she heard the dog howl again. It was a distant cry—certainly not from the kennels.

Kaye dressed hurriedly, realising that the dog, wherever it was, was in genuine distress. The occasional howls were pitiful.

Judging by the direction whence they came, Kaye decided that the howling dog was on the heights beyond the lane, a lonely spot where sheep grazed.

"The sheep-dog! That nice brown collie!" she told herself.

She went out past the kennels, hearing restless whimpers that told her some of the dogs had heard the howls. It took Kaye only a few minutes to reach the heights on her cycle, although the ride was anything but easy, and at the end of it she was forced to walk.

The dog's howling came intermittently, and Kaye in the intervals called to him soothingly and encouragingly.

"All right, boy! I'm coming! All right, then!"

Two minutes later she saw him. Flashing her pocket torch, she centred the rays on a clump of trees, in the midst of which lay the dog, a brown collie, whom she had often admired for his wonderful intelligence in keeping the sheep in order.

He blinked in the light of the torch, and then uttered a sharp bark.

"Chained!" gasped Kaye.

The collie was chained, but not in the ordinary way at his collar. Some thoughtless or cruel person had looped the thin chain about his shoulders. Struggling to get free, the collie had entwined it about his legs in such a way that further struggling would surely have wrenched a limb.

Kaye, indignant, angry, went at once to his aid, flinging down her cycle, and dropping to her knees beside him.

The collie whined with excitement.

"My goodness, I'd like to meet the

wretch who tied you up!" said Kaye, in fury.

Kaye searched along the chain until she found the fastener. But then she suffered a shock. That fastener was no ordinary spring clasp, but a padlock.

"Padlocked! What ever for?" Kaye gasped, in dismay.

She tugged at the chain and sought to unwrap it. But it had been too cunningly twisted about the dog for that to be done in a moment; and the padlock was no light, flimsy affair, either.

Whoever should want to make so sure that the dog would remain a prisoner Kaye could not imagine, but her mind turned instantly to thieves.

"Stealing your sheep?" she hazarded. "Oh, poor chap! No wonder you're howling, then!"

The collie scratched at her with his paw, urging her to hurry to set him free; and that Kaye would gladly have done, could she have found a way.

"Wait! I must think. Don't struggle; it will hurt you," Kaye warned the dog.

Silently she pondered on the problem, examining the tree to which the chain was fastened, hoping that she might be able to free him from that end.

She was so deep in thought, in fact, that she did not hear the footsteps of a man who softly approached through the darkness.

But the collie heard him, and growled.

Kaye knew what the growl meant. She stiffened, glanced about her, and snatched up her torch.

A stone whistled through the air, and the collie's growl changed to a yelp of pain.

"Put down that torch, or I'll throw a heavier stone at the dog!" came a thick voice.

Kaye lowered the torch. If the threat had been that a stone would be flung at her she would have taken the chance. But she could not let the dog suffer.

"You cowardly brute!" she said indignantly. "Did you tie this dog up?"

The man's voice came in muffled tones, as though the owner did not want his identity to be guessed.

"That dog is tied there because he has been worrying his own sheep. Why else should he be chained? You're the girl from the kennels, I know. You can take him back there with you."

"Who are you?" Kaye demanded. "You know me by sight, so maybe I know you."

There was a slight pause before the man replied.

"I am the farmer who owns these sheep. I chained the dog up because he has been worrying them."

Kaye did not believe it.

"Then why not let me shine the torch on you?" she asked.

"Because I do not want anyone to know that I own these sheep—that's why. A business reason, and no concern of yours, busybody! Now go home! If you promise to take the dog with you, here's the key. But mind he does not escape. If he does, he's as likely as not to be shot!"

Something sailed through the air—a silk handkerchief. Picking it up, Kaye saw a small key drop, and, seizing it, she fitted it triumphantly to the padlock.

The collie struggled, writhed, and wriggled so much that Kaye found the chain becoming more entangled than ever.

"Steady—steady, chap!" she warned him. "And, whatever you do, don't run free! That man might shoot you!"

The chain clinked, jingled, and then, with a sudden spring, the collie was free. Barking, he did not pause, but leaped forward in the darkness.

Kaye sprang up, horrified, taken off her guard. Then, shouting to the dog, she ran forward.

Cautiously she shone her torch. Instantly it picked out the running form of the collie. The man, however, seemed to have disappeared.

Kaye chased after the collie, determined to take him back to the kennels if she did catch him, and thus make sure of his safety.

And unexpectedly she did catch him, whining oddly. He wriggled and tried to escape as she caught his collar, whining in the same strange way.

"What's wrong, old fellow? Is it your sheep?" Kaye asked anxiously, understanding that it was trying to tell her something.

He ran forward, barked, and returned to her, and Kaye followed him. If the sheep were in peril, she would help him. But although she searched in all directions for several minutes, she could not find the sheep.

The tireless dog led her on, however, until presently they came to a small shed, the door of which stood open. He rushed inside, returned, gave a pitiful bark, and looked up at Kaye. Here was the heart of the trouble.

"Please help!" his look and whole manner said.

Kaye walked into the shed, and

looked about her. It was quite empty, and far too small ever to have held more than three sheep. But there was no sign that sheep had been there, although Kaye presently decided that it had been used as some kind of kennel. Was it his kennel?

"I don't understand," she frowned. "I—"

But, hearing a muffled voice in the distance, she broke off. By searching here further, she could do no good. Taking the collie by the neck, she led him away. And now, quite readily, he went with her, dismal and dejected though he was.

A few yards farther on Kaye halted close to a tree, as the sounds of voices came to her.

"Did he get the dog?" came a man's gruff voice. "We don't leave here until he has!"

Kaye, hardly breathing, held the collie tightly by the neck, and then, as she heard crashing steps through the undergrowth, she led her captive with her from the heights. By a round-about route she avoided the mystery men, and it was not long before she could feel safe from pursuit.

Only then did she speak again to the dog.

"All right, boy; you're safe," she whispered. "They won't get you now."

And the dog, as though understanding, rubbed against her legs. Dejected still, he walked with drooping head; yet he knew that Kaye was a friend, and was to be trusted.

Back to the kennels he went with her, and there she made him comfortable in a cosy kennel—more comfortable than he had been for a long time.

Yet even when he had been given a drink and a bone, he was not happy. The bone lay neglected after Kaye had gone to bed, and when at last the collie saw the last light disappear in her house adjoining the kennels, he gave a low, sad howl.

Brutus, the great St. Bernard, self-appointed policeman of the kennels, heard that soft howl, and went forward in the darkness. Standing close to the bars of the kennel Brutus sniffed, and tried to give consolation, but the collie was inconsolable.

The collie, intelligent enough to know where the fastener of the kennel door was, pawed at it, and in his doggy way spoke to Brutus. Brutus stood back. He knew what was wanted, and he understood that the need to escape was urgent. What he did not want to do, though, was to set the dog free himself.

While the collie worked at the latch in vain, Kaye slept. Now and again Brutus banged his heavy paw against the latch, which was fastened by a wedge secured to a small chain.

A final blow of his paw, and the wedge flew out. The collie, pushing the bars, almost fell from the kennel as the door opened; but he did not immediately rush away. He paused to thank Brutus with an odd whining sound. And then he disappeared into the darkness, leaving his rescuer with ears back, worried, a prey to guilty fears, and yet, with a dog's sense, knowing he had helped a pal.

The collie was free, and he wasted no time. He hurried at once to the heights, warily, but swiftly. There were no men there, and no one now tried to molest him; but once again he made for that lonely hut, the door of which was still open.

Sniffing inside, he gave a low howl of despair. Flossie, the other sheep-dog, was gone, and with her her pup—stolen!

It was that that he had tried to tell Kaye, that somehow he had tried to make a friend understand before it was too late.

UNDER ARREST

KAYE awakened next morning, remembering at once the adventures of the previous night, and hurried down to the kennels. She went to the collie's kennel first of all.

Brutus, loitering, did not go near to her for once. He felt guilty, and a little ashamed.

Not guessing at first what had happened—for the door had swung to—Kaye went straight to the kennel, calling the collie.

There she paused, staring round-eyed in wonder.

"Brutus, he's gone. He's gone, and you didn't bark!" she cried accusingly, wheeling.

Brutus crouched down in shame; then, looking up, he gave her a most pitiful look of appeal, which Kaye could not quite understand.

"Who stole him?" she gasped. "Oh, Brutus! Surely you didn't let thieves in without barking? Brutus!"

Frantically Kaye searched around, calling the collie, but in vain. She was about to go into the house to telephone the police station, when Brutus, from the gate, gave his warning bark that someone was there.

Kaye hurried down to the gate, and stopped, quite startled. For the local policeman stood at the gate, holding her cycle.

"Ah, miss! I'm inquiring about a collie dog," he said quietly. "Reported stolen from the heights above the lane."

"Stolen from the heights! From here, you mean!" said Kaye. "I brought that collie back here myself!" "You took the collie, miss?" the policeman asked, looking grave.

"Yes, to prevent thieves doing the same thing," said Kaye quickly.

The policeman, wheeling the cycle in as she opened the gate, rested it against the hedge, and then took out his notebook.

"I shall have to make a report of this," he said. "The dog is owned by a farmer, and apparently very valuable indeed. The owner himself will be here at any minute."

A car pulled up almost as he spoke, and a red-faced, angry-looking man stepped out. He hurried to the gate.

"Any news?" he asked. "Has my collie been found?"

"No, sir," said the policeman. "But Miss Chalmers here admits taking it from the heights."

"You admit stealing my collie?" the man cried to Kaye.

"Stealing it? Goodness, no!" said Kaye indignantly. "I took it to save it from being shot—." And she told her story. But to her amazement she saw a look of disbelief on their faces.

"Rubbish!" snapped the farmer grimly. "You know the value of the dog. You're a dealer. Looks as though by leaving your cycle behind you left a valuable clue, I'd never have suspected anyone running a respectable kennel such as this; but now you admit it—"

"Well?" asked Kaye, half-amused; because the whole thing was so absurd. Just as if she would steal a dog!

"I give her in charge," said the owner grimly.

Kaye fell back, her face pale. "In charge? You don't mean I'm to be arrested? But—but it's ridiculous! Absurd! I brought your collie here—

but in the night it was stolen. And, anyway—"

But the policeman touched her arm. "You had better get your things and come to the station, miss," he said.

Kaye, white as chalk, stood staring at them. In her mind ran thoughts of awful possibilities of being tried in court, of the shame and the disgrace if she could not convince the magistrates. Worst of all, her pets. What would happen to them if she went to prison?

"Better hurry, miss," said the constable.

Kaye, dazed, turned, running back to the house to tell her grandfather what had happened. She could not refuse to go; she could only hope that somehow she would be able to convince them that she spoke the truth.

It was ten minutes after she had gone that through the secret hole in the fence which Brutus knew, the collie returned. Brutus had guided him there by barking.

The collie's sadness had gone. He was excited; and in his mouth, he carried something that he knew was valuable.

Brutus was overjoyed to see him. For Brutus knew that bad trouble was in the air, and that his mistress was sad. And he had sense enough to connect it with the missing collie. Here the dog was back again. Now Brutus himself would not receive reproaches from Kaye—reproaches that went always to his heart.

But the problem remained—how was Kaye to be told that the collie had returned?

The collie put down the thing he had found, and went to find Kaye. He ran to the house, searched the kennels in vain, and then went back to Brutus, ears drooping.

Here was a problem for them both. Where was Kaye?

But it was not only they who were asking for Kaye. The dogs who wanted her to attend to them—even though her grandfather would see that they were not neglected—set up a howl. The spaniels barked; the terrier pup whined.

The collie ran to and fro in frenzy. Brutus, agitated, did not know what to do; for he had been left in charge, and he did not want to earn another rebuke by leaving his post.

But he went outside the kennels with the collie, hoping to find Kaye's trail. Kaye had gone by car, alas! And a car trail is not easy for dogs to follow.

So agitated was the collie—for he had important news for Kaye—that Brutus, guilty though he felt, decided to help.

There was no doggy way of explaining about the policeman, but Brutus knew where the policeman lived; he had been to the police station before.

Guiltily again, Brutus led the way, and the collie, understanding that he was being led to Kaye, followed, teeth gripping his most important find—a man's cloth cap.

THANKS TO NICK!

KAYE, in the police station, was having a difficult and unhappy time. Her story sounded thin and incredible even to herself as she told it now. She could not describe the man on the heights in any way; there was no clue to his identity.

"I'm afraid it looks black, miss," said the sergeant in charge.

"Very black!" said the owner. "Where's my dog now? It couldn't get out of that kennel by itself. She's hidden it—she's going to sell it!"

"Oh, please!" begged Kaye. "Please—please—"

Then she stiffened, and sat up as she heard a deep, well-known bark. Brutus! Kaye went to the door before they could stop her, opened it, and looked out. Brutus was not to be seen. Brutus, in fact, tail between legs, was shuffling guiltily homewards now that he had led the collie to the journey's end.

But in the doorway stood the collie. At the sound of Kaye's voice, he had jumped in, barking excitedly, dropping the old cap to the ground.

"Here he is!" cried Kaye, in shrill excitement. "Oh, you darling, you pet—here he is!"

The owner, sergeant, and policeman rushed to the scene and stood staring.

"Why—that! Mick, you mean?" gasped the owner. "I mean Floss! Mick was up on the heights all right this morning. Is this the dog you took?"

"That's the one!" said Kaye, fondling him.

But the owner shook his head. "Rubbish! You can't get out of it that way! This isn't the one I mean—and you know it!"

Kaye did not argue. She was demonstrating. She played with the dog, fondled him, stepped back, and called him.

"There! Does he know me or not? Have we met before this?" she demanded. "As for Floss, I didn't know—" Her voice tailed off as she remembered that hut on the heights. "Do you mean that there was another dog in a hut there?" she asked. "This fellow took me to it; but it was empty!"

The collie barked and danced excitedly, running back to the door, and Kaye followed, knowing that he was trying to tell her something.

In the roadway an errand boy was kicking a cap along, and the collie, rushing after him, tried to take it away.

"Get off!" snarled the boy, swinging a basket at him.

"Here, Mick!" called Kaye. "Come along!"

Kaye did not realise that the old cap was a precious clue. She thought that, in excess of joy, the collie was trying to join in the boy's game. And that was what the owner and the police felt when they followed Kaye.

The errand-boy left the cap, and the collie picked it up. He returned with it, and his owner took it from him.

"Dirty old thing like that! You don't want it, old fellow!" he said, and tossed it into the gutter while he held Mick's collar.

Kaye was breathing again; the colour had returned to her cheeks, for she saw freedom ahead of her now.

"Then I can go?" she asked.

There was silence, and then the policeman explained. The dog Floss was the one stolen; and she was valuable; almost as valuable was her pup, missing, too. A champion, Floss could be sold abroad for a large sum—and the pup, too.

"Mick, he's clever, a good fellow," said the owner. "But he's got nerves when it comes to competitions before judges and a crowd. It's Floss that's valuable. I want Floss back."

Mick, hearing the name, barked; he wriggled and tore himself free from his master. Kaye, noting his excitement, made to follow him, but a policeman held her arm.

"No, no! You're not out of it yet, miss," he said. "Remember, someone stole Floss and the puppy, and your

cycle was there and you were friends with the dog Mick. You may have got friendly with Floss and lured her, too."

Kaye's eyes flashed indignantly.

"I know that; but don't you understand that Mick's excited about something! He's trying to tell me. Perhaps he knows where they are!"

Mick came rushing in—and as he was seen there came a laugh. For Mick held the cap in his teeth.

"Hah! That's what he wanted," said the policeman. "That old cap."

Once again Mick's master took it from him, now quite angry, feeling that his dog had made a fool of himself.

Poor Mick saw the cap, his precious clue that he had picked up on the heights, hurled out into the road, to be run over by a car.

But he had one friend who understood. Kaye saw his piteous look, and she knew that it was no ordinary playing he had found; his excitement and eagerness, the way he had hunted her down, was proof of that.

Next moment the policeman gave a shout.

"After her!"

Kaye was out through the station doorway and into the road; she reached the cap, snatching it almost from under the wheels of a lorry, and rushed back, almost colliding with the policeman who had chased her. In wild excitement Mick danced and barked, as though shouting "Hurrah, hurrah!"

"There," panted Kaye, holding out the cap; "it's soaked through and tinged with green. Mick must have found this on the heights. If there's a name—any clue at all—"

The sergeant took it, examined it, and acted quickly. The shop's name was inside, and two minutes later a detective was making inquiries. It was quick work, and he returned soon, his manner excited.

"Well?" asked Kaye.

"You're right, miss. Bought by one of a gang that has been troubling us with petty thefts in other ways—poachers, too."

Mick barked as though he understood, and Kaye, with tears in her eyes, hugged him.

"Mick, you've saved me," she cried, "and saved your precious Floss, too! But I'm glad I did take you. That brute would have shot you if you'd tried to save Floss."

Mick licked her, barked, his eyes shining, and there was no possible doubt that he was then the happiest dog in the world; yet half an hour later he was happier still. For the police, knowing the haunts of the gang, trailed one member of it, and thus were led to their hide-out.

There was Floss, and her pup, too, ready for a journey to London, and thence to the Continent. Kaye was deeply touched when she saw Floss, Mick, and the pup reunited again. Their joy fully compensated for her own suffering.

Only Brutus, not knowing of the happy end, was worried; and when Kaye returned to the kennels, almost skipping with glee, he stood with head down in shame, Kaye, remembering his bark outside the police station, understood. She hugged him, fondled him, praised him, until once again Brutus' ears were up.

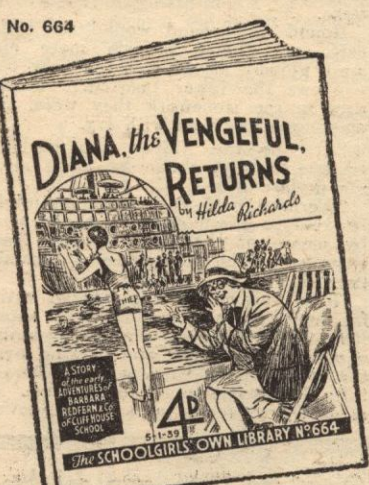
"Kaye, Kaye!" barked the other dogs. "Want you, Kaye—"

And Kaye hurried back to the cares and labours and loves of her kennels, with only gladness in her heart that by attending to a dog's cry in the night she had spared another dog lifelong misery in a foreign country.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

Ida Melbourne writes another delightful dog story in next Friday's **GIRLS' CRYSTAL**, which also contains five other brilliant stories. Don't miss any of them!

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HER UNKNOWN ENEMY AT School



By
GAIL
WESTERN

THE CHUMS' FLIGHT

OLIVE FRENCH, Fourth Form captain at St. Kit's School, and her chum, Letty Johnson, liked Jess Grant as soon as they met her on her arrival.

Jess was an orphan girl, whom a mysterious Miss Dalton had befriended and sent to St. Kit's. Then Miss Dalton had disappeared.

Some of the girls were suspicious of Jess, and when five pounds from the Form Sports Fund disappeared, Stephanie Warner, Olive's rival, accused Jess of being the thief. The chums, however, had begun to believe that Jess had an unknown enemy at St. Kit's.

In the nearby village of Fenleigh the two chums saw Jess enter an expensive jeweller's shop and buy a handbag. But she had told them she was staying at school that afternoon, and she was supposed to have no money.

Jess fled when the chums approached her, but they saw her as they returned to school on the road through the marshes. Jess saw them, and lured them into a lonely watch-tower, locking them in.

The girl they had befriended had deliberately shut them up, and it would soon be time for roll-call!

"**J**ESS doesn't intend coming back! She means to leave us locked up here!"

There was utter consternation in Olive's voice. Letty gave a rueful nod.

"Looks like it," she agreed.

For a few moments the two chums stood there in silence, then Olive spoke again.

"I can hardly believe it!" she gasped. "I liked Jess—and trusted her. Oh, it seems impossible that she could be so horrid!"

Letty, realising how keenly the Form captain felt the betrayal of that trust, gave her arm a sympathetic squeeze.

"It certainly is a blow," she remarked. "But talking won't change matters. We've got to face the fact that we've been taken in—that Jess isn't the charming girl we thought her."

Olive gave a sigh.

"I—I suppose so," she faltered, then, as she glanced at her wrist-watch, she gave a gasp. "Why, it's getting on for six!" she exclaimed. "If we don't find a way of escaping, we'll be late for roll-call!"

She tugged again at the oaken door, but it refused to budge. Next she produced a torch from her pocket, switched it on, and looked about her.

The circular room was devoid of windows, but the steps that gave access to the top of the tower gave Olive a feeling of hope.

"Perhaps there's a window up there," she suggested. "Anyway, let's explore."

The fat girl took a reluctant step forward, clinging to Olive's coat as she followed her chum up the winding steps.

Round and round wound the staircase, and Letty became more and more gloomy as she saw the only two windows the tower boasted. Narrow slits, in the stonework they were, the openings overgrown with ivy.

"It's no use. Even you couldn't squeeze through there—let alone me," she declared.

"Perhaps not. But one of us might be able to climb down to the ground by means of the ivy. If only these steps lead right to the top—Hurrah, they do!"

Olive finished with a cry of satisfaction as she saw the dark sky above her. Next moment she was running across a stone floor and leaning over the weatherworn battlements. Dreadfully far away seemed the ground. It made Olive's senses spin to look down,

Olive and Letty were delighted to discover that it could not possibly have been Jess who had played such a mean trick on them. But since it was not Jess—who then could it have been?

but she set her lips determinedly, and turned to Letty.

"You'd better stay here," she said. "No sense in both of us climbing down—and the ivy's more likely to bear my weight than yours."

The fat girl gave a horrified gasp. "Oh, you mustn't! It's too risky. Suppose the ivy should break away from the wall!"

"I'll have to chance that," Olive said quietly. "But don't fuss, Letty! We can't stay here all night. Anyway, I'll be safe enough!"

But for all her confident tone, it was gingerly that she clambered up on to the stone wall and lowered herself down on the other side. She dug her toes into the knotted branches of the ivy, then, screwing up her courage, let go of the wall and grabbed at the ivy with her hands.

Cr-aaa-ck!

There came an ominous snapping sound, and part of the ivy tore away from the mortar in which it was embedded.

Letty gave an alarmed shout, and for a moment even Olive went deathly white. But she managed to gain a firmer hold, then cautiously, testing every foot and handhold before she trusted her weight to it, she began her perilous descent.

From the battlements Letty watched anxiously, her heart in her mouth.

"Oh, do be careful!" she gasped, as there came another ominous crackling sound. "If you should fall—"

But resolutely Olive refused to think of that grim possibility. Slowly she clambered downwards—lower and lower. Then, suddenly, just as her tensed facial muscles were beginning to relax—

Cr-aaa-ck!

The whole tangled mass of ivy to which she was clinging broke away from the wall. For one terrifying moment Olive seemed to remain poised there, in midair, then down she plunged, a rustling carpet of ivy falling with her.

Letty let out a shriek, and long minutes seemed to pass before her chum landed with a thud on the dark ground below. Quiveringly she called down to her:

"Are you—are you hurt?"

To her relief, the Form captain scrambled up and dusted herself down. "No—only a bit bruised. But it was a good job I was more than half-way down before I fell. O.K., Letty. Don't worry. I'll have the door unlocked in half a jiffy!"

Mopping at her hot, flushed face, the

fat girl went flying down the stairs. As she reached the bottom there came the clang of a bolt, and the ancient door creaked open. Olive's torch cleaved the darkness.

"Thank goodness!" exclaimed Letty. "Crumbs, but you did give me a turn, old scout!" Her plump face became grim and angry. "Aren't I just looking forward to telling Jess Grant what I think of her! This is all her fault! But for her rotten behaviour—"

She finished with a snort, and Olive gave a sigh. Even now she could not get used to the idea that the new girl was a traitor—a thief!

"I suppose you're right," she agreed, "but—ah, well, don't let's talk about it. We'll never get back to school in time if we don't hurry! Come on!"

She led the way back along the soggy field, but Letty, following close behind, suddenly stopped and stooped. The light of the torch had revealed something square and white lying on the ground.

"Why, it's a letter!" she exclaimed. "Jess must have dropped it when she ran away."

Pocketing the folded sheet of paper, she went hurrying after her chum, but their troubles were not yet over. The mist had thickened, and like a dense blanket it hung over the marshes, blotting out every landmark, making it difficult to find even the path back to the road.

"Be careful," warned Olive. "We don't want to end up in a quagmire!"

Clinging to each other, they groped their way through the clammy fog. Several times they pulled up only just in time, warned by the squelching mud and the rustling reeds that they had blundered off that narrow strip of safety.

"Golly, this is awful!" gasped Letty, as one leg sank almost up to the knee in slimy water. "I've got a lot to say to that beastly new girl. Just let Jess wait—let her wait until I get back to school!"

Angrier and angrier the fat girl became. She was splattered in mud from head to foot. The mist penetrated her clothes and her teeth chattered with the cold.

Stumbling, sliding, tripping, the two girls squelched onward, with only the light from Olive's torch to save them from complete disaster. But the worst things come to an end eventually, and at last the Form captain gave a sigh of relief, for dimly, just ahead, could be seen the road.

"Now we shan't be long!" she cried thankfully. "Let's sprint for it, Letty. There's just a chance that we may get back before roll-call!"

But it was a vain hope.

When, wet and dishevelled, they reached St. Kit's, it was to find the Junior Assembly Hall empty. The register had been marked, and the girls were all in their studies, waiting for the supper bell to ring.

As they turned away, Miss Charters, the fussy Fourth Form mistress, hove in view. She stared at the two panting, mud-stained girls in shocked surprise.

"Bless my soul, what have you two girls been up to?" she demanded. "And why were you absent from roll-call?"

Olive started to explain, but Miss Charters cut her short. She was a stern disciplinarian.

"You have no right to get lost," she remarked acidly. "You both know the marshes are out of bounds. I must say, Olive"—through her pince-nez she looked disapprovingly at the Form captain—"this is a bad example you

are setting the rest of the Form. As captain you ought to have more sense."

"I'm sorry, Miss Charters!" "And so you ought to be! I trust that in future you will show a bigger sense of responsibility. Now run along, both of you, and—remember: if I have any further cause for complaint, I shall report you to the headmistress."

With another irate sniff in Olive's direction, the Form-mistress passed on. The Form captain gazed after her in dismay, but her chum's plump cheeks were red with wrath, and urgently she tugged at Olive's sleeve.

"Come on, let's find Jess!" Letty cried. "I'll bust if I don't have things out with her."

Together they made their way to their study, but there was no sign of the new girl. The room was empty.

"Perhaps she's in the library," suggested Olive.

They turned back into the corridor, to run into Stephanie. At sight of the two chums the blonde girl grinned maliciously.

"Hallo! What are you two looking so fed-up about?" she inquired. "Crying your eyes out because your precious pal's going to get into trouble?" Olive and Letty both stared.

"What d'you mean?" demanded the Form captain.

Stephanie regarded them in surprise, then she laughed.

"Mean to say you haven't heard the glad news?" she asked. "But, of course, you've been out. You weren't here when the storm broke."

"Storm—what storm?" demanded Olive, while Letty glared at the other girl in exasperation.

"Yes, out with it!" she ordered. "What's happened to make you grin like a Cheshire cat?"

"Oh, there's been a fine old row!" Stephanie replied airily. "Someone sent the Head an anonymous letter."

"An anonymous letter!"

Both Olive and Letty gave a startled glance, and instantly their minds went to Jess' unknown enemy. Had she been at work again?

"Yes, it suggested that if old Brammy wanted to recover the stolen money she should search Jess Grant's luggage. Needless to say, the Head seized on the idea, and—" Stephanie paused

tantalisingly, and her smile became more gloating than ever. "Well, of course, the result was what I expected it to be."

Olive drew in an incredulous breath. Despite all that had happened, despite her loss of faith in the new girl, yet she dreaded to hear her fears confirmed.

"You mean that the missing cash was found?" she asked.

Stephanie nodded. "Exactly—all five pounds of it. Done up in a nice little roll, it was, and tucked away under Jess' clothes. My, but wasn't there a row! Poor old Brammy nearly expired. I do wish you'd both been here. You would have enjoyed yourselves!"

Whether this was true or not, obvious it was that Stephanie was enjoying herself. She revelled in retailing the sensational news. For a moment Olive and Letty stared at her in speechless consternation. Though they themselves had come to the conclusion that Jess was a thief, yet what they had just heard shocked them to the core. But it not only shocked them, it puzzled them as well. If the stolen money had been found hidden in Jess' luggage, then where had the new girl got the money from to pay for the expensive handbag she had bought?

"Where's Jess now?" asked Olive, her voice little more than a whisper.

Stephanie nodded to the passage that led to the headmistress' own room.

"She and old Brammy are having a heart-to-heart talk," she explained. "But don't let your hopes rise. There's not a chance of saving Jess this time. Even she can't fool her way out of this mess. By to-morrow morning she'll have gone from school—gone for good!"

Stephanie laughed with pleasure at the prospect, and with another exultant look at the two chums, she went walking on.

OLIVE'S TRIUMPH!

TO be expelled! To be forced to leave St. Kit's in disgrace!

For a moment Olive forgot how badly the new girl had betrayed their friendship. She forgot the fact that she was a thief. She only



"You mean the missing cash was found?" Olive asked. Stephanie nodded. "Yes, all five pounds of it—tucked away under Jess Grant's clothes!"

remembered how happy the three of them had been together; remembered how eager Jess had been to make a success of her life at St. Kit's.

"Oh, poor kid!" she gulped.

Letty nodded.

"It certainly seems tough!" she muttered.

Like the Form captain's, all her anger had evaporated. She felt no resentment now—only pity.

"It's a funny thing," she remarked, "we've only known Jess a day or two, and yet—Golly, but I couldn't be more upset if it was my sister who was being expelled! Oh hang!" she added explosively, as if ashamed of her sentimentality. "Let's try to forget all about it! After all, she's brought it on herself."

"I—I suppose so," agreed Olive, though none too certainly.

That puzzled look still remained in her eye, and instead of following Letty to their study, she suddenly stopped.

"Just a tick," she said. "There's a question I want to ask Stephanie."

And off she dashed, to disappear into her rival's room. Wondering at the sudden excitement in the Form captain's eyes, Letty waited in bewilderment. But she was even more bewildered when Olive reappeared, her face flushed, her eyes ablaze with a wider excitement than ever.

"Here, what's up?" she demanded.

Olive was panting for breath. The hand she laid on the fat girl's arm was quivering.

"It's almost unbelievable," she gasped. "But it's true! It was half-past five when it happened."

Letty regarded her chum as if she feared she had lost her senses.

"Half-past five when what happened?" she demanded.

"Why, when Jess' luggage was searched! And Jess herself was in the dormitory at the time. Oh, Letty, don't you see what this means?"

Letty shook her head.

"No, I don't!"

"But it's as clear as water! It was just after half-past five when we were locked up in the tower! Yet at the very same time Jess was having her luggage searched—so it couldn't have been Jess who locked us up! It wasn't Jess we saw buying that hand-bag!"

"But—" Letty ran an amazed hand through her dark hair. "Either you're potty, or else I am!" she declared. "Here, let's get this straight. Are you seriously suggesting that Jess Grant has got a double?"

Olive nodded, and excitedly her fingers tightened their grip on her chum's arm.

"She must have! There's no other explanation! A person can't be in two places at once! Stephanie says Jess was in the dormitory at half-past five, and so—Oh, Letty, we've been a couple of pigs! We've cruelly misjudged Jess! It wasn't her at all. It couldn't have been!"

Letty listened to this breathless outburst in silence. She was too taken aback to offer any comment. Olive's theory was so unexpected, so sensational. It seemed impossible to accept it, and yet—

Thoughtfully Letty nodded. There certainly was something in it. If what Stephanie had said was true, then the girl who had locked them up must have been someone else. And, after all, why should Stephanie tell lies? She disliked Jess, and certainly she would not invent an alibi for her.

"A double!" gasped Letty, finding her voice at last. "Oh, my giddy aunt!

If this doesn't take the biscuit! A double!" she gasped again; then suddenly the excitement died out of her face. "But half a tick, old scout! Even if this is true—even if it wasn't Jess who locked us up—that doesn't make her out to be a giddy angel. What about the money that was found in her trunk?"

Olive bit her lip; but, black though that evidence was, she refused to let it smother her new-found happiness. If they had made one mistake, then they could easily make two.

"Perhaps—" she began, then broke off and frowned. "Yes, by golly!" she exclaimed, her excited smile returning. "It all fits in! Letty, supposing those notes were planted there!"

"Wha-a-at!" The fat girl nearly collapsed. "Steady on! That's a bit too thick, old scout!" she protested.

"Who would do a rotten trick like that? Surely you're not suggesting Stephanie did it out of revenge?"

Olive shook her head.

"No, not Stephanie—at least, I don't think it was her. But someone did—the same person who sent the anonymous note. Jess, unknown enemy! Oh, I'm certain I'm right! Deep down in me I've known all along that Jess was innocent, and now—"

She broke off, thrusting out an eager hand, as another idea occurred to her.

"That letter you picked up, Letty," she exclaimed—"that might give us a clue! We know it was dropped by Jess' double; so let's have a look at it."

Letty became almost as excited as her chum as she remembered the sheet of paper. Taking it from her pocket, she smoothed it open, then she gasped. "Why, it's a piece of St. Kit's paper!" she exclaimed. "Look! It's got the school address on the top of it!"

Olive gave a triumphant cry.

"I knew it—I knew it! This unknown enemy and Jess' double are in league! But let's see what it says—quick! This suspense is awful!"

She peered over the fat girl's shoulder; and in silence they read the few lines that were typewritten there. The letter was not complete, but there was sufficient of it to make them both gasp and gape.

"Dear J.—You needn't worry. There's no danger of our little plot failing. The Fourth Form are playing hockey this afternoon; so I'll easily be able to slip up to the dormitory and hide the money. Once the Head gets my anonymous note, Jess Grant's goose will be cooked. With regard to our next meeting, I suggest—"

And there the letter came to an abrupt end; the second sheet was missing.

"Well, I'll go to sea!" exclaimed Letty. "Of all the mean tricks! But, I say, old scout, what's the big idea? Who can have her knife into Jess at St. Kit's? And why're they so keen to get her expelled?"

Olive shook her head. The mystery was beyond her.

"I don't know. But what I do know is—this letter will clear Jess! Here, let me have it! Old Brammy must see it at once!"

Snatching the sheet of paper from her chum, the Form captain went dashing down the corridor. Letty made to follow, but Olive waved her back.

"Leave this to me!" she panted.

"PERHAPS in future you chumps will listen to me! I knew all along that Jess Grant wasn't to be trusted."

In the Junior Common-room Stephanie was making the most of her big moment. Surrounded by a crowd of eagerly listening Fourth Formers, she was preening herself with satisfaction.

"I should think Olive's feeling pretty sick," she went on. "It's a real let-down for her—and for the whole Form, if it comes to that. Though really you girls aren't to blame. It was Olive who led you astray; but for her you'd never have believed in Jess."

Several of the girls nodded.

"That's true," admitted Iris Watts, and she frowned. "Seems to me we've picked a jolly fine leader—I don't think! I think she ought to be asked to resign."

"Resign! Who's that talking about resigning?"

The inquiry came from the doorway, and most of the girls looked uncomfortable as they turned and saw their Form captain standing there; but Iris tossed her head.

"It's you we're talking about!" she snapped. "A fine old mess you've landed us in! And some of us think you ought to resign."

"But what ever for? What am I supposed to have done?"

"Oh, don't pretend to be so mighty innocent!" It was Stephanie who shouted the words. "You know very well what Iris means. We're talking about Jess Grant. Though we've seen the last of her, thank goodness—though she's going to be expelled—"

Stephanie's outburst came to a sudden stop, for the door had again opened—this time to admit Letty and Jess. In blank amazement the Fourth Formers gazed at the new girl. As for Stephanie, she glared in fury.

"What do you want in here?" she demanded, her glittering eyes fixed on Jess. "How is it you're not packing your things?"

Jess said nothing; but Olive did.

"I don't know what wild story you've all been told," she said, "but it's obvious you've been led up the garden. There's no question of Jess leaving. You see, her innocence has been established—completely established!" she emphasised.

"Wha-a-at!"

An astonished gasp went up, and Edith Fox—the Nosey Parker of the Form—took an incredulous step forward.

"But what about the money that was found in Jess' luggage?" she demanded.

"That was deliberately put there to get her into trouble. You see, Jess, has an enemy at school—someone who hates her so much that she's determined to get her expelled!"

Another amazed gasp greeted this statement, and for a moment or two the Fourth Formers stood there as if petrified. The silence was broken by Stephanie. Her face white with anger, she darted forward and grabbed Olive by the arm.

"Are you daring to accuse me?" she shouted, almost choking with fury. "Are you hinting that I'm plotting against Jess Grant?"

"I'm accusing no one," retorted Olive. "I'm only relating facts, and if you'll cool down, Stephanie, I'll explain exactly what has happened."

She did so, and the crowd of girls listened in wonder and amazement. The fact that Miss Bramleigh had accepted Jess' innocence impressed them.

For a moment no one spoke. Then Cecily Savage, Stephanie's crony, broke the silence.

"It all sounds jolly queer," she muttered. "But all the same—well, there's

no going against that letter Letty picked up."

"Of course there isn't," chimed in Molly Barker, one of Olive's staunchest supporters. "And there's no forgetting what old Brammy thinks. If she's convinced of Jess' innocence, then she jolly well must be innocent."

"Hear, hear!"

A general murmur of approval greeted this statement, and Olive and Letty heaved a sigh of relief. There was no risk now of the Fourth cold-shouldering the new girl. They would not only forget this unpleasantness, but also they would do their best to see that Jess did not suffer from it.

Only Stephanie still looked scornful.

"You can believe what you like!" she flashed. "But I shall never change my mind. I still think Jess Grant is a thief, and I still think there'll be no peace while she's at school."

And, with another glare around, she stalked out of the Common-room, slamming the door viciously behind her.

ONE PLAYER SHORT

"WELL, that's the team for Saturday, and a jolly strong one it is, too! If we don't beat Trilton College hollow, then I'll eat my giddy hat—lining and all!"

It was the following morning, and during the break between lessons, Olive had occupied herself by selecting the eleven to play against Trilton College. Now she was surveying the list with evident satisfaction.

"Yes, a jolly strong side," she declared again. "Jess alone will make a world of difference." She looked across at the new girl as she spoke, and raised a warning finger. "Don't forget, Jess, we're relying on you," she said. "If you don't get at least a couple of goals there'll be trouble."

"I'll try not to let you down," Jess promised. "But I do hope Stephanie won't be peevish when she hears I'm in the team."

"There's going to be no trouble," declared Olive, "so forget all about it, there's a dear."

The Form captain, however, underestimated Stephanie's malicious behaviour. She was furious when she saw the list that Olive pinned on the notice-board.

"It's disgraceful, that's what it is," she declared. "Apart from being a thief, Jess is a new girl. We've got no proof that she really can play hockey."

"She did jolly well in the practice match," pointed out Cecily Savage who, although one of Stephanie's supporters, nevertheless wanted the Fourth Form team to do well.

Stephanie gave an irate snort.

"That was a fluke. She'll never repeat it. You wait and see. On Saturday she'll let you down. I know she will. Well"—ominously she regarded the crowd that had gathered around the notice-board—"if you do lose, you can't say I didn't warn you!"

And she stalked away in a huff. Few of the girls paid much attention to Stephanie's angry warning—at first. But as Saturday drew nearer one or two of the team, influenced by the sly hints and rumours that were going around, became a little uneasy.

Finally, Cecily decided to tackle Olive about it. Buttonholing the Form captain on the way into breakfast, she asked her bluntly if she thought she was wise to keep Jess in the team.

Olive's retort was blunt and to the point.

"Of course, I'm wise," she declared. "Jess is the best forward we've ever had in the Fourth."

"But Stephanie says—"

"Stephanie's jealous, so what she says doesn't count," interrupted Olive. "Anyway, Jess has been picked, and she's going to remain picked. And that's final!"

Nothing more was said, but on Friday afternoon, when Olive and Letty went into lessons they received an unpleasant shock, for chalked on the blackboard was another of those anonymous messages they were beginning to know so well:

"Jess Grant will let you down tomorrow. A girl like her should never have been picked to play!"

Underneath was the signature, "Well-wisher." Jess' unknown enemy had been at work again.

Savagely Olive wiped out the offending message, but not before a number of the girls had seen it, and, though nothing was said, Olive could guess what effect it might have had on them.

Then, on Saturday morning, the chums received another shock, though this time a pleasant one. After breakfast Jess came rushing into Study No. 5 in a wild state of excitement, and she was flourishing a letter.



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"I've heard from Miss Dalton!" she announced breathlessly.

She planked the letter down on the study table, and eagerly Olive and Letty read it. Jess' mysterious benefactress apologised for not having written before, but stated that she had her outside Feneigh Railway Station been ill. However, if Jess could meet at one o'clock, she would explain everything.

"That's splendid!" declared Olive.

"Rather!" beamed Letty. "All this giddy mystery will soon be cleared up now. But I say, old scout—for a moment her smile faded—"what about the match this afternoon? If you keep that appointment, you won't be able to travel in the school coach."

Jess nodded.

"I know, but I can easily come on later. I've looked up the buses, and I'll have plenty of time to see Miss Dalton, and get to Trilton College." She looked anxiously at Olive. "That'll be all right, won't it?" she asked.

"Of course, but—" It was Olive's turn to look a little worried. "You won't miss the bus, will you? After all Stephanie has said, it would be awful if you didn't turn up."

Jess smiled.

"I won't miss it," she promised, and so it was settled.

The moment lessons were over she hurried off to keep her appointment, her cheeks flushed, her eyes sparkling.

Needless to say, Stephanie, when she heard the news, had her own comment to make.

"If you ask me, it's jolly dangerous to travel one short," she said. "Suppose Jess doesn't turn up?"

"Of course she'll turn up!" snapped Olive. She turned to the rest of the team and frowned at them. "Don't you pay any attention to what Stephanie says," she ordered. "She's only being spiteful. Come and get your dinner."

They all went into the dining-room, and by the time the meal was over the coach had arrived to take them over to Trilton College.

In the excitement of discussing the forthcoming match, Jess' absence was forgotten, but when Trilton College was reached the Fourth Formers discovered, to their dismay, that as yet the new girl had not arrived.

In the dressing-room, Cecily Savage surveyed Olive anxiously.

"I suppose there's no danger of her failing to turn up?" she asked.

Olive shook her head.

"Of course not. Don't be a chump. The bus from Feneigh isn't due for another couple of minutes."

They changed, but still there was no sign of Jess. Even Olive began to grow uneasy, for it looked as if the missing player had missed her connection. What could have become of Jess? Five minutes passed—ten, and still she did not show up.

Cecily, glaring through the window, swung round savagely.

"If you ask me, Stephanie was right!" she burst out. "Jess does intend to let us down. Olive ought to have had more sense than to pick her."

An uncomfortable silence greeted this statement. The atmosphere in the dressing-room became more and more tense, and then suddenly the door opened. Eagerly the Fourth Formers turned, but it was not Jess who looked in, but the Trilton captain.

"Sorry to seem awkward," she said, "but time's getting on, you know. If we don't begin soon, it'll be dark before we finish."

She withdrew, and another awkward minute passed, then Cecily, her face scarlet with anger, snatched up her hockey-stick.

"It's no use!" she burst out. "We'll have to play one short. Come on, girls, let's get started. It's no good waiting any longer."

She stalked out of the pavilion, and the rest of the team, picking up their sticks, followed her. Olive and Letty were left alone.

"She promised she'd catch the bus," groaned Olive. "She knew how important this match was. Oh, what does it mean, Letty? I can't help feeling something may have happened to Jess. She wouldn't let us down deliberately."

Letty nodded.

"Of course she wouldn't. I wonder—" She caught in her breath. "Golly, Olive!" she gasped. "Suppose her unknown enemy is behind this fresh mystery."

Olive's eyes opened wide with horror. "You never—"

"I mean, supposing Jess' unknown enemy has been at work again?" was the grim reply.

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was utterly unscrupulous, and that he was engaged in some secret plot with his daughter. His enmity towards herself, his determination to part her from the children, all pointed to this fact.

What this plot could be, Norma as yet had no inkling. But if Ben Tregellis had inadvertently stumbled on it, as his strange warning suggested, then it was possible that Mr. Penhale has taken steps to keep the old boy silent.

But it was useless to engage in wild surmise. More than ever Norma was determined to leave no stone unturned to fathom the mystery—a mystery that concerned not only the old sailor and his two grandchildren, but which concerned her personally.

For she felt convinced that this mystery was connected with another—the secret hinted at in her father's diary.

Picking up her torch, and thrusting the battered cap into her pocket, Norma hurried across the cellar towards a door at the far end.

Her fears had given place to reckless determination.

To-night was her chance to unravel the mystery!

Did Gerald suspect? Could he be connected in any way with the plot?

Instinctively she shrank from the thought as she recollected that boy's cheery friendship—his efforts to help her all along.

Gerald knew nothing. But his uncle was a Penhale, so she dared not breathe

THE GIRL WHO HAUNTED GREY GABLES

(Continued from page 372.)

a word to him about her suspicions. She must carry out her secret quest on her own.

From the cellar a flight of steps led to an apparently blank wall; but a hurried search disclosed a rusted iron lever. Norma pulled at it, and, with a faint grating sound, a portion of the wall slid away, disclosing the life-sized statue of the Black Knight, standing grim and sinister in the moonlight.

She had found the secret entrance to Grey Gables!

For an interminable moment Norma waited breathlessly, her heart thudding painfully, her cheeks pale. Reaction had swept over her after her eerie journey through those subterranean tunnels. But quickly she pulled herself together; her real dangers were by no means over—they had actually only just begun.

She had come so far in safety; she steeled herself now not to turn back.

And then, even as she strained her eyes, peering into the darkness beyond, her heart leapt. Was that someone coming in? Norma thought she heard a creak, as though someone was at the door. For another long moment she listened, waiting to hear the sound again.

But it was not repeated. All was silent.

"Just the wind, or a mouse—or something," she chided herself, with a faint smile. "I mustn't let my nerves get the better of me now."

Norma crept through the opening, to find herself in the deserted lumber-room. The pale moonlight streamed through the window, shining on the marble statue, and flinging its shadow in dark relief on the floor.

It revealed, too, the old oak chest that Gerald had mentioned that evening.

Her heart beating quickly, Norma tried the lid. It was unlocked. Throwing it back, she discovered her phantom robes, carefully wrapped in paper.

A moment sufficed to slip on the robes, and don the veiled headdress, then she turned to retrace her steps to the secret opening. But at that instant a door creaked behind her. There was a soft, quick footstep on the floor. A shadow fell across the path of the moonlight.

"Got you!" exclaimed a stern, boyish voice; and a hand grasped her shoulder. "Now, my elusive phantom, let me have a look at your face!"

With a stifled cry Norma turned, to confront Gerald—Gerald, his face pale and grim as he reached out to snatch off her veil.

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"Your dad tells us you're an expert at unpacking," remarked the leader, beckoning to her. "Get to work! If anything's broken, it'll be the worse for you."

The girl turned, revealing an alert, rather pale young face beneath the red kerchief. Noel saw her violent start, as she caught sight of him—and he bit back a stifled, incredulous ejaculation.

"June!" he breathed.

The bearded leader looked round sharply—and Noel lay still, watching from beneath his eyelids, his thoughts racing.

June was standing motionless, like a frozen statue—staring at him in piteous dismay. One false move on her part—one sign of recognition—and her daring masquerade would be seen through.

Noel, realising the danger that menaced his plucky young niece, ventured to open his eyes and grin reassuringly.

He saw June's face light up; heard her half-stifled sob of relief.

"Set to work, girl!" ordered the leader sharply. "Cut that bale, and start unpacking."

June, her hand shaking, took the knife that was handed to her and bent over the bale, cutting the stout cord that secured it. Then, abruptly, she stiffened, turning sharply.

"Hark!" she gasped. "I can hear someone—outside the cave!"

The men turned; the leader strode to the doorway, lantern in hand.

In a flash, June acted. Darting to Noel's side, she slashed the bonds that secured his ankles and wrists.

The young detective leaped to his feet.

"Good work, June!" he breathed. "Stand back!"

The leader of the men spun round, hearing Noel's voice.

"He's free!" he shouted. "Quick,

THE CLUE OF THE PINK SHELLS

(Continued from page 384.)

you fools, don't let him get away! Catch that girl, too!"

Followed by the other men, he made to rush at the young detective and the white-faced schoolgirl. But Noel was master of the situation now.

"One minute!" he snapped, backing against the wall of the cave. "Don't come a step farther—or I fire!"

A revolver glittered in his hand, as he covered the startled men.

"Put your hands over your heads!" he added. "Get over there—in that corner."

Sullenly they made to obey him, but the leader doubled suddenly, aiming a kick at the lantern that stood on the floor of the cave.

With a splintering crash it was overturned, plunging them into darkness.

Noel, quick as thought, seized June and thrust her behind him.

A hulking figure leaped at him in the gloom, attempting to wrest the revolver from his hand.

White-faced, June heard the sound of the struggle; fear for her uncle's safety sharpened her wits. Cautiously she crept along by the wall till she reached one of the huge, empty drums; snatching a heavy iron bar, she struck it a terrific crash—followed by three others in quick succession.

There followed a tense minute in which Noel struggled desperately with his assailant, then, from outside the cave, came the shrill cry of a seagull.

June's face lit up.

"Boys—this way!" she shouted.

There came a rush of footsteps—the brilliant gleam of a torch.

"At 'em, boys!" yelled Ted Barton's voice.

The diversion gave Noel his chance; with a swift movement he sent his opponent sprawling.

Ted and his brother brought down one of the other men; Noel covered the remaining three with his revolver.

"Try any more tricks, and it'll be the worse for you," he snapped. "Good work, boys! Look slippy—and tie up these scoundrels."

Only too willingly the boys obeyed.

Noel re-lit the lantern and held it above his head, smiling across at his white-faced niece.

"It's your trick, June," he said, a gleam of admiration in his eyes. "Those bales contain smuggled perfume—hundreds of pounds' worth. Matter of fact, I came down to Cornwall to investigate on behalf of the Customs people. Thanks to you—and to these boys—I've succeeded."

June smiled, a little unsteadily.

"I can see it all, now. Jeff Garwyn—au-ty gardeners—had been acting as a look-out for the smugglers, and he borrowed our boat for his purpose."

"Exactly," said Noel. "Garwyn was their intermediary on shore. I'd been watching his movements, before I met you; that was why I was so dubious about the supposed practical joke."

June flushed slightly.

"And to think that I suspected the boys!" she said.

"Oh, we don't mind!" declared Ted magnanimously.

"You're a sport!" declared June.

"Shake hands on it," suggested Noel, with a grin.

They shook. The old feud was buried, there and then.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.
"THE GOLDEN FINGER-PRINT," That is the title of next Friday's exciting Noel Raymond story. Make certain of reading it by ordering your GIRLS' CRYSTAL now!