

"The Girl Who Haunted Grey Gables" One of the thrilling stories for schoolgirls inside.

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EVERY FRIDAY.

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GIRLS' CRYSTAL^{2D} WEEKLY



FACE TO FACE WITH
JESS' MYSTERY
DOUBLE

A dramatic moment in this week's grand instalment of "Her Unknown Enemy At School."

The GIRL WHO HAUNTED GREY GABLES



THE FATEFUL HANDKERCHIEF

NORMA ROYSTON lived in the Cornish village of Clovellyn, looking after a small shop, whose owner, Ben Tregellis, had disappeared, leaving his 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 carry out her search, Norma had to impersonate the ghost of Lady Rowena, which was supposed to haunt Grey Gables.

One night Gerald caught Norma in her robes and veil, but, realising it was a girl, he chivalrously let her escape, apparently not recognising her.

He lent her a handkerchief, also, with which to bind a cut on her hand.

Then, when Norma went to a Mrs. Merrivale's, to put up decorations for a concert, she met Gerald again. He did not seem to connect her yet with the Phantom.

While they were working together, a footman appeared, shouting that the Phantom had been seen. At the same time, Gerald saw the handkerchief, which Norma had accidentally dropped, and recognised it as the one he had lent to the Phantom!

NORMA'S heart turned cold as Gerald stared at the incriminating handkerchief.

"It's mine, right enough!" he declared, a half-bewildered, half-excited gleam in his eyes. "The one I lent to the Phantom. How on earth did it get here?"

Norma swallowed hard, uneasily conscious of the pallor of her face.

The very worst had happened. Gerald was bound to suspect her now. How could he help but suspect?

Yet his glance, as he turned towards her, held no hint of suspicion. There was a puzzled, questioning smile on his lips.

"What d'you make of it, Norma?" he demanded. "It's the identical handkerchief—or I'm a Dutchman!"

Norma bit her lip, forcing a smile in return.

"Are you sure you're not mistaken?" she asked.

"Dead sure," declared Gerald. He whistled softly. "The plot thickens. The Phantom's been here—in this room. Yet neither of us has seen it—"

The footman, who had been staring

By **RENEE FRAZER**

agitatedly from one to the other, now intervened.

"Beg pardon, Master Gerald—but one end of the hall's in darkness. It might have crept through without either you or the young lady taking notice—"

"Gosh! I suppose it might," agreed Gerald, as though the possibility had not occurred to him till then.

Norma gave an involuntary sigh of relief, grasping at the explanation as a drowning man grasps at a straw.

"That must be it, Gerald," she breathed.

The boy nodded, a daredevil gleam in his eyes.

"Wait here for me, Norma," he muttered. "I can't let the Phantom slip through my fingers a second time. You're not scared?"

He regarded her quizzically.

Norma shook her head, a nervous flush on her face.

"Of course not!" she managed to whisper.

Gerald grinned; and Norma tried in vain to read the thoughts behind the half-humorous gleam in his eyes.

"Between you an' me, Norma," he confided, as the footman hurried to the door, "I've my own ideas about this Phantom—an' I'm anxious to put 'em to the test. If it's a girl, as I half

What could it mean? Twice the "phantom" had been seen—when Norma had had no hand in its appearance. And twice it had committed a daring and unscrupulous theft!

imagine—then you can take it from me she's got some desperate reason for what she's doing."

With a mysterious nod, he hurried after the footman; the door slammed behind him.

Left alone, Norma sank weakly into a chair. Her thoughts were in a conflict.

What did it mean—what could it mean? Her reckless masquerade seemed to have recoiled on her head in a startling, almost incredible fashion.

Twice the Phantom had been seen—when she had no hand in its appearance; and twice it had committed a daring and unscrupulous theft!

Now, to make matters worse, Gerald was on the verge of discovering her masquerade.

If he learnt the truth, now—

Norma shrank from the thought. "He mustn't find out—he mustn't!" she breathed, starting to her feet.

She crossed to the door, intending to call after him; but even as she reached it the door was thrown open and Gerald came in, followed by Mrs. Merrivale and Squire Guthrie.

Norma drew back, not daring to meet the squire's glance. His usually florid features were pale and set in stern lines.

"Don't worry, Mrs. Merrivale," he was saying. "I shall take immediate steps to run the scoundrel to earth. The matter has gone beyond a joke; the village is being terrorised by an unscrupulous trickster—and I mean to put an end to it!"

For the first time he observed Norma and nodded briefly, his thoughts otherwise engaged.

Gerald crossed to Norma's side, taking her arm; there was a hint of suppressed excitement in his eyes.

"The Phantom's got away," he whispered, "but I've found a clue! Don't say a word to the others; I'm going to follow it up on my own."

Norma's heart gave an uneasy jump. She longed to question him, but Gerald raised a warning finger to his lips.

The squire was coming towards them. "How long have you young people been here?" he demanded, glancing keenly at Norma.

Norma's heart missed a beat, but she met his glance as steadily as she could. After all, she was innocent of the theft; there was no need to feel guilty.

Yet she was painfully conscious that the boy was watching her.

It was Gerald who replied in his usual cheerful fashion.

"About a quarter of an hour, I should say—eh, Norma? Neither of us have seen anything of the Phantom."

"Umph!" remarked the squire, stroking his chin. "Pity. According to the footman, the scoundrel must have come this way."

"I imagine it escaped through one of the windows," said Gerald. "Did it get away with much?"

"Nearly fifty pounds' worth of jewelry," declared Mrs. Merrivale, in obvious distress. "But it has a sentimental value far above that. Mr. Guthrie, do you think I shall ever recover it?"

"I shall have the entire village combed," declared the squire grimly. "The scoundrel is obviously someone local. My friend Penhale is convinced that the trickster is a woman or girl—though I can hardly credit it."

Norma swallowed hard, her face slightly flushed. She dared not meet Gerald's gaze.

She heard the boy laugh. "Queer you should mention that, sir. I had a similar suspicion myself—as I told Norma. But on second thoughts I've decided that it's impossible!"

Norma caught in her breath sharply as she looked up, encountering Gerald's grave smile.

"What do you think, Norma?" he added.

Her pulses were racing. Did Gerald mean that—or was it just a quixotic attempt on his part to shield her?

It was impossible to read his expression.

"I'm certain," she replied, choosing her words carefully, "that no girl could have been responsible for such a despicable theft!"

"I'm not so sure of that, my dear Norma," cut in a smooth, sneering voice from the doorway.

With a violent start Norma turned; Squire Guthrie stepped to meet the newcomer.

"Why, Penhale," he exclaimed, "what brings you here?"

Mr. Penhale stood in the doorway, a sardonic smile on his handsome features. His daughter Ethel accompanied him.

"I was on my way into Clinsdale," he remarked, "when I met one of your men. He told me of the latest outrage, and I decided to come along at once. I've got news for you."

"News?" echoed Mrs. Merrivale anxiously. "Of the Phantom?"

Mr. Penhale nodded, and Norma's blood ran cold as his steely glance was turned towards her.

"You've caught him?" demanded Gerald.

"Her," corrected Mr. Penhale, regarding his nephew keenly. "You know that we decided that the trickster was a woman—or a girl."

"I've changed my mind since then," declared Gerald. "But you say you've caught the trickster?"

"Not yet." Mr. Penhale's lips tightened. "But it's only a matter of a few hours. Ethel, show them the snapshots."

Ethel opened her handbag, producing a packet. Carefully unwrapping this, she displayed a number of rather blurred snapshots.

"Take a look at these, Guthrie," said Mr. Penhale, pointing triumphantly. "They were taken with the aid of a camera concealed in the grounds, on the occasion of the Phantom's last visit to Grey Gables. I used a specially sensitised film, and the shutter was released by a wire drawn across the path leading to the terraco. I've only just received the prints back from the photographers, and they confirm my suspicions."

"The Phantom is a girl with dark hair!"

THE TELL-TALE SNAPSHOTS

NORMA bit back a choking cry as the others crowded forward. She caught at the back of a chair, feeling suddenly faint and sick.

In a moment Gerald was at her side, his hand grasping her arm. "Steady!" he said quietly. "You've been overdoing things. This business has upset you—like the rest of us—but there's no need to take it so much to heart. Come and have a look at the snaps."

His cool, matter of fact tones were like a tonic to Norma's frayed nerves. She glanced at him gratefully, her lips trembling; but his expression betrayed only a frank concern.

In spite of everything, he did not suspect her—yet!

Drawn by a fatal fascination, she permitted him to lead her across to the group surrounding Mr. Penhale.

The squire was holding one of the snapshots up to the light.

Norma's heart contracted as she recognised, dimly, the grounds of Grey Gables, silvered by the moonlight, and in the foreground a misty figure clad in the garments of bygone days.

Herself! The snap must have been taken on the night when she had encountered Mr. Penhale in the grounds, and so narrowly escaped him.

Luckily, the features beneath the pointed headdress were blurred and indistinct.

"Might be anyone," declared Gerald cheerfully. "Not much use as a clue, uncle."

Mr. Penhale frowned. "Perhaps not yet," he rejoined coldly, "but I propose having it enlarged."

"Ah, the very thing!" exclaimed the squire. "Just a minute, Penhale. I have a powerful magnifying-glass that may assist."

He placed the blurred prints on the table, and crossed to his desk.

Norma's mind was working frantically. If the squire recognised her features—what would happen? She dreaded to think. It might even mean arrest—disgrace. And the two children would—

Desperately she made her decision.

She was standing near the door; the other was momentarily occupied. The fatal prints on the table were within reach of her hand.

Silently she took a step backwards, and her hand closed on the electric light switch; the next instant the hall was plunged into darkness.

There came a startled cry from Mrs. Merrivale.

"What's happened?" demanded Squire Guthrie sharply.

"The lights have fused, sir," said Gerald. "I'd better see to it."

Norma heard him cross the room towards her. Her heart thudding, she stepped softly aside, and reached out towards the table.

Her hand groped vainly over the bare, polished surface, and a chill of dismay swept over her.

The fatal prints had gone! She could hear Gerald fumbling with the switch.

"Hurry, boy!" snapped his uncle. Suddenly the lights blazed up. In the dazzling glare Norma saw the squire cross to the table, followed by Mr. Penhale and Ethel.

Then a shrill cry left the other girl's lips. Her face pale, she pointed to the empty table.

"The snaps!" she gasped. "Someone's taken them!"

"Impossible!" barked the squire. Gerald hurried across from the door. "Probably they've fallen on the floor," he suggested. "I'll have a look."

Obligingly he dropped to his hands and knees, peering under the table. He glanced over his shoulder, with a wink at Norma.

"Phew! There's a pretty strong draught here," he said. "An' the table's not far from the fire. Think they could have blown up the chimney, uncle?"

"Don't talk nonsense!" snapped Mr. Penhale, his eyes narrowed with anger. "There's been some trickery here, Guthrie."

Both he and Ethel were staring pointedly at Norma, whose face was pale. She returned their stare.

The fire blazed up suddenly as Gerald stirred it with the poker.

"Must have been the draught," he said cheerfully. "Couldn't have been anything else."



"Ethel, show them the snapshots," said Mr. Penhale. Ethel opened her bag and produced them. Norma bit back a choking cry, for they were snaps of the "phantom" Lady Rowena!

Squire Guthrie cleared his throat. "I'm sorry, Penhale," he said. "I fancy the boy's right. It was my fault for leaving them there."

Norma's heart gave a quick bound of relief. By a lucky stroke of fate the danger was past. She was safe.

But her relief was short lived. Mr. Penhale gave an unpleasant laugh.

"It's annoying," he said. "but the matter can be remedied. I have the negatives at home, and to-night, when I return from town, I'll make an enlargement. I'll let you see the result in the morning, Guthrie. Come, Ethel, we'd better be going."

Ethel darted a malicious glance at Norma as she passed.

"I hear you've been asked to sing at the concert," she remarked sweetly. "I do hope nothing happens to prevent you."

There was a barb behind her words that was unmistakable. With a hypocritical smile she followed her father from the room.

Squire Guthrie and Mrs. Merrivale accompanied them outside.

Norma was left alone with Gerald.

The boy was whistling softly, his hands in his pockets, a twisted smile on his lips.

"Funny thing, Norma," he remarked, "but I've got a feeling the Phantom isn't far away. Pity those snaps of uncle's got lost; I'd have liked to have had a closer look at 'em."

Norma encountered his quizzical glance; her face was rather pale.

"I think I'll go home, Gerald," she said. "I'm feeling a bit tired. Do you mind?"

"Rather not!" declared Gerald. "I'll take you back in the car. You look dead-beat. We'll say good-bye to Mrs. Merrivale as we go out."

Norma protested that she could easily walk; she was anxious to be alone—to think. But Gerald refused to take any denials.

Ten minutes later the car drew up outside the little shop, and Gerald assisted her to alight.

The children came running out to meet them; young Martin agog with excitement.

"Norma, we've just heard about the Phantom!" he exclaimed. "Jim Hartley, the carpenter's boy, was in here to buy cigarettes, and he said that the villagers are making plans to catch the ghost. Elsie's scared—but I'm not!" he added.

Norma bit her lip, her face paling, as little Elsie clung to her hand.

The very thing she had most feared had come about—the news of the Phantom had reached the children, in spite of her efforts to keep it from them!

Elsie's blue eyes were very wide. "It won't hurt us, will it, Norma?" she whispered.

"Of course not, dear," declared Norma, avoiding Gerald's glance.

"Rather not, young 'un!" declared that boy cheerfully. "No need for you to worry, with Norma to take care of you!"

His hand grasped Norma's.

"And don't you worry," he added. "Get to bed and have a good sleep. I may have news for you in the morning. By hook or by crook, I'm going to get to the bottom of this phantom business to-night!"

He was gone, with a cheery wave of his hand. Norma stared after the receding car, a lump in her throat.

Gerald was so kind, so chivalrous; but, though he did not yet suspect her, by the morning, everything might be changed—his friendship might be turned to scorn.

With sinking heart, she led the two children into the house.

Young Martin was all agog with the news brought by the carpenter's boy. It seemed that the villagers had formed a little band, sworn to run the "spectre" to earth.

They were to keep watch at night on the roads and open fields.

Though Norma made light of the news, her heart was gripped by despair.

For, at all costs, she had determined to play her spectral role that night, in a desperate attempt to recover the fatal negatives from Mr. Penhale!

Long after the children were in bed, she thought over her plans, wondering how best to avoid the watchers.

She had arranged with her neighbour, Mrs. Fowey, for her daughter to come in and take charge of the children, giving the usual excuse of a visit to the town.

Before Milly arrived, Norma hastily packed her phantom costume in an attache-case.

Her hands shook in her agitation; every sound from outside the house made her heart jump painfully.

She had never felt so nervous as this before. It was as though she had a premonition—an inkling of disaster.

Yet she was determined to go through with her purpose.

Half an hour later, leaving Milly safely ensconced in the parlour with her sewing, Norma kissed the sleeping children and crept from the house.

The sound made by the closing door awakened little Elsie from a dream.

She sat up with a faint cry, her blue eyes wide and scared.

The pale glimmer of the nightlight reassured her; she crept out of bed and pattered into her brother's room, shaking him by the shoulder.

"Wassermatter?" inquired young Martin sleepily, raising his tousled head from the pillow.

"I'm scared, Martin!" whispered Elsie. "I've been dreaming about the ghost!"

"Dreams are silly!" declared Martin—but his tone was not entirely confident. "Let's—let's creep downstairs and surprise Norma."



How would you like to knit a lovely present for daddy, mummy or your school-chum? Well, even a very little girl can make a "pixie" hood for herself, a scarf or shawl, a "Dusky Sue" tea-cosy, and "Bunny" bed-room slippers, etc., with the help of this book.

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KNITTING BOOK No. 51

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Hand-in-hand, the two children stole downstairs, and looked into the lamp-lit parlour.

Milly had dropped asleep over her sewing, and her workbasket had slipped to the floor.

"Coo!" whispered young Martin; while Elsie stared with wide-open eyes. "I s'pect Norma's gone out for something. I tell you what—let's play a joke on Milly!"

Elsie nodded eagerly, her eyes sparkling with fun.

Martin crept to the big cupboard in the corner and pulled it open, searching for some means of surprising the sleeping girl.

The lamplight reflected on a glittering object lying on a shelf.

It was the chain-girdle from Norma's phantom robes, forgotten in her haste.

Young Martin chuckled as he dragged it out.

"A chain!" he whispered. "Look, we'll hang it round Milly's neck! I bet she'll be s'prised when she wakes!"

With breathless caution, the children carried out their jape.

And just then there came a loud shouting in the street; the sound of running footsteps.

The two children hastily concealed themselves as Milly awoke with a start, rubbing her eyes.

There came a hammering on the shop door.

Bewildered, still half asleep, Milly hurried to open it, the chain-girdle dangling from her shoulders.

Her cousin, Ted Gaspard, stood outside, his dark face flushed with excitement.

"I say, Milly, is Miss Norma back?" he panted.

"No; she's gone into the town," replied Milly sleepily. "Has anything happened?"

"I'll say it has!" replied Ted. "The Phantom's been seen again—along by the cliff path—the way she generally goes! The lads are setting out after it. I thought I'd just look in with the news—"

He broke off, staring blankly—and for the first time Milly became aware of the chain dangling from her shoulder.

"What—what's that?" demanded Ted.

"I don't know," replied Milly blankly, as she removed it. "Those two youngsters must have crept down and put it there while I was dozing. Just wait till I catch the young scamps—"

"Wait a minute!" cut in Ted, a rather strange tone in his voice. "Let me look at it."

He took the chain in his hands, and a startled whistle escaped his lips.

"It is!" he declared excitedly. "It's the chain girdle Mr. Penhale described to me—the one worn by the Phantom!"

Milly's eyes widened, and the blood drained from her face.

"But—what does it mean?" she muttered.

Ted Gaspard's face was rather grim.

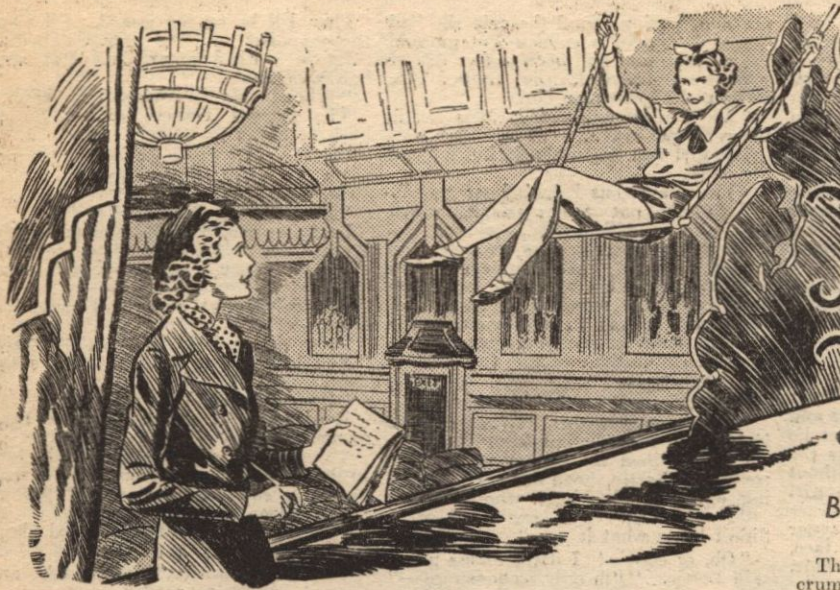
"I dunno," he said. "But Mr. Penhale's going to be told about this; he'll know what to do! Better keep your mouth shut, Milly—and look after the kids. Miss Norma always was a bit of a mystery; she'll have something to answer for when she gets back to-night!"

He hurried away; Milly, her face pale, slowly closed the door.

In the room behind her two frightened children stared at each other—neither understanding quite what had happened.

All they knew was that their beloved Norma was threatened with trouble of some kind—and that it was their fault!

(Please turn to the back page.)



Pat's Trapeze Thrill

By ELIZABETH CHESTER

PAT'S MYSTERY MESSAGE

"AND now, Mr. Tinsley," said Pat Lovell, girl reporter on the "Midshire Gazette," "can you tell me what reforms you propose to make?"

And Pat, resting her notebook on the counter of the ironmonger's shop, prepared to make rapid shorthand notes of what Mr. Tinsley, the prospective candidate for the South Ward in the coming Council Election, had to say for himself.

But just as he cleared his throat the door of his shop opened again, and a small boy came in to buy a screwdriver.

Pat sighed. It was her busy morning, and it was Mr. Tinsley's busy morning, too. Until she had interviewed the would-be councillor, she could not go to the Theatre Royal, where there were the usual Monday morning rehearsals for the week's variety programme, and Pat particularly wanted to see the rehearsals.

"It's like this," said Mr. Tinsley, when the boy had gone, "what the council wants is new blood and new ideas. I'm seventy years of age, and I've had experience of life. Now when I was a nipper—"

He told a rambling story about when he was a nipper, and in the middle of it, just when he seemed likely to remember what he had started to tell Pat, the door opened again.

A girl entered this time, looking determined in a grim, resolute way, and her manner rather suggested to Pat that she had come to tell Mr. Tinsley what she thought of him, and that that was but little.

She walked to the counter, frowned, took a glove off, touched her hat, and then turned to Pat sharply.

"Have I got a dirty face?" she asked Pat brusquely.

"Why, no!" said Pat, surprised.

"Hat crooked?"

"No."

"Any other reason for staring at me," asked the girl unpleasantly, in a quarrelsome tone, "as though I've dropped from Mars?"

"H'm!" said Mr. Tinsley.

"I'm sorry if I appeared to stare," said Pat, taken aback and embarrassed. "I suppose I must have thought you rather—distinctive."

Tact was part of her stock-in-trade, and the girl seemed pleased and

relieved. Without comment she addressed Mr. Tinsley.

"I want a sharp knife—one that would cut through strong rope," she said. "A saw edge to it if that's better."

Pat pretended to take no interest, and drew idly on her notebook.

Mr. Tinsley brought forward a variety of knives, and the girl studied them critically. Some were too big, others too small, and those that were the right size were too expensive. But at last she decided on one—a sharp, rather dangerous-looking knife, which Mr. Tinsley demonstrated by cutting through a rope.

Pat, idly sketching, suddenly noticed the girl's shadow on the page. Next moment the notebook was snatched from her.

"Drawing me, were you?" said the girl angrily.

And to Pat's amazement she ripped the page from the notebook and crumpled it. Her hands were shaky, and her voice shrill, as though she were more afraid than angry.

"Oh, please!" Pat protested sharply. "I had written notes on that page."

"That's your loss. It'll teach you not to sit caricaturing people," said the girl.

Pat stared at her, quite at a loss for once, unable to understand why anyone should be so touchy about being looked at, or even drawn. She had not made by any means a good likeness of the girl, and, indeed, had hardly been conscious that the face she had sketched bore any resemblance to her. But apparently it did, enough to offend its owner.

"Can I have that page back, please?" Pat asked quietly. "It happens to be important to me. If my sketch worries you, you can pencil all over it with this," she added, holding her pencil out.

All sorts of thrills and adventures came Pat Lovell's way, because she was a reporter. But she never imagined, when she set out to help the daring young trapeze artiste, that she herself would actually be helping at her performance!

The girl, calmer now, unfolded the crumpled sheet, looked at the drawing, and grimaced.

"It's not what you'd call a portrait," she said.

Pat smiled more genuinely. "No, it isn't," she admitted. "But haven't I seen you somewhere before?" she asked. "Aren't you on the stage?"

She asked because the girl's clothes, hair, and general appearance suggested it, and on Mondays the new artistes to appear at the Theatre Royal were usually to be seen in the town.

The question startled the girl; her colour changed, paling under her makeup.

"I—I have been," she said.

"I'm a reporter," Pat explained. "And one way and another I see quite a number of well-known stage people, you know, especially those who come to the Theatre Royal here."

The girl hesitated, obviously on her guard.

"If you've guessed I'm on the bill at the Royal, you're wrong," she said.

"I'm resting—which you may know is the term we use when we've finished one show, and are waiting for a new one to rehearse."

She turned and walked out of the shop, forgetting her parcel, even though she had paid for it.

Pat took the parcel, and ran with it into the street, calling to her.

"Your knife!" she said.

The girl, who was studying her reflection in a mirror from her handbag, wheeled, startled, and almost snatched the parcel. But Pat's good-natured smile disarmed even this girl's hostility.

"I couldn't have hunted you for long," said Pat. "I'm due at the Theatre Royal."

"The Theatre Royal. Oh! Reporting? I suppose you're going to write up Lottie Leroy," the girl said, with a touch of bitterness, "and her wonderful trapeze act—daring, clever, heart-throbbing." She laughed jarringly.

Pat concealed her surprise at the bitterness, and the too-obvious jealousy.

"Why, yes, I was," she admitted. "Lottie Leroy is heading the bill. They say—"

"They talk a lot of bosh," said the girl. She seemed about to say something more, and then changed her mind.

Without another word she turned and hurried away. Pat thoughtfully went back into the shop to continue her interviewing. By this time Mr. Tinsley had satisfied another customer, and there was a lull, so that for fifteen minutes

Pat listened to his reminiscences and opinions, sorting them out as best she could.

Finally she left the shop, quite pleased with the interview, for she had thought of a good heading for her article—"An Iron-Man for Midshire?"

Hurrying from the shop, Pat crossed to the bus-stop, and, as she waited there, from force of habit glanced at the little theatrical costumier's shop, the owner of which was a friend of hers. Sometimes she caught a glimpse of her friend and waved.

By luck to-day the shop door was just opening, and her friend was on view, showing out a customer. Pat's wave of the hand went unnoticed, however, as the customer, talking, required her friend's undivided attention.

But that customer held Pat's attention, too. Her smart little hat and shapely though worn coat could not be mistaken. Without a doubt it was the girl who had bought the knife—without a doubt, Pat thought, until the girl turned.

The clothes were the same, the manner of carriage was the same, but the face, once fair, was now dark, eyebrows, hair, and sallow skin to match.

But at that moment a bus drew up and Pat had to jump aboard, but as she did so she cast another look at the girl. Was she another girl in the same clothes, or the same girl—disguised?

"Disguised! But why?" Pat asked herself.

And, wondering whether she could possibly have been mistaken, if the girl who had bought the knife had been dark, not fair, Pat looked at the only other passenger to test her powers of observation.

The other passenger was a girl, well-dressed, smarter than most, trim-looking, fair-haired. But before Pat could really study her she stooped to pick up a fallen coin.

That other passenger was still stooping when steps sounded on the bus staircase. Pat did not look round until she felt a touch on her shoulder, and then, turning her head, saw only a folded piece of paper in a girl's hand.

She took the paper, since clearly she was meant to do so; but before she could see anything except that the girl was dressed in a blue coat and hat, the mysterious messenger had vanished down the stairs.

Completely puzzled, Pat unfolded the paper and read the message. It was written in pencil, hastily, the writing growing smaller at the end so that the message could be cramped into the space available.

So startling was the message that Pat Lovell sat bolt upright with shock.

"Don't do your new trapeze act to-night. An enemy plans to ruin it. You may be badly hurt. This is serious.—A FRIEND."

THE GIRL WITH THE KNIFE

PAT LOVELL read the message through twice, then went to the top of the bus staircase as she felt the bus slow down. Too late to act, she saw the mysterious bearer of the message step on to the pavement, her wide coat collar up to hide her head.

Having delivered the message, the girl had hurried away as quickly as possible in order not to be recognised. But she had delivered that message to the wrong person. It was not for Pat Lovell. There was only one person it could apply to—Lottie Leroy.

Returning to her seat, Pat saw the other passenger rise from her stooping

position, having found the coin she had dropped, and of a sudden Pat guessed the mistake that had been made.

Walking forward, she tapped the other girl on the shoulder.

"Are you by any chance Miss Lottie Leroy?" Pat asked.

The girl was taken aback, but nodded her head.

"Yes, I am; but I don't know you."

Pat held out the message, which Lottie Leroy, still puzzled, took.

"I think someone knew you were on top of the bus," Pat explained. "And it so happened that when she looked up here you were stooping down out of sight and I was in full view. She couldn't have known you very well to have given me the message, though."

Lottie Leroy read the message, crumpled it, and her face paled.

"Who gave you this? What did she look like?" she asked huskily.

Pat described the girl as well as she could, but Lottie shook her head, frowning, still puzzled to know who it was.

"I read it," Pat explained. "I didn't know what it was."

"Oh, of course! I don't blame you," said Lottie. "I'm only wondering—"

She turned to Pat anxiously, pleading.

"Don't mention this to anyone, please," she begged.

Pat held up her notebook and smiled wryly.

"I'm a reporter. Anything you say is likely to be taken down and used in print," she warned.

"A reporter!" Lottie exclaimed in dismay. "Then you will mention it?"

"Not if you don't want me to," said Pat.

"Only, isn't it rather serious? Oughtn't you to make certain there isn't a plot?"

Lottie seemed as though she had something to say which she could not bring herself to put into words; but she was spared from making a decision by the sight of the Theatre Royal on the left.

"Here we are," she said.

"Here I am, too," agreed Pat, "because I'm going into the theatre. Fancy meeting you like this when I'm supposed to be interviewing you!"

They went down the stairs together; but Lottie Leroy paused on the pavement and did not seem inclined to hurry into the theatre.

Pat, watching her, saw that her anxiety was growing. The message had had its effect.

"Is there anything that I can do?" Pat asked. "Any clues I can follow up? Have you any idea what they would do if they wanted to ruin your act?"

Lottie turned to her quickly, and her manner was confiding.

"There is something you can do," she said. "If you'll be sweet and kind enough to do it. You see, I shall have to rehearse, so I can't do any detective work; but there is one person I fear: a man with a short moustache, tall, fair, with a slight stoop, and a lip. He was my agent. I got another because I found he swindled me. Then I seemed to jump right into fame—and my old agent was bitter and angry because I wouldn't go back to him. He thinks of the commission he's losing, and he's vowed to ruin my act. Until now, I thought nothing of it. Thought it just a silly threat. But now—well!"

Pat nodded understandingly; for she had heard many such stories since she had become a reporter.

"If he's in the theatre—is that what you want me to find out?" Pat asked.

"Yes; he may be lurking somewhere. There will be people watching in front. He won't suspect you; so if you see him—" said Lottie significantly.

"Then I'll be on my guard. I'll warn the manager to have him watched."

Lottie walked away, but Pat held her, smiling.

"Whoa! My interview," she said.

The famous trapeze artiste smiled back at her.

"Bring me news to the dressing-room and you shall have the interview," she said.

"Done!" said Pat readily.

Lottie hurried into the theatre by the stage door, and Pat went to the main entrance, where a commissioner stood on duty.

He looked Pat over, and shook his head.

"Not this way in for you," he said. "You'll find the queue at the stage door."

"Queue?" asked Pat, surprised.

Reporters did not as a rule form queues.

"Two dozen of them, and only four to be chosen," he grimaced. "I suppose you're looking for the job in Lottie Leroy's act?"

It was the first Pat had heard about it, and she shook her head.

"I'm a reporter," she said, and showed her Press card.

"Oh! Sorry! I thought you were looking for that job—" he said, and pointed to a handwritten poster.

"WANTED."

"Four local girls to assist Lottie Leroy this evening. Four different girls will be chosen every night. No previous experience necessary, only good appearance, intelligence, and charm."

"Golly!" said Pat, amused. "And I've got good appearance, intelligence, and charm, have I? You saw it at a glance? Oh, Mr. Porter, you're a very nice young man!"

He winked, and then turned aside as another girl came through the doorway.

"Yes? Applying for the job of assisting Miss Leroy?" he asked. "Stage door. In the yard. First left. Join the queue, miss!"

Pat looked at the girl then, looked and nearly jumped. For the girl applying for this job was none other than the one who had bought the knife in the ironmonger's shop. She was also the girl whom Pat had seen leaving the costumier's shop. At such short range, there was no mistaking her; she really was the same girl, with different hair and eyebrows, and different complexion.

"My golly!" murmured Pat. But the girl did not look at her; she hurried down the steps to obey the doorman's instructions and join the queue.

Pat stood quite still, and she suddenly recalled every detail of the happenings in the ironmonger's shop. The girl had been agitated and cross; she had not liked being stared at, had resented being drawn.

Suddenly Pat realised that her behaviour was that of a girl who did not want later to be identified. She did not want anyone to know about that knife she had bought to cut a rope.

Pat wheeled and hurried into the auditorium, where an act was in progress; and, although eager to get behind the scenes as quickly as possible, she took a seat for fear of interrupting this singing turn.

There were a dozen others sitting in the auditorium, and Pat studied them. Seven of them were men, some fat, some small, tall, bald, fair, dark. But she did not see one who tallied with

the description Lottie had given of her enemy.

Pat moved down to the front, a row at a time, so that she could hear the men if they spoke, and detect a lisp. Two men were tall and fair-haired, and she concentrated on them. But presently they spoke, commenting on the turn, and with disappointment she realised that neither lisped.

The act being over, Pat found her way to the back of the stage by the side door; and the manager, knowing her, as she had visited the theatre before, allowed her through, telling her which was Lottie's dressing-room.

Lottie had changed when Pat looked in, and she swung round anxiously.

"Any news?" she asked.

"He's not here," said Pat.

And then, right from the beginning, she told the story of the knife, and the disguised girl.

"But—but what has that to do with me?" asked Lottie.

"The knife—cutting the rope—the warning message. Don't you see?" she added, in a soft, earnest voice.

"That girl is planning to cut the trapeze rope!"

THE MAN WHO LISPED

L OTTIE LEROY, pale-faced, stood with brows knit.

"My goodness! You don't really mean—but—" Then her expression darkened. "Judith! It wasn't Judith More, was it? Nose a little turned up; large mouth—"

"Yes; that sounds like her," agreed Pat. "Anyway, she's disguised, applying for the job to be one of your assistants."

"But why should she send me a warning note if she's going to cut the rope herself?" asked Lottie.

"She's no doubt hoping to scare you into not going on to-night. If that fails, then she'll go through with it and cut the rope."

Lottie turned to the old woman who was her dresser.

"Kate, go down and see if you can pick out Judith More. Her hair and eyebrows have been darkened, but you'll recognise her through her disguise."

Pat took out her notebook.

"Now for the interview," she said, taking stock of Lottie's glittering spangles, and slim but rhythmically muscular limbs. "Please, what does it feel like to sit on a trapeze high above the audience?"

A call-boy rapped the door.

"Miss Leroy!" he called.

"There's my call!" said Lottie briskly. "But, listen—what's your name?"

"Pat Lovell."

"All right, then, Pat, if you'd like to know what it feels like on the bar, you can have a swing on it!" she smiled.

"Oh!" said Pat. "Um!" But a reporter had to find out things, and although she did not quite like the idea, she steeled her nerves. "Right. I'll try it," she said.

"Then change into the practice shorts and shirt," advised Lottie. "And follow me down."

It took Pat a few minutes to change, and then, hardly sure whether she was being silly or not, she walked on to the stage, feeling a little quaky.

Pat had never swung on a trapeze in her life before; and she had never been on a stage with professionals. So she found it rather a nerve-racking business. Luckily there were four other amateurs this morning at rehearsal.

Lottie was on the trapeze swinging,

and now the stage-manager escorted on four local girls, one giggling, one lofty, suffering from self-consciousness, and the other two awed.

None was the girl who had bought the knife at the ironmonger's.

"Now then, all you have to do is to catch Miss Leroy whenever she falls," said the stage-manager humorously. "And throw her back to the trapeze."

Seriously, what they had to do, Pat learned, was to execute a quite simple step, and bow. Then one had to climb to the trapeze up a rope ladder, swing twice, scream, and climb down hurriedly. Another had to get half-way up, hesitate, and climb down. Each had her part to play, a small comedy act to whet the appetite of the audience in preparation for Lottie Leroy.

Lottie swung down by the rope and joined Pat.

"She's not here," she said in a low voice. "I think you're mistaken. I've told the stage manager, though."

The stage manager, leaving the girls to an assistant, approached Pat, frowning.

papers without warning us if she'd wanted to."

Mr. Bates grunted, turned away, and joined his assistant in instructing the girls, who were shy and awkward.

Pat watched, and an idea dawned. "I say, you couldn't do with five girls?" she asked eagerly. "I'd love a chance to be on the stage with you. In fact, I ought to be. 'Local Girl on Trapeze.' My editor will expect that of me."

Pat looked up at the trapeze and beyond it, and as she did so she fancied she saw a movement aloft.

"I say, who's up there?" she asked.

"Up aloft? No one," said Lottie.

Pat stared again, and resolved that she would make sure presently by exploring. For the trapeze ropes went out of the audience's range of vision into what is known in a theatre as the flies. The mechanism for raising and lowering scenery was there, and Pat saw that there was foothold enough for anyone who seriously intended to damage the trapeze ropes.

But her attention was distracted by



Just as she was about to board the bus, Pat cast another look at the girl. Was she the same girl she had seen in the shop? Or—was she another girl, disguised?

"You're the reporter girl—eh?" he said in rather a grim tone. "You started this yarn about the supposed plot, didn't you?"

Pat faced him, startled.

"I didn't start it. I had the message on the bus—"

"Sounds a funny thing to me," he retorted. "And I tell you what it sounds like, too; like a nice little Press stunt, for one thing—and if not that, just a little scheme to unnerve Miss Leroy and ruin the act that way. No one would be crazy enough to try to cut a trapeze rope."

Pat shrugged her shoulders.

"Then I'm wrong. But I was given the message, and everything else I've said is true. It's up to you to keep a watch, that's all."

"I'd do that anyway, without being instructed by young girl reporters," he said. "And what are you doing in this kit?"

"She's wearing it because I said she could," said Lottie sharply. "For goodness' sake, don't nag her, Mr. Bates! She could have put it in the

fact that one of the chosen four girls was in tears, and in a temper, too.

The stage manager had spoke sarcastically, and she was resentful. When she said that she wouldn't be spoken to in that way he told her to go, and, head in air, she went.

"One more, if there are any left!" he called.

But there were none left; the other selected girls had been detailed for other nights of the week.

"Can I try?" asked Pat.

And Pat, anxious not to make mistakes, climbed up the rope, finding it a very insecure perch, and from it to the trapeze.

The stage looked a long way down; and, shaking a little, she clambered on to the trapeze.

"Swing!" said the manager.

Pat swung. It was safe enough, since no trick was required, but her heart was thumping. Reporter to the end, she took stock of what was to be seen of the auditorium.

"Come down! That'll do!" said the stage manager.

Pat climbed down, and was never

more glad to feel firm floor under her feet. But before she could tell Lottie how she felt the young trapeze artiste swung up the rope and on to the trapeze, swung, dropped, turned in the air, and caught the bar with her hands.

There was silence on the stage then; and Pat marvelled as Lottie next swung her feet up, and, gripping with them, swung with hands pointing down.

The tricks she performed were breathtaking. Twice she seemed doomed to crash to the stage; yet without a snatch, with perfect ease caught the bar with foot or hand.

Then came the most dangerous, most daring trick.

From the high trapeze a lower one was suspended, which, as the high one pulled it, swung at different intervals.

Standing on the top one with the drums rolling, but no music, Lottie somersaulted. The lower trapeze had swung away, but came back. Yes, no, yes, no—

She caught it just as it was swinging back, swung and somersaulted neatly from it to the ground.

"Oh, wonderful!" said Pat. "A split second's mistake in timing—and she'd be flat on the stage," muttered the stage manager. "It's a grand stunt, but mighty risky."

Pat looked up at the flies; and then, when the act was over and she had been given her full instructions, she went to investigate—to find out if someone was lurking there or not.

A man in overalls guarded the iron ladder that gave access to the flies, and he signalled her to stand clear. Not until the act ended did he come down from his position half-way up the ladder, and Pat realised that it would be hard for anyone to cut the rope while he stood by.

He came down the ladder and frowned at her.

"Yeth?" he said. "What do you want? Thith ith no plathe for you girth."

Pat's heart stood still for a moment. He lisped; he was tall; but he had no moustache, and his hair was dark brown in colour. But for his hair and moustache, he could well have been the enemy Lottie feared.

Her enemy—and guarding the iron ladder to the flies where the evil plot could be brought to success!

As the man descended the ladder Pat moved towards it, and then glanced up—as he did—when a faint sound came from the flies.

"Hurry off, you, or I'll tell the manager," he said rudely to Pat.

Pat obeyed and hurried off—in fact, she was running. Reaching Lottie's room, she opened the door and glanced in. Lottie was not there, but the dresser picked up a note from the dressing table.

"Miss Leroy left this for you, miss," she said.

It was a message from Lottie, wishing Pat luck in the show, and promising her an interview that evening; for Lottie had had to hurry away to lunch with a friend, and would not return to the theatre before half-past six.

"Half-past six!" groaned Pat. "And before then that man, that girl, or both, may have cut the rope."

Pat, disappointed, more alarmed than ever, returned to the stage. No one was about now, and she mounted the iron ladder to the flies. High above the stage she stepped warily. There was dust there, a few scraps of paper, empty cigarette packages, and matchboxes.

No one was there, however, and the ropes, so far as she could judge, had not been tampered with. It was not until she was descending the ladder again

that Pat saw the screwed-up piece of brown paper with string still about it.

Picking it up, her heart went suddenly cold; for that was the paper and string in which had been wrapped the knife. The shape and fold of it was proof enough.

Taking it with her, hoping it might be proof of her story's truth, she went down the ladder again; it did not occur to her that the knife might be up there, still hidden, ready to be used that night. But there it was, the blade smeared with black grease-paint so that it should not reveal itself by reflecting the bright lights.

SAVED BY THE TRAPEZE STAR

LOTTIE LEROY was not as calm as usual. She had lost the train she had intended to catch back to the theatre, with the result that it was now a quarter to seven, and she had only ten minutes to wait before her act.

It was a note from Pat Lovell that disturbed her; for Pat had explained in it about the man with the lisp, and about finding the brown paper above.

If Lottie had been earlier at the theatre she would have had time to interview the man herself, but she was too late for that.

She waited, already changed, for Pat, hoping she would come in for the interview, and that Pat might have found out something else.

As Pat did not come, Lottie went to find the manager, and told him just what had happened. Two minutes before she was due on he rejoined her, with the news that the man who attended to the flies was off duty, replaced by another. He had sent word to say that he had influenza.

"Is that good or bad?" said Lottie worriedly.

"Keep your nerve!" urged the manager anxiously. "Don't do that dangerous stunt if you're likely to crash."

Lottie, as the orchestra struck up for her entrance, danced on. Three assistants were already on the stage, a little nervous by reason of their first rehearsals. But the fourth? The fourth, as Lottie had guessed before she made sure, was Pat Lovell.

The others were doing their act amidst laughter from the audience. One girl had been swinging when the curtain went up, and they had supposed she was Lottie.

But the girl on the trapeze had slipped, screamed as planned, and then gone down the ladder.

"Where's the fourth?" breathed Lottie, smiling at the audience.

"Not come," Lottie made no comment, but swarmed up the rope, the ladder being swung aside by a scene-shifter.

On her trapeze her confidence returned, and soon she was swinging and somersaulting as happily as ever.

But aloft in the flies lurked a girl with dark hair; out of sight from the audience, and even from those in the wings. There was a dark knife in her hand, held in such a manner that as the nearside rope swung back it must chafe against it.

She leaned forward, the knife in her hand. Back came the rope, grazing the knife; then forward it went.

And then from amongst the scenery above stepped Pat Lovell in her stage attire, moving softly as a cat. Like the other girl, she had been hidden there for hours. But while Pat had known that the other was there, her own presence was unguessed.

Without a word she gripped the girl's wrist,

The girl gave a scream, quickly muffled, turned, and pulled her arm.

Lottie heard the scream from above, looked up, and saw the two hands and the dark object, which a moment later came down. It fell behind the trapeze, and clattered on the stage.

Lottie knew what that object was, and she knew that it might already have done its work—that the rope might fail with the extra strain.

Swinging back, she looked up. Pat Lovell, flung aside by the girl, was staggering above, rocking on a narrow strut of iron.

Pat lived through years in that moment. She had saved Lottie, but all at once she knew at what cost. She knew that she must crash to the stage.

There was only a rope a yard away to cling to; and in desperation she threw out her hand to it, missed, and, turning in the air, went down, head over heels.

Pat heard the audience's combined gasp, and then her turning legs were suddenly gripped.

At dizzy speed she swung through space, not to the stage, but across it. Dazed, bewildered, she looked up, to see Lottie's face.

Lottie, feet holding the trapeze, had caught her in flight by the ankles, and together they swung.

One of the other girls on the stage, recovering her scattered senses, held up her hands to catch Pat's.

"Grip wrists," said Lottie. "Next time—now!"

Pat gripped the other girl's wrists desperately, and felt her own clutched; then her legs were flung by Lottie, and over the girl's head she went feet first.

Pat landed on the stage, staggered against the back cloth, and, hardly knowing where she was, how, or why, heard the audience's roar of applause.

So far as the audience knew, this was just another crazy stunt, and they applauded wildly, while Pat, realising what was expected of her, bowed.

"The ropes—are they all right?" whispered Lottie.

"Yes," answered Pat.

The other trapeze was brought, and Lottie, with drums rolling, cool and calm, performed that daring somersault.

In the nick of time, it seemed, Lottie caught the trapeze bar, swung, alighted gracefully and bowed.

Then on she went with the rest of her act, to bring down the curtain with thunderous applause.

No sooner was the curtain down than Lottie hugged Pat.

"You saved me! You were up there, watching?"

"Yes, it was Judith," said Pat.

"That same girl. But she got away."

"Never mind, you saved me. A million thanks!" breathed Lottie.

Judith More was not caught, nor the man with the lisp, who never appeared again at the theatre.

Pat caused quite a sensation when she gave her editor the news article in which she recounted how one of Miss Leroy's assistants had prevented the ropes being cut, had lost her balance, and been neatly caught.

The Theatre Royal was packed that week, and the manager, in gratitude for the articles which, widely read, had served to draw the public, gave Pat a permit for a free stall whenever she liked, with friend; while Lottie, not only gave her the interview, but even gave Pat a few trapeze lessons.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

Don't miss next Friday's grand story featuring Pat Lovell, the Girl Reporter. Order your copy of **GIRLS' CRYSTAL** early and so make sure of getting it.

HER UNKNOWN ENEMY AT School



By
GAIL
WESTERN

A SHOCK FOR THE CHUMS!

OLIVE FRENCH Fourth Form captain at St. Kit's School, and her chum, Letty Johnson, liked Jess Grant as soon as they met her. Jess was an orphan girl, whom a mysterious Miss Dalton had befriended and sent to St. Kit's. Then Miss Dalton had disappeared.

All the Fourth Formers liked Jess, except Stephanie Warner and her cronies. Olive and Letty quickly realised that Jess had an unknown enemy in the school who was trying to get her disgraced.

Then they discovered that Jess had a double in the village, who was in league with this unknown enemy.

One night the three chums went to the Mimosa Cafe, in Fenleigh, hoping to see this double. A telephone call came from the unknown person at St. Kit's, which Jess took, pretending to be her double.

Then Olive and Letty, waiting for Jess, had a shock; for outside the cafe they saw a girl exactly like Jess!

JESS' double!

In startled surprise, Olive and Letty stared through the glass door of the cafe, at the girl who stood on the pavement, paying her taxi-driver.

Olive's first feeling was one of dismay, for she realised that the mystery girl intended to pass through the cafe on her way to the ball-room.

"She mustn't see Jess!" she exclaimed. "If she does, then Jess' plan to discover who her enemy is will be ruined!"

But Letty, Olive's plump and headstrong chum, did not worry about that. All she realised was that on the other side of that door was the girl who had once tricked them—the girl who knew the reason for all this mystery.

"I'm going to find out what her game is!" she exclaimed.

She leapt to her feet, her intention being to catch the girl as she entered. But she reckoned without the mystery girl's next move.

As she opened the cafe door, she immediately saw the two chums. As she recognised them she stopped dead, a startled hand flying to her mouth.

"Oh!" she gasped, and involuntarily recoiled.

Letty gave a triumphant cry. "Didn't expect to find us here, did you? Well, this time you won't trick us so easily. We mean to discover exactly what you're up to!"

As she spoke, Letty thrust out an excited hand, but the unknown, recovering from the first shock, plunged back through the doorway.

Thud!

The door slammed behind her, and Letty, unable to stop, crashed against it, losing her balance. As she toppled to the floor, there came a frantic shout from outside. Jess' double was signalling to the taxi she had just paid off.

Scrambling up, Letty jerked open the door and raced out on to the pavement. But she was just too late. For away whirled the taxi, the fugitive girl inside it.

Red and breathless, Letty watched it disappear up the street, then, with an irate snort she re-entered the cafe.

"She was too quick for me!" she told Olive. "She got right away!"

The Form captain, however, did not completely share her dismay.

"Never mind. Perhaps Jess is having better luck," she said, and eagerly she looked across to the telephone cabinet at the far end of the long room.

Through the glass door she could see the new girl standing, the receiver to her ear. She seemed to be carrying on an animated conversation.

Olive's heart leapt and her pulses tingled.

Had Jess succeeded in fooling her un-

Olive and her chums held their breath. A door creaked below them in the old mill. Jess' unknown enemy had arrived to keep her appointment—not knowing that Olive and Letty were there also!

known enemy? It looked like it. But what were they talking about? Was Jess' enemy, thinking she was speaking to that girl's double, unwittingly revealing her identity?

Impatiently Olive sat there, and, once Letty had got over her disappointment, she began to share her excitement.

"What the dickens is happening?" she asked. "What—?" She finished with an eager shout, for at that moment the door of the cabinet swung open and Jess emerged. "Well," gasped the fat girl, "did it work?"

There was really no need for Jess to answer. Her sparkling eyes and flushed cheeks told the chums all they wanted to know.

"Yes, she never had a suspicion of the truth," she replied.

"But what did you discover?" asked Olive.

"Yes, who is she?" demanded Letty.

Jess shook her head. "I'm afraid I don't know. She just asked if I was 'J,' and when I said I was, she went on to warn me. She seemed to take it for granted that I knew who was talking."

"Warn you!" echoed Olive. "What did she want to warn you about?"

Jess' face was grim, yet she could not resist the temptation to chuckle.

"About us three. She said she'd seen us sneak out from school, and feared we were making for the Mimosa Cafe. She warned me to keep my eyes open." "Ph-ee-ew!"

Olive and Letty both whistled. This was news indeed. So Jess' unknown enemy knew that they were on the track of her mysterious crony! But there was even more sensational news to follow!

An excited glint in her brown eyes, Jess sat down and leaned across the table.

"This girl—whoever she is—seems to be a bit scared," she declared. "Anyway, she said she must see me to-night, and so—"

She paused, and the other two girls waited breathlessly.

"So—" prompted Olive.

"So I said I'd meet her in the old mill beside the school at nine o'clock," finished Jess, with another thrilled chuckle.

Olive gasped, while Letty gave a whistle of admiration.

"We'd better get going," said Olive quickly.

The Form captain paid the bill, and they went to retrieve their bikes. As they cycled back to school their hearts thumped with excitement. For at long

last it looked as if they were to clear up the mystery.

"Come on, let's hurry!" puffed Letty. "I'm dying to find out who this unknown enemy is!"

On they pedalled, and as the school

buildings loomed into sight, they swung off down a narrow side path. The ancient windmill stood on the edge of the marshes, amongst the belt of trees that lined the playing fields; gaunt and desolate it looked in the darkness.

Having hidden their machines, the chums approached it cautiously.

Jess turned to Olive in the darkness. "I said I'd wait up in the loft. I suppose neither of you've got a torch?" They shook their heads. "Never mind. We can grope our way up somehow!"

They crossed to the ladder that led to the upper story and gingerly they commenced to clamber up it. The loft was in darkness, and for a moment or two they stood there helplessly; then Letty, who had been ransacking her pockets, gave a cry of relief.

"Hurrah! A match!" she exclaimed. "Half a jiffy while I strike it!"

There came a scraping sound, then a flickering yellow flame shot into being, revealing a mass of rusty machinery and a pile of old sacks.

"There's nowhere much to hide," commented the fat girl, "but I suppose—"

She finished with a gasp, for the match, burning down, had scorched her fingers, and even as inky darkness again descended, Jess, who had been peering out of the solitary window, gave a warning shout:

"Someone coming—look out!" Frantically Olive and Letty blundered across to the heap of sacks and crouched down behind them. Hardly had they done so than they heard the door below creak open. They held their breath. Jess' unknown enemy had arrived to keep her appointment!

Never had the chums known such suspense. As for Jess, her face was white and taut. Bitterly had she suffered from the unknown's treachery. But all that was over now. Soon she would know who her unknown enemy was.

Footsteps clattered on the ladder, then dimly the chums saw a girlish figure scramble up through the opening in the floor. The collar of her coat was turned up; the brim of her school hat turned down. It was impossible to identify her.

"That you, J?" asked a husky voice. Jess' heart was pounding. She could hardly speak, so deep was her emotion. She nodded and took a step forward.

"Good!" said the other girl. "But are you sure you weren't followed? Those Fourth Form kids are on our track. I'm certain they suspect."

"No, no one followed me here," Jess said, trying to disguise her voice. "But hadn't we better have a light? It's horribly dark here."

"All right. Just a moment. I've brought a torch with me."

The unknown fumbled in her coat pocket, then a dazzling sword of light cleaved the darkness. With a gasp she recoiled, fearful of her imposture being discovered. But her enemy suspected nothing. She only gave a husky chuckle.

"What's the matter?" she demanded. "It's not like you to be nervy, J. Here, sit down."

She turned as she spoke, and the torch, swinging round with her, played on the pile of sacks. But it played on something else as well—Letty's fat form!

The unknown enemy clicked off her torch and gave a horrified screech.

"What's this mean?" she gasped. "J, I thought you said—"

But that was as far as she got, for Olive and Letty, realising that further concealment was futile, leapt to their feet.

"Quick—catch her!" the Form captain gasped.

Jess hurled herself forward, but the unknown eluded her grabbing hands,



FROM ONE GIRL TO ANOTHER

Helpful Hints
and Chery
Chatter by
Penelope

HALLO, EVERYBODY,—This is your Penelope here again—just as if it would be anyone else. Have you all seen pictures in the papers of those adorable new animals—at least, they are new to Europe—the giant pandas?

If any of you would like to buy me a nice little present some time, you might make it one of these lovable pets. I believe they would only cost a thousand pounds or so.

But seriously, if any of you do trot off to the Zoo to see them, do write and tell me about them, will you?

IMPORTANT PEOPLE

And, goodness me, what a lot of discussion you young schoolgirls have been causing lately. All the clever people of the country have been discussing your homework, your examinations, new schools for you—and goodness knows what else.

One very important lady even discussed "penny dreadfuls," and said she thought they were good for schoolgirls. If, by "penny dreadfuls" she means a paper like this one—even though it costs twopence—well, I quite agree, don't you?

Relaxation in our spare time, whether by reading, dancing, going to the pictures, or just sitting doin' nuffin', is good for us all when we have been working hard, whether at school or at any office.

SQUEAKING SHOES

Isn't it annoying when you have a very nice-looking pair of shoes, and the silly things will squeak.

You trot around, feeling very smart, until this mouth-organ noise starts issuing from the soles of your feet, and however lightly you tread, you just can't stop it.

Most embarrassing! And, of course, you can't afford to discard a pair of shoes just because they squeak.

Isn't it annoying, too, when light-hearted Form-fellows at school will murmur something about your shoes "not having been paid for?"

That's what they say about squeaky ones, isn't it? Jolly mean, I call it.

It wouldn't surprise me in the least if this squeaking business hasn't occurred in a good many shoes just lately—and I'll tell you why.

To get the shoes very wet

frequently, and then to dry them near a fire—causes some of the oils to dry out of the leather. This leaves it so dry that it cracks and squeaks when you next put the shoes on again.

Quite simple, isn't it? So what about a remedy.

Yes, I have one—equally simple. You must just restore those oils.

To do this, smear the soles and round the welts of the shoes with Vaseline or with linseed oil. Stand them on a newspaper and let this soak in all night if possible. If not, do it once or twice, and that infuriating squeak will soon disappear.

FOR COLD DAYS

A sort of waistcoat jersey to wear over your wintry dress sounds a jolly good idea for this weather, doesn't it?

If you—or mother—has a gay jumper which has worn out under the arms and around the neck, you could very quickly make this very sporty looking slipover from it.



Just snip out the arms, leaving fairly big armholes, and cut off the collar part. Machine-stitch around the raw edges to prevent the stitches running, and then bind them with bias binding or turn them in and hem them strongly.

Make some ornamental buttons of bobbles down the front, wear a belt at the waist, and you'll feel as trim and cosy as if you were off to the Winter Sports.

Good-bye now until next week,

Your own

PENELOPE

and, giving her a push, sent her reeling back.

"Look out, you chump!" panted Letty; then she also went staggering as Jess collided with her. Olive, leaping forward, tripped against an outflung foot, and in a moment all three chums were rolling on the dusty floor.

There came a cry of triumph, then the clatter of hurrying feet on the ladder. The mystery enemy was making her escape!

"After her!" cried Olive, springing up and blundering forward.

In her frantic haste she almost toppled down the ladder, and hot on her heels came her chums. But when they reached the doorway of the mill, there was no sign of the fugitive. For a moment they looked about them helplessly, then Olive, glimpsing a shadowy shape amongst the trees, gave a shout.

"There she is! She's making for the Head's garden!"

Once again they took up the pursuit, and Olive, emerging from the trees, gave a cry of triumph as she glimpsed a dim figure rounding a bend in the garden path.

"Got you!" she exclaimed, and leaping forward, she clutched the unknown by the arm. Her captive gave an alarmed gasp and angrily swung round. As luck would have it, at that moment the moon came from behind the clouds. Olive gave a horrified gulp. "Oh, g-g-golly!" she stuttered.

For it was not Jess' unknown enemy whose arm she was clutching, but—Miss Bramleigh, the headmistress!

THE NOTE IN THE NIGHT!

"HOW dare you? Release me at once!"

Scandalised was Miss Bramleigh's expression, then, as Olive hastily obeyed and the other two Fourth Formers pulled up in dismay, the Head gave a cry of recognition.

"Why, it's Olive French!" she ejaculated. "Olive, Letty, and Jess! Bless my soul, what does this mean? You have been out of the school grounds. You have been breaking bounds."

"Y-y-yes," Olive confessed. "But we had a reason, Miss Bramleigh. You see—"

The Head held up a stern hand. "That will do, Olive. I refuse to listen to any excuses. Nothing you can say can disguise the fact that all three of you have grossly abused my trust in you."

"Oh, Miss Bramleigh!" cried Olive in dismay. "Surely—"

"Please be quiet, Olive! I say you have betrayed my faith in the Fourth Form. I have granted you all my privileges. And this is how I am repaid! At the very first opportunity you break bounds! It is not a very auspicious beginning to the more liberal reign I have instituted, I must say."

"But, Miss Bramleigh—"
"Silence! Not another word!" The Head raised her hand again, and her angry gaze settled on Olive. "It is you I chiefly blame," she declared. "As Form captain you ought to set your friends a better example. However, for the moment, you will all do me a hundred lines. That is all—you can go."

And with a curt nod she turned away. Glumly the three girls hurried back to school.

"This is all my fault!" Jess declared. "Sometimes I wish I'd never come to St. Kit's. There's been nothing but



"Got you!" Olive cried, as she grasped the arm of the figure she had dimly seen in the darkness. Then she gave a horrified gasp. For it was Miss Bramleigh, the headmistress, she was clutching!

trouble for you, Olive, since I've been here."

"You'd better stop moping and hurry up and get to bed," cut in the Form captain, with a laugh. "If we're not soon between the sheets there will be a row, then we'll all have something really to worry about!"

They made their way upstairs to their dormitory. Though in bed, the rest of the Form was still awake. They stared curiously at Olive & Co. as those three girls walked in.

"Hallo, where have you been?" demanded Edith Fox, the Fourth Form nosey parker.

But the chums were not saying. They felt too dispirited. Glumly they undressed and climbed into bed.

But it was a long time before they got to sleep, for they could not help wondering about what they had discovered this evening.

Now they had proof that Jess' double and her unknown enemy were in league. But in league for what purpose? Why should they both wish to see the new girl forced out of St. Kit's in disgrace? And in what way was their treacherous plotting linked with the strange silence of Miss Dalton, Jess' mysterious benefactress?

"It's worse than a Chinese puzzle," Olive told herself, frowning into the darkness. "I can't make head or tail of it. I only wish—" She finished with a startled gasp. "Hallo, what's that?" she cried, sitting up with a jerk, for something had fluttered through the air, brushing against her face.

Clicking on her bedside light, she looked about her. But everyone was asleep. There was no clue to the queer happening that had aroused her. Then, as she turned her head, she saw what it was that had touched her face. It was a folded slip of paper.

But where had it come from? Who could have thrown it across the dormitory?

Flinging back the bed-clothes, she went to the door, opened it, and looked up and down the corridor. No one was in sight.

"Well, that's funny," she murmured. She returned to bed, and picking up the slip of paper, she smoothed it open. A few lines of typewriting met

her startled gaze, and she gave another gasp.

"Another anonymous message!" she exclaimed. "Well-wisher has been at work again!"

Angrily she read what had been typed there; the contents of the note were enough to make anyone indignant.

"IT IS DANGEROUS TO BE-FRIEND JESS GRANT," the mystery enemy had written. "IF YOU DO NOT WANT TO LOSE THE FOURTH FORM CAPTAINCY YOU HAD BETTER MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS! REMEMBER—I SHALL NOT WARN YOU TWICE!"

"Well, of all the cheek!" Olive cried, and with furious fingers she crumpled up the slip of paper and tossed it away. Never for a single second was she tempted to take notice of that grim warning. Her lips set fiercely. "This settles it," she told herself. "From now on I won't rest until I've bowled out Jess Grant's secret enemy!"

And as she settled down in bed, dragged the sheets up over her shoulders, her eyes gleamed with determination.

A PUNISHMENT FOR THE FORM

"COMING for a stroll, old scout?" "Yes, do, Olive. There's plenty of time before chapel."

It was the following morning, and eagerly Letty and Jess hailed the Form captain as she emerged from the dining-room. But Olive shook her head.

"Sorry, it can't be done. Though it's Sunday, I've got work to do. It's the Fourth Form party soon, you know, and I've not even started to think out the programme."

"Party!" echoed Jess. "Oh goody! What kind of a party is it to be?"

Olive laughed. "Well, that's not been decided yet! You see we've never had one in the Fourth before: Miss Gunter, the old Head, didn't approve of them. But Miss Bramleigh says each Form can stay up late one evening during the term, so we're going to have a party. There'll be a special supper and some kind of

entertainment, and as this is our first we want it to be a success."

"You bet we do!" exclaimed Letty, with a chuckle, and eagerly she surveyed Jess. "I say, can you conjure, juggle, or stand on your napper?" she asked.

Jess shook her head.

"Fraid not. But I can sing a bit, if that's any help."

"Splendid!" Olive looked at her with new interest. "What kind of stuff do you go in for?" she asked.

"Oh, rather modern, jazzy songs," replied Jess.

"Splendid!" said Olive again. "I'll put you down for an audition this afternoon. Stephanie goes in for hot rhythm stuff as well, but there's room for two lots on the programme. Now I must toddle off. I've got to get out a notice calling a meeting for this afternoon, and there's heaps of other things to do. Cheerio!"

With a smile the Form captain retired to Study No. 5, leaving her chums to go for their walk. When she had printed the notice calling the meeting, she went out into the hall to pin it on the board.

But as she did so she stopped and stared, for another notice had recently been put up—a notice that bore the headmistress' own signature. It was brief and to the point:

"The privilege permitting members of the Fourth Form to retire to bed without supervision is withdrawn. In future a prefect will accompany them upstairs. It will be her responsibility to see that all lights are extinguished at the appointed time, and that thereafter perfect quiet is maintained."

Olive read in dismay.

"Oh golly!" she exclaimed. "This must be the result of what happened last night. I only hope—"

She broke off as a group of Fourth Formers appeared on the scene. Seeing their Form captain standing there, they gathered curiously around the notice-board.

"Anything fresh?" inquired Molly Barker, then she gave a gasp as she saw the new regulation. The other girls gasped also. In mingled surprise and consternation they read the notice. Not only did they resent the implication that they could not be trusted to go to bed on their own, but also they were painfully aware that if this new rule were strictly enforced they would lose many little opportunities for pleasure.

They would be unable to read in bed. They would have to forgo the enjoyable little chats they had each night after Lights Out. Nor would they be able to hold an occasional dormitory feed.

"It's a shame!" declared Molly, her cheeks flushing indignantly.

"Why should we be the ones to be treated like this?"

There came a chorus of similar cries, and Olive bit her lip. She felt keenly her own responsibility in the matter.

"I'm sorry, girls," she said, "but I'm afraid I'm partly responsible for this happening."

"What!"

The Fourth Formers stared at her incredulously.

"Yes, you see—well, old Brammy caught me breaking bounds last night, and so—well, I suppose that's why she's withdrawn this privilege."

"Caught you breaking bounds?" It was Edith Fox who spoke. She gazed at the Form captain inquisitively.

"So that's why you were late coming up to bed!" she exclaimed. "But what were you and those other two up to?"

Olive coloured uncomfortably.

"Oh, we had to go out," she said

evasively. "It was very important, but, of course, old Brammy wouldn't listen to any excuses. I'm sorry, girls. I feel horribly guilty about it all."

"Crumbs, you don't think there's any chance of us losing the rest of our privileges, do you?" gasped Molly Barker.

"You will if you don't make Olive French toe the line!" declared a malicious voice; and Stephanie Warner came striding on to the scene. With glittering eyes she looked around. "This all comes of hobnobbing with that wretched new girl!" she declared.

"You mean Jess Grant?"

"But what's she got to do with it?"

"Everything!" snapped Stephanie.

"It's because of her that Olive and Letty broke bounds! If it hadn't been for her—"

"That's enough, Stephanie!" cut in Olive. But though she was angry, she was also puzzled. How did her rival know the reason why she and her chums had broken bounds last night? Angriely she surveyed the other girl. "You can blame me, if you like," she said, "but kindly leave Jess' name out of this!"

Stephanie tossed her blonde locks defiantly.

"I'll do nothing of the sort!" she snapped. "I know you're trying to shield your precious pal, but we're not taken in! But for her, we'd never have lost this privilege! But for her, we'd never have had any trouble this term! As it is, we've had nothing but strife!"

"That's true!" chipped in Iris Watts, Stephanie's biggest pal.

"There'll never be any peace while Jess is at St. Kit's!" agreed Cecily Savage, in whom the new girl's failure to turn up at the recent hockey match still rankled. "What Stephanie says is right!"

Olive stood there helplessly, hating this fresh dissension, knowing that unless it was quickly nipped in the bud there was danger of the Form splitting up into quarrelling groups. In an effort to distract attention, she pointed to the notice she herself had pinned up.

"Pipe down, girls!" she urged.

"Let's think about something more pleasant. Let's think about the party."

"The party?"

Instantly the angry voices died down, and one by one the Fourth Formers turned their attention to the notice-board. Their eyes sparkled as they thought of the forthcoming high spot of the term. Olive, realising their interest, gave a sigh of relief. She had high hopes of the momentary unpleasantness being forgotten.

But she reckoned without Stephanie. That girl gave a disdainful sniff as she saw that Jess was down on the list to give an audition.

"Well, of all the cheek!" she cried.

"After what's happened, I'd have thought you'd have left her name off the list! We don't want her spoiling the party!"

Olive's eyes flashed.

"Rubbish!" she retorted. "We want all the talent we can get, and, by what I've heard, Jess is a jolly good singer. She goes in for bright, jazzy songs."

Stephanie laughed shrilly.

"Just like I do!" she scoffed. "Well, let me tell you this, Olive French! If she sings, then I don't!"

And, with another disdainful toss of her head, Stephanie stamped away. The rest of the Form gazed after her in consternation. But Olive quickly took steps to prevent another argument from breaking out.

"Don't let what Stephanie said worry you," she urged. "She'll soon come down and see sense. And don't forget, girls, I'm relying on you all to rally round.

We want the party to be a huge success."

"Rather!" cried Molly Barker.

"Hear, hear!" chorused the rest; and, excitedly discussing the party, they went on their way.

Immediately after dinner, Olive led the way to the Junior Common-room. A few of the girls had already arrived for the meeting, and, putting her papers down at the table, Olive waited patiently for the rest to turn up.

Gradually some of the stragglers came in, but when the time to start arrived eight girls were still absent. Olive caught in her breath as she saw that Stephanie, Iris Watts, and Cecily Savage were amongst those missing.

"We'd better hang on for a few minutes," she said. "No use starting until everyone's here."

Another five minutes dragged by, then Molly Barker jumped impatiently to her feet.

"I vote we go and find the slackers!" she suggested.

She made for the door, but Olive called her back.

"No, I'll go," she said.

Her face was pale and her heart was thumping as she left the Common-room, for she had the uneasy feeling that this had been deliberately staged.

She drummed her knuckles on the door of Stephanie's study, then walked in, her lips firmly set. As she had half-expected, all the absentees were in the room; but, to her surprise, they sat in rows as if at a meeting. Stephanie, looking very important, sat at a table, a sheaf of papers before her. She looked up, with a scowl, as she saw who it was who had entered.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" she said. "Well, what'd you want? We're busy!"

With an effort, Olive restrained her indignation.

"Aren't you coming to the meeting?" she asked. "It's awfully important."

One or two of the girls looked uncomfortable, but none of them showed any signs of getting up. Olive bit her lip.

"Come on! Be sporty!" she urged.

"Forget any grouse you may have against Jess or me. The Form must come first, you know; and if the party's to be a success—"

She stopped as Stephanie gave a jarring laugh.

"You're only wasting your time!" the blonde girl declared; and Iris Watts gave a vigorous nod.

"Yes; you can push off, Olive French!" she declared. "We don't want you in here! And you may as well know that we're not going to have anything more to do with Jess Grant! If she's in the party, then we're out of it!"

"Hear, hear!" added Cecily Grant; but the other five girls remained silent, uneasy and embarrassed.

"You really mean you're going to ban the party?" she cried.

Stephanie patted her blonde locks. "We're going to do more than that!" she smirked. "We're going to organise our own party!"

"Wha-at!"

Olive stared incredulously.

"Our own party!" Stephanie repeated. "And it's going to be a real rip-snorter—one that everyone in the Fourth will be glad to attend! So you and your precious pals, Olive French, can go and have a little party on your own!"

How mean it is of Stephanie to put Olive into this difficult position. It means that if she stands by Jess, the Form party will be a failure. You mustn't miss a word of next Friday's enthralling chapters of this grand school story. Order your **GIRLS' CRYSTAL** right away.

Their Quest AT THE Winter Sports



MR. ROSS REAPPEARS

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

At their hotel they met Sylvia Drake. Sylvia had thought that she was the ward of Mr. and Mrs. Ross, but the chums soon discovered that the Rosses had no legal authority over her, and were scheming against her.

Sylvia's cousin, Douglas, had been hiding from the police in the mountains. He told Sylvia that it was vital for her to win the St. Lauritz skating championships. The Rosses discovered where he was, and sent police to arrest him.

Douglas managed to leave a clue for the chums before he was arrested—a rhyme which they believed referred to a cuckoo clock that had been sold. They went to a shop and asked to see the clock, which had been taken there. But even as they examined it, Mr. Ross appeared.

"Don't let them buy that clock," he said to the proprietress. "I'll pay any price you like for it!"

SWIFT dismay gripped Doreen, for it seemed certain that Stephen Ross knew about the cuckoo clock! He must know about the vital secret which she and her friends believed it to hold!

"No, no! You shan't have it!" Doreen cried fiercely.

"We'll soon see about that!" Mr. Ross snapped; and, allowing the door of the shop to close with a crash behind him, he strode towards the group.

"Keep back, you rotter!" Tony exclaimed angrily, moving forward. "Back up, Jack—"

The two boys stood barring his path. Mr. Ross came to a halt glaring at them furiously.

"This is none of your business—" he fumed.

"Yes it is! We know what a scoundrel you are! Here, keep your hands off!"

"Then out of my way—"

"Messieurs—messieurs!" the proprietress wailed, wringing her hands. "Plees haf the goodness not to fight here! I call ze gendarmes—"

"I'm not fighting!" Mr. Ross hooted.

"I want that clock. Name your own price and I'll buy it!"

Desperately Doreen caught at the dealer's arm.

"No, we'll buy it from you, madame!" she cried. "Oh, please, please don't let this man get it!"

"After all, we were here first," put in Jean.

"Take no notice of them!" Mr. Ross interrupted blusteringly. "I want the clock, too, and I'm going to have it! You're a business woman, madame. We're both willing to buy. And I am offering the higher price! Now, what do you want for it?"

The shopkeeper folded her plump arms. She glanced at the clock, which she had stood upon the counter. It looked no different from the dozens of other cuckoo clocks she had sold; but very obviously there was something different about this one.

She saw Doreen, looking at her with such pleading entreaty in her eyes. She saw Mr. Ross extract a wallet from his pocket and ostentatiously display its bulging contents.

Madame's eyes began to gleam. She didn't know what all this was about, but—yes, she was a business woman! Perhaps, in a way, she'd rather the pretty English girl got the clock; but, on the other hand, the loud-voiced man was evidently prepared to pay big money, and it would be foolish to miss this opportunity of making easy profit.

"Ze price is twenty Swiss francs," she said at length, which was exactly double the price she had been asking for the clock.

"Then we'll give you twenty-five francs, madame!" Doreen cried, opening her handbag.

There was no price too high for the unscrupulous Mr. Ross to pay for that cuckoo clock. So the chums realised that if they were to gain possession of it, it would have to be by a trick.

By DAPHNE GRAYSON

"Fifty francs!" Mr. Ross snapped immediately.

"Oh, you hateful thing!" Doreen panted.

"I've got fifteen francs I can spare," Jean offered.

"And here's twenty you can have," Jack said.

"Count on me for another twenty," Tony put in.

"Then we'll make it sixty!" Doreen cried desperately.

"One hundred!" Mr. Ross bid, and laughed in Doreen's face. "I'll raise your price every time!" he said mockingly. "You'll never leave this shop with the clock!"

One hundred francs! Madame felt quite dazed. One hundred francs for a clock worth only ten! This was marvellous! This was the best bit of luck she'd had for years!

But Doreen's eyes were agonised now. Her heart was cold within her. Mr. Ross meant what he had said. He would raise and raise the price until he won.

If only Aunt Elizabeth had been here the situation might have been different. She would have had the money to fight him—would have fought him, knowing the vital interests that hung upon the result. But Aunt Elizabeth had gone away the previous afternoon, visiting friends, and she was not due back until late that morning. And by then it would be too late—too late!

"One hundred and twenty-five francs!" Tony called suddenly.

Doreen swung round on him, hopelessly, yet despairingly.

"But, Tony, we haven't the money!"

"Don't you be so sure, Doreen!" he said. "We're not letting this rotter get away with it, believe me! My father will stand by me. He's Mr. Gordon Semers, the famous surgeon," he added, for the benefit of the proprietress, who looked expectantly towards Mr. Ross.

"One hundred and fifty!" Stephen Ross called at once, his wallet open now.

"One hundred and seventy-five!" Tony retorted.

Doreen suddenly felt herself trembling. She felt rather appalled. Would

Tony's father stand by him? Would he understand?

And then she went tense, her eyes widened in surprise. For Tony had suddenly nudged her; unseen by Mr. Ross or any of the others, he had suddenly winked.

Quickly she looked up at him, puzzled, yet curiously thrilled. There was laughter in his eyes, a grin on his face.

Doreen's hopes rose high again. Tony was playing some game. But what could it be?

"Two hundred!" Mr. Ross bid, and glared furiously at the boy who was balking him.

But again Tony raised the price. Still there was that confident look in his eyes as he glanced unobtrusively at Doreen.

Mr. Ross bared his teeth savagely. "Confound you!" he grated. "But you won't beat me! Three hundred francs!"

At that, Tony gave a shrug of despair. Apologetically, he looked at Doreen.

"Sorry," he said, "but I'll have to back out now. I daren't go to any more."

Mr. Ross laughed triumphantly. "I'm glad you've realised it!" he exclaimed. "Here's the money. Now, let me have the clock!"

Madame, her eyes almost popping at sight of the pile of notes on the counter, seemed to come out of a daze.

"Oui, oui, m'sieur!" she almost stuttered. "Shall I wrap it up?"

"No!" Stephen Ross had pounced on the clock, grabbed it up. Eyes glittering with triumph, he strode towards the door. Then, for a moment, he paused. "Thanks for letting me into the secret," he taunted. "I can afford to be generous now. You must be wondering how I got to know about this. In future you had better be more careful when solving cryptic messages. You see, I happened to be in the hotel lounge last night, behind those palms, and I heard everything!"

Next moment the door crashed shut. Doreen saw him hurry into the roadway, hail a sleigh, and then he was driven away out of sight.

Her heart stood still within her. So that was how he had known! And now he'd got the clock!

She suddenly remembered that wink Tony had given her. Round she swung. "Tony—"

Tony laughed outright. "Diddled him!" he cried. "All right, Doreen, don't worry. Look—"

He suddenly pointed upwards to the shelf from which the dealer had taken the clock. And on that shelf was another clock, very much like the one which Stephen Ross had paid such a high price to possess.

Doreen started. "You—you mean—" She broke off. "But how do you know—"

"Remember that last bit of the message we couldn't puzzle out?" Tony laughed. "Something missing that rhymed with late? Well, take another look at that clock, the eight is missing—and that rhymes with late, doesn't it?"

An electric thrill shot through Doreen. Goodness, he was right! Then—then—

"Oh, let's see it!" she cried. "Madame, may we have a look at that clock—"

In amazement the proprietress reached up, brought it down to the counter. Excitedly they all crowded round. Tony opened the back of it, peered in among the mechanism.

"Nothing hidden here," he gasped. "Gosh, I hope I'm right. What about the top here, where the cuckoo does its

stuff. How does one get it open—I say, does it work? Have you got the key?"

Still bewildered, madame produced a key and wound up the mechanism. It started ticking. Quickly Tony moved the hands.

Cuckoo-cuckoo-cuckoo! The little doors had swung open. The imitation bird had swivelled out from its cavity. At the same moment Doreen let out a cry of excitement.

"Look, look! Oh, Tony, you're right! Here's something—"

She dived her hand into the cavity, brought out a little bundle of papers neatly tied with ribbon.

Again Tony laughed. "Papers that prove the innocence of Sylvia's cousin, or I'm a Dutchman!" he cried jubilantly. "And I made old Ross pay three hundred francs for the wrong clock!"

But now Doreen was feverishly unfastening the ribbon. One quick look she took at the documents, and then her eyes were shining.

"Yes, yes, it's them!" she cried, and turned quickly to the startled proprietress. "This is what we were looking for. We don't want the clock really, but it's only fair we should buy it. How much do you want—"

"Ze clock you can have! I give it to you!" the woman said.

"We'll keep it as a souvenir!" Doreen exclaimed excitedly. "But come on now. We must race to the police station. Once the police see these papers—"

"Come on!" Tony grinned. And a moment later they were all rushing from the shop.

DOUGLAS EXPLAINS

WITH a jingle of harness, the sleigh pulled up outside the police station at St. Lauritz. Out of it poured Doreen & Co.

Clutching the precious documents in her hand, Doreen led the rush across the snowy pavement and up the steps.

A gendarme barred their way, looked at them inquiringly.

"We want to see Mr. Drake!" Doreen cried. "He was brought here under arrest. But he's not guilty of the charges brought against him. We have papers here which prove—"

"M'sieur Drake?" the gendarme interrupted. "But he is not here now—"

"Not here?" Doreen gasped. "But—"

"He was taken to the courthouse less than an hour ago," the gendarme explained. "He will be appearing before the justices. And he is not guilty, you say?" The man shook his head. "You are mistaken, m'selle. Perhaps you are his friends and do not know of all the evidence against him. He will be deported to England, there to stand trial—"

"But I tell you he is innocent!" Doreen exclaimed. "These papers prove it. We have just found them. Oh, please help us! Please look at them—"

The gendarme looked both startled and impressed. He took the documents, gave them a quick glance.

"Wait here," he said abruptly. They waited while he hurried off—waited in a fever of impatience.

Douglas Drake in danger of being deported! If he was taken back to England then all their efforts would have been in vain. The papers must surely vindicate him in time, of course, but it would mean they would be unable to see him. And see him they must, if all this mystery was to be cleared up.

He could tell them the reason of the Ross' enmity towards Sylvia. He could tell them why it was so vital that she should win the skating championship of St. Lauritz.

If they were too late; if indeed he was deported, then everything might be lost. The knowledge that her cousin was still under a cloud would be bound to affect Sylvia and seriously endanger her chances of winning the championship on the morrow. And if she lost, and Irma won, then the Rosses would have triumphed after all.

"Oh, why doesn't he hurry!" Doreen cried distractedly. "Why doesn't he do something—"

She broke off. The gendarme was returning.

"A car will take you to the courthouse," he said quickly. "These papers are indeed important and seem to prove that the M'sieur Drake is innocent. We would have telephoned the court, but there was heavy snow during the night, and while our own line is working we cannot get through. But here is the car, m'selle."

A few moments later they were all being driven through the town. On reaching the courthouse, they leapt out, together with the gendarme.

Officials came to bar their way, but swift explanation from the gendarme acted like magic and they were allowed to pass.

Down a wide corridor he led the way, paused outside a door to harangue with two other gendarmes who stood on guard there, and then they were passing through into the court beyond.

Doreen gave a gasp of relief. They were not too late.

There to one side of the court she saw Douglas. Pale and haggard of face, he stood listening to the stern-faced judge, or magistrate, who even then was addressing him.

"The decision of this court," he was saying in French, "is that we accede to the request of the English police authorities. You will be deported to England at once, where you will stand trial on such charges as may be brought against you—"

Doreen was not an expert at French, but she understood enough to get the gist of what the magistrate was saying.

"No!" she cried. "He is innocent, and here is the proof!"

In a moment there was a sensation. She saw Douglas swing round in her direction, his pale cheeks flushing with excitement. She heard the judge give an angry exclamation. Then the gendarme was speaking to him, was showing him the precious documents.

Now everybody seemed to be talking, and Doreen & Co. were being questioned. The magistrate consulted with various officials. Again he examined the papers. In the box, still guarded by two gendarmes, Douglas craned forward excitedly.

At last the magistrate looked up and addressed him.

"But this is remarkable!" he exclaimed, speaking in English now for the benefit of Doreen and her friends. "These papers certainly prove your innocence. There can be no doubt about that."

"Then—then he will be released?" Doreen asked joyfully. "His name is cleared?"

The magistrate hesitated. "It is beyond my power at the moment to say that." He smiled as he saw the look of disappointment which spread over Doreen's pretty face. "But it is within my power to allow him to go free on parole until such time as this matter has been placed in the proper quarters. Providing Monsieur Drake

will give his word of honour that he will remain in St. Lauritz until such time as he is summoned here again, then he is free to leave this court. And I have no doubt that in due course his name will be completely cleared of the charges against him."

Doreen wanted to cheer. Shining-eyed she looked towards Douglas Drake. Already he was stepping down from the box, his face overjoyed.

Two minutes later, after formalities had been concluded, he was marching from the court, surrounded by his friends.

"FREE! No longer hunted for by the police! Gosh! It seems too good to be true!"

And Douglas drew in a deep breath, looked about him as if he still couldn't believe that all this had actually happened.

"But it is true, Mr. Drake!" Doreen laughed.

"Douglas to you!" he said gaily. "To all of you, I hope. I don't know how to start thanking you for what you've done—"

"We're only too happy to think that we were in time," Doreen told him.

"Golly! Won't Sylvia be excited?"

"Where is she?" he asked eagerly.

"On the lake, practising for the championship to-morrow," Doreen replied. "She's going to win, Douglas."

His expression became tense.

"She must win, Doreen!" he said quietly. "If she doesn't, then she loses a fortune!"

"A—a fortune?" Doreen gave an incredulous gasp.

Nul they were all staring at him in amazement. He smiled.

"Yes, a fortune," he repeated. "But let's jump on a sleigh and drive back to the hotel, and I'll tell you everything as we go."

He signalled a passing sleigh. Somehow they all managed to squeeze in.

Then, as the pony trotted slowly in the direction of the Crestina, Douglas told his story.

"It goes back many years," he began, while Doreen & Co. listened with rapt interest. "I expect Madame Marie, dear old soul that she is, has already told you that I was born here in St. Lauritz, and that she was my nurse.

Living here, too, was a rich old uncle of mine. At least, Uncle Robert didn't actually live here, but he owned the mill at Grimelle and stayed there every winter.

"He was a famous sportsman, and it was always his ambition to win the St. Lauritz skating championships. He did it once, and to celebrate presented the Golden Goblet trophy—which, as you know, still goes to the winner every year.

"By this time I was living with uncle, both my parents having died," Douglas went on. "I was about ten or eleven then, I suppose. We still spent every winter here at the mill; and while in London uncle was frequently visited by his youngest married sister and her baby—the baby was Sylvia. Also, visitors were Mr. and Mrs. Ross, with little Irma.

"Uncle was very fond of us children," Douglas continued, "and was always saying that he hoped one of us would follow in his footsteps some day and win the St. Lauritz skating championship—"

Then Uncle Robert had quarrelled with Sylvia's parents, and from that moment Douglas hadn't seen any more of them. But Robert Drake had never forgotten Sylvia, and he became intensely interested when he learned that

she was blossoming into a marvellous skater.

"Irma Ross, too, had taken up ice skating," Douglas went on. "The Rosses knew uncle was interested, and I always had the impression that they were trying to curry his favour. Two years ago Uncle Robert died. He left me his business, with the proviso that if I wasn't considered worthy to run it, then it was to pass to Stephen Ross. His fortune he left to either Sylvia or Irma; the one who first won the St. Lauritz skating championship was to get the money."

Doreen gave a whistle.

"Ah, now we're getting to it!" she exclaimed. "So that's why the Rosses hate Sylvia—why they did their utmost to keep her out of the championship. But why did they pretend to be her guardians—"

"I'm coming to that," Douglas continued. "I was delighted that uncle had remembered Sylvia. As soon as I knew the conditions of the will I tried to trace her, but she seemed to have vanished completely. I discovered that her parents had died when she was quite young, but that was all. I didn't know that the Rosses—knowing how uncle had intended to leave his fortune

hiding at the secret chalet then, and I had just met with a serious accident after falling into a crevasse.

"Madame Marie nursed me, and there's no doubt that she saved my life. But in the meantime, my friend had hidden the papers at the mill—hidden them so cleverly that, in spite of various clues, I couldn't find them. I never dreamed, for instance, that when I told Madame Marie to sell the furniture at the mill to get money, the very papers which would prove my innocence were hidden in that cuckoo clock!

"Still, all's well that ends well," he finished, with a smile. "And, thanks to you, everything is getting straightened out at last."

"But when did you first know that Sylvia was in St. Lauritz?" Doreen asked.

"That day you went to the mill," Douglas explained. "Madame Marie happened to see you, and was immediately struck by Sylvia's likeness to that picture hanging on the wall. Then she saw the Rosses hanging about, and, suspecting them, cut out the picture and brought it to me at the secret chalet. I was still ill then and unable to move. She dared not tell anybody about my being there, and she was hoping to



Doreen caught her breath as she read the note which had been sent to Sylvia, for it was signed "Doreen." "But you never wrote that!" Jean gasped. "Sylvia's been tricked!"

—had pretended to appoint themselves her guardians, and had sent her away, saying nothing to anybody. Their idea, of course, was to prevent her learning anything about the will.

"They intended that Irma should be the first to win the championship. Not content with that, they wanted uncle's business. Stephen Ross forged documents which made it appear that I was defrauding the business. I had to flee; and I came here to St. Lauritz, knowing Madame Marie would help me.

"She did. She hid me from the police, while I determined to prove my innocence and trace Sylvia so that she could be told the truth. I had a friend in England who believed in me and worked on my behalf.

"This friend succeeded. He found those papers which cleared my name, and also that document which showed that the Rosses were not Sylvia's guardians, as they were pretending. He brought all those papers to the Mill Grimelle, but I wasn't there; I was

bring Sylvia along to me so that I could make sure it was really her. As you know, the Rosses—and circumstances—prevented that."

"And that piece of charred paper with the writing on it about Sylvia's having to keep up her skating?" Jean asked.

"Oh, that! My writing, I expect," Douglas smiled. "I started keeping a diary, then, realising it was rather foolish, with the police on my trail, I destroyed it. But apparently that piece didn't get burned, and to you it formed just another clue in all this mystery."

"Mystery! I'll say it's been a mystery!" Doreen laughed. "But now everything's cleared up, thank goodness! Now we can tell Sylvia— Oh golly! Isn't she going to be excited?"

"A fortune for her if she wins to-morrow!" Tony exclaimed. "Gee! What a thrill! What a championship it's going to be!"

"And now here we are at the lake!" Doreen cried, jumping to her feet.

"Stop, driver—stop! Come on, everybody! We've got to find Sylvia and tell her the marvellous news. Come on!"

LURED AWAY!

"CAN you see her?"
"Not yet—"
"But she said she'd wait for us here!"

"My hat, what a crowd to look for anybody in!"

Doreen & Co. and Douglas stood on the edge of the lake. Eagerly, excitedly they scanned the ice for sign of Sylvia. "What will she be wearing?" Douglas asked.

"That pretty blue skating costume of hers with the tammy to match!" Doreen said.

"Gosh, there are dozens of girls here in blue—"

"Yes; but hers had white pockets. Oh, goodness, where is she?"

They went on looking. Before them, on the glittering ice, skaters whirled to and fro.

Never had they seen the lake so crowded. Never, for that matter, had St. Lauritz itself been so crowded. The winter season was at its height. Excitement was reaching its peak.

For on the morrow was the famous skating championship. Visitors from other Swiss resorts had come specially to St. Lauritz to be present at that popular and thrilling event.

Newspapers had blazoned the news that a new skating star had been discovered, forecasting that a tremendous struggle for honours would take place between Sylvia Drake and Irma Ross, both of England.

But Sylvia was the favourite—already Sylvia was being hailed as the future skating queen of St. Lauritz.

The lake itself was all decorated in preparation for the great event. In an hour or two now it would be closed to the general public so that the ice would be in perfect condition for the morrow.

Already every seat in the grand stand had been sold. Rows and rows of seats were being erected on the banks. Flags and bunting fluttered everywhere. Tomorrow the lake would be the scene of one of Switzerland's most famous sporting events—a natural arena in a setting of perfect beauty.

Doreen tingled as she thought of it; thrilled deliciously as she pictured Sylvia whirling over the ice-winning championship honours, the Golden Goblet. And a fortune!

But then, coming back to the realities of the moment, she frowned a little.

"Jiggered if I can see her," she said. "Perhaps she's waiting for us in the hotel—"

"Then let's have a look!"

But even as they turned, Doreen gave a cry.

"Hallo, there's Aunt Elizabeth. She's just come from the Crestina. Perhaps she's seen Sylvia! And, golly, we must tell her all that's happened!"

Aunt Elizabeth beamed at them as they raced up.

"Hallo, my dears!" she greeted. "I've only just returned, and I simply had to come and look for you. I hope," she added, with a twinkle, "you have behaved yourselves while I was away last night—"

"Have you seen Sylvia?" Doreen broke in eagerly.

"No, my dear. Has anything happened—"

"Anything happened?" Doreen cried excitedly. "Just wait till you hear! But first—meet Sylvia's cousin! This is Douglas Drake, Aunt Elizabeth. And

his innocence has been proved—he's no longer wanted by the police—"

Then in a torrent of words she was telling Miss Hill everything that had happened. They were all telling her, excitedly, rather incoherently, until Douglas himself took up the story.

Aunt Elizabeth listened in amazement. But then she was smiling, a glad light in her eyes, astonishment mingling with pleasure as she heard about the fortune that would be Sylvia's if she won the skating championship.

"Bless my soul!" she exclaimed. "But this is incredible—it sounds almost like some fairy story! But I'm glad—glad for Sylvia's sake. And I'm glad, too, Douglas, that you have been able to clear yourself. It's wonderful news. Most certainly we must find Sylvia and tell her. You say she was practising—"

"Yes." Doreen nodded, again searching round for sign of their friend. "Can't make out where she's got to. I say, what about splitting up and scouting round?"

"Jolly good idea!" agreed Tony.

"You and Jack. Jean and myself." Doreen broke off. Already Tony and Jack had gone racing off, but just at that moment a man came up to Douglas, doffing his hat as he did so.

"Pardon me, you are Monsieur Drake—yes?" he asked.

Doreen nodded, looking a little startled. The man smiled.

"All is well, monsieur," he said. "I am a detective, but do not fear. Already we have been in touch with your English police, and very soon now your innocence will be an established fact. But it is not that I have come to see you about. We want a description of Stephen Ross—"

"You mean you are looking for him?"

"Oui, m'sieur. Already a warrant has been issued for his arrest. If you could describe him—"

Douglas did so, while Doreen felt a thrill of satisfaction surge through her.

Mr. Ross to be arrested. It was only what he deserved after all his villainy. The Rosses had schemed, and now they would have to pay the penalty.

The detective took his departure. Doreen laughed excitedly.

"Golly, it looks as if Irma won't be skating to-morrow, after all!"

But Douglas shook his head.

"She'll be there!" he said. "And Mrs. Ross, too, if I'm not mistaken. It's only her husband the police are looking for—there's nothing against the other two. But he, of course, will be charged with the forgery and fraud which he tried to get me imprisoned for. No; Irma will be there. Don't forget a fortune is at stake—and you can be sure Irma and her mother won't abandon it without a fight. We've still got to be on our guard. Now, let's look around for Sylvia—"

Then there was a shout. Tony and Jack came racing up.

"You've found her?" Doreen cried.

"Where is she—"

"No; but we've just found somebody who saw her," Tony said. "Apparently she received a message of some sort—"

"A message? Who from?"

"We don't know. But a small boy gave it to her as she was skating. That was over an hour ago," Tony explained. "The chap who told us said she looked very excited, that she went back to the hotel and then hurried off again into the village!"

"Golly! Wonder who the message could have come from?" Doreen muttered. "She was so eager for news of Douglas—"

"Now, now, don't start worrying!" Aunt Elizabeth smiled. "She'll be back

for lunch, and then we can tell her everything!"

They all moved in the direction of the Crestina. But Doreen was still frowning.

Sylvia had said she would wait for them to return. She had been so excited. She had known the vital importance of their mission—that they had been on the verge of discovering the proof of her cousin's innocence.

Now she had suddenly gone rushing away. Had received a message—from whom, about what?

Desperately Doreen tried to still her worries. Oh, she was being foolish! She was worrying over nothing at all. But—but—

Her disquietude persisted. "We must still be on our guard," Douglas said.

Yes, on their guard, when a fortune was waiting to be won—when another beside Sylvia stood to win that fortune.

"Jean," said Doreen worriedly, turning to her chum, "I'm anxious about Sylvia. Where on earth can she have got to? I simply can't understand it."

Jean looked at her sympathetically. She, too, wore that anxious frown.

"Sylvia can take care of herself," she said, trying to speak brightly. "She'll be on her guard, just in case there is any trickery going on."

"Now, you two!" cut in Douglas Drake. "No gloom wanted at the moment! Why, we may possibly find Sylvia waiting for us when we get to the Crestina. The note may have been from someone at the hotel, about some trivial matter."

They had all reached the hotel now. Aunt Elizabeth was interviewing the manager, pleading with him to find accommodation somewhere—anywhere—for Douglas. Yes, she knew the hotel must be full, but surely there was somewhere—

Doreen went on up the stairs, Jean with her. They reached their room, opened the door, and went in.

There on Sylvia's bed was the blue skating costume which she had been wearing on the lake.

Then Sylvia had changed before going out. But why should that have been necessary?

And then Doreen's gaze became riveted on something protruding from one of the coat pockets.

"What's that—"

In two leaps she was beside the bed, was extracting the sheet of paper she had seen.

"Jean, this must be the message Sylvia received!" she cried. "It must be—Oh golly!"

Amazement and consternation sounded in her voice suddenly. Her eyes dilated.

"Jean, read it—read it!"

"NEWS CONCERNING YOUR COUSIN. MEET US AT TOP OF FUNICULAR RAILWAY AS SOON AS POSSIBLE."

And the note, written in capital letters, was signed "DOREEN"!

"But you never wrote that—" Jean gasped.

"Of course I didn't. Oh, don't you see? It's a trick—Sylvia's been tricked!"

"But who—"

"Who else but the Rosses!" And in that moment Doreen knew—positively knew—that she had hit on the truth.

Sylvia had been lured away on the eve of the skating championship—this was the Rosses' last desperate scheme to rob her of the chance to win a fortune!

Next Friday's thrilling chapters will bring this grand story to an exciting close. Be sure not to miss them. Order your GIRLS' CRYSTAL in advance.



Kaye of the Kennels

Poor Brutus was jealous because he thought his mistress, Kaye, liked another dog better than him.

A Charming Complete Story

by

IDA MELBOURNE

DIGGER THE DEFIANT

BRUTUS, Kaye Chalmers' St. Bernard dog, sighed, swallowed hard, and sighed again. He was jealous. With mournful eye he watched his beloved mistress pet and pamper and fondle and play with another dog, and, big-hearted though he was, Brutus could not watch without suffering.

Kaye was the very last girl in the world to cause any dog unnecessary suffering, and as Brutus was her nearest and dearest dog, who ruled in her heart, there was really no need for him to worry. But the circumstances were such that Kaye could not help playing with the other dog.

Kaye Chalmers was mistress, not only of Brutus, but of the Chalmers Kennels, and because of that she had to attend to the wants of many dogs. She dressed the wounds of the injured, nursed the sick, trained the backward, petted the home-sick, and in general gave every dog its rightful share of affection and happiness.

The dog she now petted was not injured, and he was not sick. If he had been, Brutus would not have worried; for he understood about illness, and followed Kaye from kennel to kennel on her rounds. There was no tinge of jealousy ever when she soothed a lonely dog, or petted a sick one. But this nasty, horrible brown dog was not injured, nor was he sick, yet, although if he occupied much more of Kaye's attention, he soon might be.

Thus ran Brutus' thoughts, and he lay brooding with his mighty head on his paws, sighing like a furnace.

In point of fact, the brown dog was not horrid, or horrible. He was a nice-natured and very intelligent dog. "Come on now," said Kaye gently, kneeling down. "Think, Digger! Think, chappie!"

Digger was the brown dog, and he sat down and thought. Blinking, he looked at the queer assortment of things spread out before him on the ground in a semicircle. There was a tobacco-pouch, a book, a duster, a pencil.

And what was Digger to do with them? He knew. He was to take each

separate article to the person who owned it, and to no other.

It was a trick which clever Digger had to display on a charity concert platform on Saturday; one which he had performed before with great success. If his master had not been taken ill, perhaps he could have gone on showing the same skill; but an attack of influenza had confined his master to bed, and Kaye had been asked to take charge of him.

For that reason only, Kaye was devoting to him so much of her time and attention; and three times she had explained it all to Brutus.

"Think, Digger!" said Kaye quietly. "Whose pencil is this?"

Kaye looked up, taking care not to glance in the direction of the errand-boy whose pencil it was. The errand-boy, Kaye's grandfather, their maid, a local farmer, and another villager, formed the interested audience, and it was their property spread out before Digger.

Digger picked up the pencil, turned, and then trotted to the farmer.

No one spoke. Once before Digger had taken the object to someone not the owner, and then had changed his mind.

"Oh, Digger!" reproved Kaye, and in such a gentle tone of affection that Brutus made an audible sniffing, snuffling sound.

Digger went to the maid then, and because she giggled he went to Kaye's grandfather, to each person until last of all he dropped it at the errand-boy's feet, and ran back to Kaye, who looked at him, deep in thought.

"You know, granddad," she said, "I think he's being defiant. He took the pencil to the rightful owner last of all. That's just what he did with the book. He knows whose it is, but I'm beginning to think he won't do it for anyone but his own master. This is his way of showing us that he won't."

"Mm! Maybe." Her grandfather nodded. "But if that's so, he can't perform on Saturday. It'll be a great blow to the kiddies."

Kaye thought that she had found the fault in Digger, but that did not mean that she was abandoning hope.

"Now, whose tobacco-pouch is this?" she asked, lifting it up.

That was too much for Brutus. He knew whose it was—granddad's—and as Kaye was his mistress, her grandfather had a place as his master. No other dog had a right to touch that pouch.

With an angry snarl, Brutus jumped forward.

NEARLY A TRAGEDY

BRUTUS' weight rolled Digger over, and, with eyes blazing, he stood over his victim.

"Brutus, stop!" cried Kaye, in horror.

Brutus heard, and his powerful jaws did not close on his enemy. Instead, he snatched up the tobacco-pouch, and rushed with it to Kaye's grandfather, put his feet on the old man's chest, and sent him staggering back, by sheer excess of enthusiasm.

"Whoa!" gasped grandfather, taking the pouch. "Steady, Brutus!"

Brutus, with a triumphant look at Digger, swaggered back to Kaye, and sat down in Digger's place in the centre of the assorted articles.

But if he expected admiration and approval from Kaye, poor Brutus suffered sad disappointment. For this was not the time for him to butt his eleven stone of weight into the proceedings.

Because Kaye loved him, however, she was patient.

"Now, Brutus, to your kennel, old boy," she said, giving him a pat. "It was very, very clever, and I know you'd return everything to granddad, wouldn't you, like a loyal dog? Charity begins at home. But this is a trick, so please go away."

Brutus did not go away, although his ears drooped, and his eyes glistened; for he could detect that Kaye, although she spoke kindly, did so only on principle.

"Come along now," said Kaye, and chained him up to the kennel. "Be a good, sweet dog, Brutus. And if you are, I'll give you that lovely bath I've promised you."

Brutus did not like baths, but Kaye had enough knowledge of dogs to tell her that he would rather have a bath every hour than feel ignored or neglected.

Resentment burning within him, Brutus settled down to watch—and he watched without looking away for a

moment until Kaye called a halt to the disappointing rehearsal.

Digger had failed; through defiance he had failed, not through lack of intelligence, and there was no use going on at the moment.

Shutting him up in the kennel, Kaye spoke to him sternly.

"Now, Digger, you've got to do these tricks. And if you think that by failing you'll bring your master here to do them with you you're wrong, silly old chap!"

Digger settled down—stubborn, determined, triumphant—feeling that he had been loyal to his master in not performing properly for Kaye.

So Kaye, to teach him a lesson, decided to ignore him. Remembering her promise to Brutus, she freed him and led him to the special room reserved for shampoos, baths, and general grooming.

Ten minutes later Brutus, happy again, was being covered with foam, soused, and splashed, and scrubbed. And because Kaye spoke pettingly he endured it without one struggle or protest, just as though it was grand fun.

He was cleaned and dried and, as Kaye said, made beautiful; then, as soon as he was dry enough, she led him to his kennel.

While she had been busy with Brutus, Kaye had been thinking about Digger, and the idea occurred to her that she might take him to his master for a lecture, to have him impressed with the fact that she really was in charge of him for the time being.

It seemed such a sound idea that Kaye decided to act upon it at once, and, getting out her bicycle, she released Digger from his kennel.

Brutus, half-dozing, heard Digger's bark and sat up. Shocked, amazed, deeply wounded, he saw Kaye wheel out her cycle, Digger at her heels.

"Woof!" barked Brutus.
"Darling, not you," said Kaye regretfully. "Not this time. I won't be long; so be a good dog, and don't get dirty."

Then, fondling his head, she waved him good-bye and hurried out.

Brutus stood up; he whined pathetically; he gave a yelping bark; and, finally, as he heard the gate close, he tugged at his chain.

He tugged, strained, pulled, and then he rolled over as the link nearest his collar gave way. But he scrambled up in a flash, ran down to the closed gate, failed to jump it, ran back, made for the hole in the fence at the far end of the kennels, and, despite his bulk, wriggled through.

But by the time he reached the road Kaye was out of sight, cycling at fair speed, with Digger easily keeping pace.

Brutus looked right and left, then made for the woods where Kaye usually took him for his exercise. Reaching them, he thudded on until, failing to see Kaye, or pick up her scent, he slowed, puzzled and anxious.

His quick ears could detect faint sounds; and now, listening intently, he heard a cry that could not be mistaken; it was a cry for help—a cry of fear.

Brutus leaped forward, crashing through bushes, swerving past trees, taking the shortest cut to the source of that sound.

Twice more the cry sounded before he saw the victim. In the middle of the wood was a large pond, and on the surface, its sail flat to the water, drifted a small toy yacht.

Nothing else, no one else was in sight—yet that cry for help had come from this direction. Puzzled, Brutus looked about him, stared across the pond, and waded in. Before he had moved a

yard a face came to the surface of the water, a scream sounded.

Floundering wildly, a small boy floated up from under the water, yelling, coughing, spluttering incoherently.

Brutus did not hesitate; he plunged into the water, and his powerful legs with strong strokes carried him to the drowning child.

Seizing the small boy's jacket, he tugged at it. Head half-submerged now and then, but holding up the boy, Brutus fought his way back to the shore, and there tenderly, gently dragged the boy to the bank, where now the toy yacht, to save which the boy had waded in, had drifted.

Panting, Brutus looked for human aid, licked the boy's face, and then, worried because he did not move, padded off, barking excitedly.

Turning back, with sudden quickening of intelligence, he snatched up the small boy's toy yacht and went off with it to find Kaye. He thought that she would only have to see it to understand everything and come to help.

As Brutus disappeared into the bushes a man ran to the bank, near to exhaustion, choking for breath, and, seeing the boy, he flung himself down, rather than knelt.

"It was Robbie! I knew it!" he shouted to a white-faced woman, who, near to exhaustion, still ran, stumbling, weak at the knees. "But, thank Heaven, he's breathing!"

They had not seen Brutus, and Brutus did not see them. Lumbering on, he paused only to shake himself, and then to rub some of the slimy weed from himself by rolling on the grass and in the dust.

Never had a recently bathed dog presented such a sight as Brutus did then; he was green, he was muddy, soaked—a hopeless mess of a dog. But proud, excited, eager to find Kaye, he thudded on, the toy yacht in his mouth.

BRUTUS WAS MISUNDERSTOOD

KAYE, meanwhile, thinking Brutus free from the torment of watching Digger do tricks, was just entering the nursing-home sick-room where Digger's elderly master lay.

"Miss Chalmers, grand news!" the old man wheezed, as Digger jumped on to his bed in whining excitement.

"You'll be better for Saturday?" asked Kaye eagerly.

"Well enough to see the show, if I'm wrapped up warmly, the doctor says; but not well enough to do the turn. Hey, Digger, old fellow, what a greeting, eh?" he said, fondling his pet.

Kaye was silent, dismayed; for the news did not seem so good to her, glad though she was that he was recovering.

"I—I—its' splendid!" she murmured. "But—but do you think Digger will like being watched by you?"

"Why, bless you, yes! He knows I'm ill, and he's doing well. Don't tell me he isn't. I know my Digger," he said. "And I shall be the proudest man there when he shows off, and all the kiddies cheer. My word, I shall! And don't forget my grandson Robbie will be there."

"Y-yes, it will be wonderful," admitted Kaye slowly.

"Wonderful is the word. Took you back, I dare say," said Digger's master. "I've never known a dog so intelligent—never."

Kaye, who had come to explain about Digger's obstinacy, felt that she could not bring herself to the speaking point. He hardly gave her a chance to say a word, so full was he of Digger's cleverness.

"Don't you fail me, Digger, my boy," he said to the dog. "I want to watch you from the front. If you don't behave, then, doctors or no doctors, I'll have to go on the stage with you."

Kaye saw Digger's intelligent eyes gleam. It was almost as though he understood those words, and was planning to fail on purpose, so that his master could come on the stage to share in his triumph.

So excited were master and dog that the nurse heard them and looked in.

"Come, come," she said sternly, "this won't do! I must ask for the dog to be taken away. You're still not well enough to get over-excited, Mr. Grey, and if you're not well by Saturday you can't go to the concert."

Kaye took Digger by the collar.
"Come along, Digger," she said softly. "Say good-bye!"

Digger barked twice, and Kaye led him from the room.

Planning new methods to teach him, Kaye cycled back to the kennels, deep in thought—so deeply in thought, indeed, that she did not notice Brutus until she actually arrived at the gate.

There Brutus stood, the toy yacht in his mouth, his coat muddied, green, and sodden.

"Brutus!" cried Kaye, in horror.
Brutus put the toy yacht at Kaye's feet and barked, expecting Kaye to snatch it up eagerly, to pet him, and then rush immediately to the pond and the silent, still boy whom he had left on the bank.

But Kaye did not understand. She only knew that Brutus, so recently bathed, was dirty, in a perfectly filthy, disgraceful condition; that he had sneaked out of the kennels, and had stolen some child's toy.

Brutus' sudden wilfulness so upset her that she did not speak to him, but, opening the gate, ordered him in. Digger, dodging past, ran in, first; but Brutus loitered, bewildered and hurt.

"Go on, get inside!" said Kaye, in ringing scorn. "You're a horrid dog! I know you're jealous, and I'm sorry; but this is no way to behave, Brutus. I trust you; I leave you in charge, and you behave like a young naughty pup. I'm ashamed of you. Don't expect me to speak to you, and if you like wallowing in dirty ponds and retrieving yachts, you can stay dirty!"

The toy yacht dropped from Brutus' mouth.

"Go in!" shouted Kaye.
Brutus, tail between legs, bolted for his kennel, quaking, whimpering, bewildered, while Kaye, taking up the yacht, put it on one of the kennel shelves and called Digger.

And Brutus, hearing Kaye call to Digger, hearing her soft, gentle, affectionate tone, shivered inside. For now he knew. There could be no doubt. Kaye loved him no longer. It was Digger now she loved.

Kaye, thoroughly determined to master Digger, invoked her grandfather's aid, and called the maid from the kitchen.

"Once again?" smiled Kaye's grandfather.

"In the middle of getting lunch ready, too!" grumbled the maid.

"Can't be helped," said Kaye doggedly. "Digger has to learn. Sit down, Digger."

Digger sat down, and once again the various objects were spread round about him. But this time Kaye produced some succulent pieces of liver. Digger had a weakness, and, as his master had told Kaye, it was for liver.

Tempting morsels were shown to him, and Digger snapped at them; but those pieces of liver had to be earned by his

hard work, and were not given to obstinate dogs. Giving a piece to her grandfather, and another to the maid, Kaye took some things belonging to them, and some of her own, placing them on the ground.

"No second guess, Digger," she warned him. "But if you guess right you can have liver."

But Kaye artfully allowed him a second guess first time, so that he knew that the liver was a prize for correctness. But it was only a tiny piece he received.

Next time, with a pencil of hers, Digger failed first time, but the second time offered it to her.

"It's mine, but no liver for you," said Kaye.

Digger, sulky, sat down.

Next it was something of her grandfather's, and Digger, taking it, hesitated. Then, suddenly determined, he took it to its owner, and, proving his intelligence, stood on hind legs for the liver.

"Good—good!" said Kaye. "I knew it was just obstinacy, Digger. Once again—"

And lo, once again he succeeded, this time getting a rather bigger piece of liver. He did not wait for the next article to be picked up for him, but snatched the maid's shopping-book, dropped it at her feet, stood up for liver, gulped it, rushed back, seized Kaye's handkerchief from the ground, tossed it to her, and snapped for liver once more.

"Hurrah!" cheered Kaye's grandfather. "That's the stuff!"

Kaye, delighted, laughed.

"Digger, good dog! Well done!" she cried; and, lifting him up, she brought out the largest piece of liver of all.

Round the corner of the kennel peered Brutus, shaking with fear that Kaye was not his any more, and with hatred of this rival. He saw Digger put down, saw him petted again, saw him snatch up the toy yacht, and then, losing control, Brutus rushed.

Brutus roared, snarled, and rushed, and this time his angry voice told Digger that there would be no quarter. Without pause, Digger swung, leaped a chair, swung right, left, and was away.

Brutus, slithering, unable to slow down enough for the bend, thudded into a kennel, and Kaye with one leap was on him.

"Brutus, you had, had dog!" she cried angrily; and for the first time since his puppy days she smacked him.

It was not the blow that hurt; he was too tough and strong for that. But as the blow landed, Brutus' heart seemed to burst, and he lay still. Had Kaye whipped him he would not have stirred.

But after that one smack Kaye ran after Digger, calling him. She ran to the hole in the fence, saw the mud-marks that showed his pads, smaller than Brutus', and then, in dread alarm, climbed up to the fence.

Far away across the field, Digger ran on, without looking back; for, clever though he was, he had not the heart of a lion, and he knew that Brutus could have killed him had he been caught.

Then Kaye, scrambling over the fence, went in pursuit of the panic-stricken Digger—so panic-stricken that he still held, locked in his jaws, the toy yacht.

THE WRONG HERO!

DIGGER ran blindly on for a while, and then, as his senses returned, he swung round. He moved now with a definite objective in mind, conscious that he held the yacht in his mouth.

The owner of the toy yacht was well known to him, and Digger's trained mind told him he must return it.

The yacht belonged to the small boy his master played with, and Digger had carried it before. So, with sure steps, he made his way to the white house on the fringe of the wood.

It was half an hour later that Kaye, following his trail in the soft ground, reached the white house and banged on the door.

"Shush!" said the pale-faced woman who opened it. "Quietly, please! My little boy is very ill!"

"Ill? I'm so sorry!" said Kaye in a gentle tone. "I've come about a dog who escaped from my kennels—a brown dog—"

"Not Digger?" said the woman. "You know him?" exclaimed Kaye. "But, of course," she added, "that's why he came here. Mr. Grey's dog, you mean?"

"My father's dog, yes. Please come in," said the woman. "And don't blame Digger for running away; he's the bravest, the most intelligent dog in the world! Oh, I'll love him for ever and ever! He saved my little boy Robbie from drowning!"

"He did? Oh, how wonderful!" said Kaye. "And he's rather small, too. How brave he must be, as well as clever!"

She followed the woman into the sitting-room of the house, and there on a couch was Digger, being patted and petted by Robbie's father.

Upstairs the doctor was fighting for Robbie's life, and winning; and the father, knowing that he had a dog to thank for the rescue, could not pet Digger enough. For the fact that Digger had brought back the toy yacht seemed proof enough that he had saved the boy.

"Robbie came to, and the first thing he said was that a brown dog had

saved him," said his father, his eyes shining. "Although how Digger got dry so quickly I can't guess—unless you dried him?" he asked.

Kaye looked from Digger to the yacht, and suddenly a lump rose to her throat, and her eyes were misty with tears.

"A brown dog saved your little boy," she said huskily, "from the pond?"

"Yes; that awful pond! He was sailing his yacht—that one lying there."

"But it wasn't Digger who saved him; it was Brutus—my Brutus!" cried Kaye, shame at the way poor Brutus had been treated colouring her cheeks. "He saved him! He brought back the yacht! He's drenched, covered with green slime and mud! It was Brutus—Oh!"

And Kaye swung round, forgetting Digger completely, and ran from the house. Nor did she stop running until she reached the kennels. She ran on to the house, and raced up the stairs to the back room, where Brutus, as though all the life had gone from him, lay inert on the floor.

Opening the door, Kaye ran in, dropped down at his side, and, not heeding the mud and the slime, hugged his massive body, while scalding tears fell on his head.

"Oh, Brutus darling, will you ever forgive me, my sweet?" she choked. "Oh, Brutus! You brave, noble darling, and I was so beastly to you, beastly—"

Brutus stirred. His heart throbbed; he whined, and his tongue licked her hands. Then he shivered all over, and sprang up, happy again.

IT was at Robbie's house that Kaye finished training Digger, and Robbie, recovering, watched with delight. But in this home environment Digger's obstinacy faded so that not even liver was needed. And when Saturday night came, and Digger found himself on the stage, his pride alone urged him on to success. For Kaye it was a triumph as great as Digger's, and no one applauded more heartily than his master at the back of the hall, comfortably propped up in a wheel-chair.

Sitting next to old Mr. Grey were little Robbie and his parents. And if Mr. Grey had enjoyed Digger's performance, his enthusiasm had not been greater than that of Robbie.

"Digger and your Brutus are just wonderful!" smiled Robbie's mother, as Kaye came up to them after the show.

"Yes, an' me trained Digger to do his act," chipped in Robbie. For, imitating Kaye, he had spent the past few days trying to teach Digger all sorts of tricks.

"You'll be a real trainer when you grow up, I'm sure," said Kaye gravely. "A triumph for Robbie and Digger!"

Brutus did not see that triumph; he did not see Digger again. Newly bathed Brutus was busy with a bone, which he dropped only when Kaye returned, and before doing anything else went at once to his kennel.

"Hallo, loveliest!" said Kaye. "Best dog in the world!"

Brutus' tail-wagging sounded like the tom-toms of an African army.

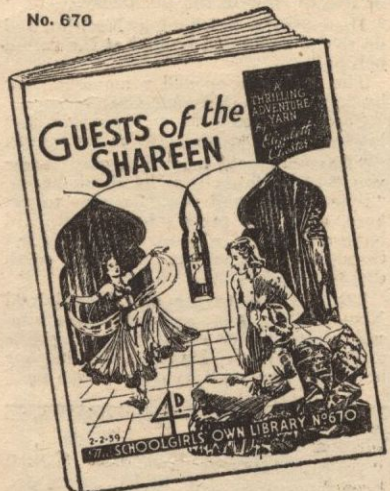
"Woof!" he said, which was all he could say; and then gave Kaye his mighty right paw, which was all he could do. Yet it was enough; it told her everything.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

There will be another delightful story by Ida Melbourne, featuring Kaye and her pets, in next Friday's **GIRLS' CRYSTAL**. Order your copy as soon as possible.

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MYSTERY at the Snow-Bound House



THE CURIOS THAT VANISHED

GREAT SCOTT! What was that?"

Noel Raymond, rowing through the darkness of the night, rested on his oars and peered at the cliff that dimly towered before him. Summoned from town by an urgent letter from an old college chum, the young detective had been unable to find a conveyance to take him from the station to his destination—Eagle's Nest—that strangely named house standing high and bleak on the cliffs, overlooking the bay.

Owing to the snow-drifts there remained only one way of reaching it—from the sea, by rowing-boat, with a precarious climb at the end.

High above him, from the rocking boat, he could see his friend's mansion, its roof and chimneys limned sharply against the sky-line.

But the sound that at present riveted his attention had been caused by something much closer at hand.

It was during a momentary lull in the wind that he had heard it—a curious whistling sound, followed by a terrific splash.

"Queer!" Noel muttered under his breath.

Whipping out his torch, he flashed it across the sea; but the brilliant beam revealed only the frothing waves lapping against the cliff—and the narrow, treacherous path by which he must climb.

With a shrug at what he imagined must have been a trick of his fancy, Noel brought the boat skillfully on to the shingle and sprang out.

The climb proved even more hazardous than he had anticipated, but the young detective was an experienced mountaineer, and he arrived within a few yards of the summit without mishap.

Just then the moon came out from behind the clouds, shedding its pale, ghostly light over the snowclad scene.

The young detective caught in his breath sharply, for, standing on the very brink of the cliff, was a girl—a slim, dark-haired girl, a shawl partly covering her head.

"Look out!" he called, fearing for the girl's safety. "Stand away from the edge!"

The girl turned, staring down at him, a frightened, bewildered look in her eyes. The next moment she had gone, vanishing like a ghost among the snow-covered bushes.

Noel, climbing swiftly, reached the top of the cliff and stared round him. There was no sign of the mystery girl.

The house lay a few hundred yards from the edge of the cliff, completely surrounded by deep snowdrifts. The moonlight sparkling on the snow revealed a single trail of small footprints on its otherwise unbroken expanse.

The footprints led across the lawn, to be lost to view in the shrubbery.

His curiosity quickening, Noel hurried up to the house and tugged at the rusted bell-pull.

The door was opened a moment later by his friend, Desmond Carfax.

Carfax looked pale and worried, but his face lit up at the sight of his visitor.

"Raymond, old man, I'm glad to see you!" he exclaimed, as he shook hands.

"I never dreamed you'd be able to get here, after last night's heavy fall. I'd have sent you a wire—but we can't get through to the village. How on earth did you—"

"Rowed out to the cliff," explained Noel, with a grin, as he divested himself of his heavy coat. "Nothing like a bit of exercise. I gathered from your note that you were anxious to see me."

It was obvious that the stolen goods were not hidden in the house. Yet how could the mystery thief have removed them? For the footprints in the snow proved conclusively that only Noel Raymond and Elsie Cranford had passed that way.

By PETER LANGLEY

Carfax drew him quickly into his study, and closed the door.

"The fact is, old man," he confided, "I'm up against a pretty queer mystery—something in your line."

Noel pricked up his ears.

"A mystery, eh? I rather fancied as much." His eyes twinkled. "Nothing to do with sea-monsters, I suppose?" he added, recollecting his curious illusion in the boat.

Carfax stared.

"Sea-monsters?" he repeated. "Don't joke, old man—I'm serious. It's to do, in a way, with Uncle Henry's will."

Noel raised his eyebrows.

"But I thought that was all settled. You came into the property here—and the rest of his possessions were to be shared among relatives."

"That was the arrangement—by a previous will," admitted Carfax.

"Though anyone can have the old house, as far as I'm concerned. But since then another will has come to light—and a solicitor fellow was to have brought it along yesterday, to read to the family. But the snow's made the roads impassable; so here they all are, the whole crowd of 'em—cousins, nephews, and nieces—squabbling and hating the sight of one another, and no sign of a thaw."

Noel whistled softly.

"But what about the mystery?" he asked.

"I'm coming to that," said Carfax. "It started soon after the first fall of snow. You've heard speak of Uncle Henry's collection of antiques? They're supposed to be priceless—and by the previous will they were divided among four or five of the relatives. Naturally they look on 'em as theirs already."

"Someone been tampering with 'em?" asked Noel.

Carfax glanced at him strangely.

"They've been vanishing," he said, "one after another—and we can find no trace of the thief."

"But the roads," Noel protested.

"You say they are impassable?"

"So they are," replied Carfax glumly.

"That's what is making it so unpleasant. No one could possibly reach the house from outside—without—risking their necks, as you did; and even then they'd be bound to leave tracks in the snow. There've been no tracks; we've searched after each disappearance."

Noel's eyes narrowed; his thoughts flashed to the dark-haired girl on the cliff—but for the moment he decided to keep that to himself.

"What kind of things have been vanishing?" he asked. "Trinkets and such-like?"

"Trinkets, my eye," rejoined Desmond Carfax. "An antique marble clock was the first thing to vanish—then three massive brass candlesticks weighing several pounds. There've been other things, too, including a suit of chain mail and an ancient steel helmet."

"What!" ejaculated Noel. "Big things like that! Have you searched the house?"

"Naturally; but I'll swear they're not hidden here."

The young detective came to a swift decision.

"I'd like to have a look at some of these curios," he said, "and I'll have a word with the relatives while I'm about it—"

He broke off as a sudden commotion sounded from the direction of the hall—a girl's choking cry, followed by a burst of voices raised in accusation.

"I didn't! How could you say such a thing?"

"If it wasn't you, Miss Cranford—then who was it? You're the only one who's left the house."

"I think you're all horrid to turn on me like this. What have I done to you? Haven't I as much right to be here as any of you?"

"You certainly haven't," came a man's slightly sneering tones. "What right have you to expect anything from Uncle Henry—you, an impoverished outsider who played up to the old man when he was too ill to help himself—"

"Oh, that's hateful of you! You talk as though I was after Uncle Henry's money. At least I was fond of him—while you others didn't come near the place till after—after he was dead—"

The girl's voice choked; with an apologetic glance at Noel, Carfax opened the door.

A girl broke from the group in the hall and hurried towards the stairs. Her face was deathly pale, and her eyes were stained with tears.

For a moment her glance encountered Noel's—and the young detective started violently as he recognised her as the mystery girl of the cliffside!

Whether she recognised him it was impossible to say; she swept on without another glance, and hurried up the stairs.

"Miss Cranford—Elsie!" called Desmond Carfax anxiously.

His reply was the distant banging of a door.

Noel grabbed his friend by the arm.

"Who's that girl?" he asked.

Carfax looked frankly upset.

"That's Elsie Cranford—a distant relation by marriage—who looked after Uncle Henry in his last illness. I believe the old man was fond of her, though he left her nothing in his will. Most of the others hate her," he added, in an undertone.

Noel glanced at the other relatives, who were talking in an angry group.

"Better introduce me," he murmured.

Carfax approached the group.

"What's the trouble, Silas?" he asked, addressing a dark-haired, saw-toothed young man who seemed to be doing most of the talking.

The other laughed unpleasantly.

"Trouble enough, my dear Desmond.

One of Miss Marple's bronze statuettes has gone—vanished into thin air! And I bet that Cranford girl knows something about it. One of the servants saw her sneak out of the house about half an hour ago."

Carfax's face turned pale; he glanced appealingly at Noel.

"This is my friend, Noel Raymond, the well-known detective," he said. "He's come to investigate these mysteries."

They clustered round Noel, all talking excitedly.

While he listened to their story, he was taking shrewd stock of the speakers. There was the saw-toothed young man, Silas Taplow, a distant cousin; Miss Marple, a sharp-featured spinster, who laid claim to the missing statuette; Mr. Fanshaw, a gentleman of brusque and military aspect—and a fair-haired, languid girl named Freda Hemingway.

With the exception of a red-haired young man of cheery aspect, whom Carfax introduced as Bob Hartley, the relatives were united in accusing the unfortunate Elsie Cranford of the latest theft.

"Personally," remarked Bob Hartley, with a wink at Noel, "I think they're all barking up the wrong tree. It's my considered opinion—in view of the difficulties—that these thefts are the work of a jolly old spook!"

There came an indignant snort from the other relatives.

"You can joke," sneered Silas Taplow. "You've got nothing to lose. I'd like to know what Mr. Raymond thinks."

Noel glanced at his friend, his expression inscrutable.

"I'd like to have a look at the remaining curios," he said.

"Of course," nodded Carfax, obviously relieved to change the subject. "Come into the library. You others had better come as well."

The young detective followed his friend, the others crowding behind.

The library was a big room, yet scarcely large enough to house the bewildering array of antiques collected by the late Henry Carfax.

A massive bronze statuette, some two and a half feet high, on a solid marble base, stood next to a vacant pedestal. Near to it were two elaborately carved

bowls, a rack of jewelled swords and other objects.

Taplow pointed to the empty pedestal.

"It was there earlier this evening," he explained. "We all saw it."

Noel examined the pedestal closely; on the floor at its foot he discovered a trace of half-melted snow.

There was a curious gleam in his eyes as he rose to his feet and lifted the companion statuette.

A soft whistle escaped his lips.

"The two statuettes were identical in size?" he asked.

"Oh, yes!" declared Miss Marple excitedly. "Exactly the same. My late dear Cousin Henry brought them from abroad."

She dabbed her eyes affectively with her handkerchief.

"That," announced Noel quietly, "lets out Miss Cranford; she couldn't have been the thief!"

A gasp greeted his words; Desmond Carfax looked relieved. The other relatives were obviously incredulous—with the exception of young Bob Hartley, who treated the whole affair as a huge joke.

"How do you make that out?" snapped Silas Taplow, scowling. "I tell you the girl was seen to sneak out of the house—carrying something in her arms."

"You taxed her with it?" asked Noel.

Taplow shrugged, with a faint sneer. "Naturally, she denied it; said she went out for a breath of air. I suggest she sneaked out to bury the statuette."

"In which case, we'd expect to find traces," said Noel quietly. "I can assure you there are no such traces. Miss Cranford's footprints are there—and those footprints are proof of her innocence!"

"How?" demanded several voices.

"Come with me," said Noel.

Carrying the heavy statuette, he led the way on to the terrace. The relatives crowded at his heels.

The pale moonlight revealed the smooth snow on the lawns—and two trails of footprints—his own, and Elsie Cranford's.

Noel pointed to the latter.

"Please examine them closely," he said. "Miss Hemingway—you're about the same height and build as Miss Cranford. Take this statuette, and walk a few paces from the veranda."



"Those—those are mine!" the girl gasped. "Then why hide them here in the snow?" asked Noel.

The fair-haired girl obeyed, staggering slightly beneath the weight of her burden.

"Thanks—that will do," said Noel, relieving her of the statuette. "Now, Taplow—and you others—look at Miss Hemingway's footprints. She was carrying the statuette. Notice the difference?"

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Desmond Carfax. "Of course—you're right, Raymond! Those footprints sink several inches below Elsie's—Miss Cranford's—owing to the weight of the statue!"

"Exactly!" Noel smiled grimly at the crestfallen faces of the others.

"Jolly good!" declared Bob Hartley. "I say, you're pretty smart!"

"But, look here!" cut in Silas Taplow. "If Miss Cranford didn't take the statuette, then who did? Her footprints and yours are the only ones in the snow. The thing can't have been hidden in the house! Then where is it?"

He stared round triumphantly. There came a murmur of agreement from most of the other relatives.

"That," Noel said, "is exactly what I intend to find out. You others had better search the house; I'm going to have a look round outside."

He murmured something to his friend, and Carfax nodded.

A few minutes later, Noel was left on his own.

Torch in hand, he tramped through the deep snowdrifts surrounding the house, carefully scrutinising every inch of the ground.

His expression was baffled as he concluded his tour. The snow could not lie. No human being—excepting Elsie Cranford and himself—had passed beyond the precincts of the house that night.

Yet he was convinced that Elsie Cranford was not the thief!

HIDDEN UNDER THE SNOW!

FOR a moment the young detective hesitated, wondering whether to return indoors; then, with sudden decision, he set out across the snow, trailing the girl's small footprints back to the edge of the cliff.

He remembered the reckless gleam in her dark eyes when he had first caught sight of her; and there was the servant's story of a mysterious parcel.

Near the brink of the cliff, the footprints turned abruptly, leading towards a cluster of stunted bushes.

Torch in hand, Noel thrust his way among the bushes, staring round him keenly.

The girl appeared to have walked rather aimlessly, as though seeking something. A hiding-place?

The young detective's eyes glinted as he bent to scrutinise the snow. He could see where it had recently been trampled—as though intentionally.

Thrusting his hand into the snow, he groped round, hardly knowing what he expected to find.

His fingers closed on something, and he caught in his breath sharply as he dragged it to light.

It was a small bundle, wrapped in sacking!

Shaking the snow from the bundle, Noel removed the sacking—to disclose a polished wooden box. It was locked, but the flimsy catch gave Noel little difficulty.

In a moment he had opened it, and a soft whistle escaped his lips.

Piled inside the box was a heap of antique jewellery and other small curios, gleaming dully in the moonlight.

Even as Noel stared at them, his mind

working swiftly, there came a faint rustling among the bushes.

The young detective spun sharply on his heel, his eyes narrowing. Motionless, he watched the stealthy movement of the snow-covered foliage; then, abruptly, he sprang forward, his hand falling on someone's shoulder.

There came a startled cry, as Noel drew his captive into the moonlight.

"Good-evening, Miss Cranford!" he remarked.

Elsie Cranford was staring at him, her lips parted, her face ashen pale against the surrounding snow.

Her gaze sought the box of glittering ornaments, and a gleam of fear mingled with defiance sprang into her eyes.

"Those—those are mine!" she gasped.

"Yours?" inquired Noel gently.

"Then why hide them in the snow?"

"Because"—the girl's voice choked slightly—"because if I didn't, those hateful relatives would claim them! And Uncle Henry promised them to me just before he died; they're all—all that I have now to remind me of him, and I won't part with them! I tell you, I won't!"

She made to snatch the box from Noel's hands.

"Steady, Miss Cranford!" put in the young detective, a trifle sternly, as his hand closed on her wrist. "The trinkets are quite safe in my possession, and no one has any claim to them yet."

The girl stared at him, her dark eyes tearful.

"I suppose," she said, "you think that I stole those other things?"

"I'm quite certain that you didn't," replied Noel.

A gleam of gratitude sprang into the girl's eyes.

"Mr. Raymond," she whispered, "does Desmond—Mr. Carfax—think I'm to blame?"

Noel shook his head, realising how matters stood.

"Carfax is as certain of your innocence as I am, Miss Cranford," he replied. "But he's worried, as is only natural."

The girl gave a sigh of relief; then her attractive face clouded.

"It's those relatives who've made me act as I have done," she breathed. "They've been horrid to me ever since I came here—all except Bob Hartley, who makes a joke of everything. They've given me to understand that I'm an outsider, and not wanted. Oh, I hate them!"

Noel nodded understandingly. His eyes became keen.

"I suppose," he remarked casually, "that you don't suspect any of them of these thefts?"

The girl started; the thought evidently had not occurred to her.

"I don't know," she breathed. "I don't see how any of them could have stolen those things without leaving the house; and it's been practically proved that they haven't been out."

"Yet the things have vanished," said Noel dryly. "No outside thief could have gained access to the house without leaving tracks in the snow. Disregarding the servants—who, I understand, have been with the Carfax family for years—there only remain the relatives and yourself."

The girl bit her lip, her hands clenching.

"I swear I know nothing about the disappearances!" she declared, meeting Noel's gaze unflinchingly. "I—"

Abruptly her voice trailed away, and she caught nervously at Noel's sleeve.

"What—what was that?" she gasped.

The young detective's sharp ears had already heard the strange sound. He turned, with a swift intake of breath, a

startled expression flashing into his eyes.

It was a low, eerie, whistling sound that seemed to come from directly overhead. For a moment he imagined he saw a grotesque shadow flit with noiseless speed across the snow. Then the moon was obscured by a bank of clouds.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Noel, under his breath.

For the sound was identical with that he had heard when in the boat.

The girl's hand was trembling on his arm.

"Mr. Raymond, what was it?" she faltered. "I've heard it before."

"When?" demanded Noel.

"This evening when I was hiding those trinkets," whispered the girl. "I imagined that some huge bird had flown overhead. And Freda Hemingway declares that she heard a similar sound yesterday afternoon just before the first of the disappearances took place."

The young detective whistled softly, his eyes glinting. Into his mind crept an amazing, almost fantastic theory. Yet there might be something in it. There was just a chance—

His hand tightened on the girl's trembling arm.

"Come on!" he said tersely. "Let's get back to the house. I've got an idea, and there's no time to lose. Say nothing about this to anyone."

Together they hurried back across the thick snow towards the house.

They had barely reached it when the french windows leading to the terrace burst open, and Desmond Carfax stumbled out, his face pale and agitated.

"Raymond!" he shouted, catching sight of the young detective. "Quickly, man! It's happened again!"

"What's happened?" demanded Noel.

"There's been another disappearance since you left the house. The pair of Oriental brass bowls have vanished from the library. I tell you, it's uncanny!"

Noel caught in his breath sharply as he sprang up the steps on to the terrace.

He looked back for his companion, but Elsie Cranford had slipped away without a sound.

"DON'T worry, old chap," said Noel, as he returned from his examination of the alcove in which the brass bowls had stood. "This is the best thing that could have happened."

Desmond Carfax stared at his friend in blank bewilderment.

"I—I don't follow you. There's been another theft, and—and they're saying Elsie's to blame. I nearly had a row with Taplow. He wants to get a message through to the police."

"He'll be unlucky," rejoined Noel dryly. "There may be a thaw to-night, but the roads will still be impassable for some hours. By the time the solicitor arrives I hope to have cleared up the mystery and brought the real thief to book."

"How?" demanded Carfax, a gleam of hope in his eyes.

Noel lit a cigarette; his active brain was formulating a plan of action.

"I want two people to help me," he said. "You'll be one of them—and I think young Bob Hartley might be the other. We'll lay our trap after dinner—when the other guests have retired."

"What's the plan?" asked Carfax.

"Sorry—I can't give away details now," replied Noel. "Just leave everything to me. You might mention it to young Hartley, if you can get him on his own. Mind that fellow Taplow isn't listening."

Carfax nodded, and hurried from the room.

Noel closed the door and locked it; then swiftly he set to work.

From a glass-fronted cabinet he took a massive silver casket set with semi-precious stones. Into this he placed a cardboard cylinder that he extracted from a leather case in his pocket.

There were wires attached to the cylinder—and he busied himself in securing these to the lid of the casket, which opened by a spring.

He placed the casket on the shelf from which the brass bowls had been stolen, noting that it stood within a few feet of the partly open window leading to the terrace.

Then, with a grim smile, he left the room.

During dinner, Noel appeared in the best of spirits. Everyone was present—excepting Elsie Cranford, who remained in her room.

The other guests were inclined to be silent and morose—but the young detective kept up a cheerful flow of conversation.

He brought the topic round to the missing curios—and mentioned the silver casket as an object of especial value, advising his friend to keep it under lock and key.

His keen eyes were watching the faces of the guests—and he observed Silas Taplow dart a hurried glance towards the door.

After dinner, the majority of the relatives retired early—including Taplow.

Noel remained downstairs with his friend and young Bob Hartley.

The red-haired young man was agog with curiosity.

"What are we going to do?" he demanded.

Tersely Noel issued his orders. "Carfax—I want you to keep watch at the front of the house; you, Hartley, had better scout round at the rear, including the stables and outhouses."

"And—you?" asked Carfax. "I'll keep watch indoors," said Noel. "When you hear my signal—this whistle—come along at the double. Understand?"

Both men nodded, and a few minutes later they took their departure, well muffled up against the cold.

Noel entered the library and closed the door—but he did not switch on the light.

He did not anticipate a lengthy vigil; he felt convinced that the mysterious thief would make his next attempt without loss of time.

And the young detective was ready for him!

He stood by the door in the enveloping darkness, his eyes strained towards the dim patch of light that was the window.

The minutes dragged past, and still nothing happened. Noel's patience had almost reached breaking-point when, abruptly, a faint sound reached his straining ears.

He stiffened, staring sharply towards the dim patch of the window. A stealthy shadow moved silently across the snow outside. Then with a curious scraping sound, something came in through the open window—something that looked like a grotesque claw!

There was a sharp snap—and it was withdrawn, grasping the silver casket.

In a noiseless bound, Noel crossed the room, flinging open the french windows. He was in time to see a shadowy figure vanish in the direction of the stables.

Placing a whistle to his lips, he blew a shrill blast—and broke into a run. As he sped towards the yard adjoining the house, he heard a muffled thud—fol-

Your Editor's Corner



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

MY DEAR READERS,—
Supposing some very rich person came along and asked you where in the whole world you would most like to visit.

I wonder what you'd say? This weather would probably make you long for sunshine and tropic flowers. Perhaps the Riviera would be your choice—or wondrous Egypt.

From there your thoughts might go even farther—perhaps thousands of miles away.

What about Hollywood? Wouldn't you just love to go there—where there are sunshine, tropic flowers, wonderful homes, and glorious scenery. Where there would also be a chance of actually seeing—even if you weren't able to meet them personally—your favourite film stars!

A GRAND TREAT IN STORE

That all sounds like a glorious dream, doesn't it? But if you can't actually go to Hollywood, I think the next best thing is to read all about it, don't you?

And that's exactly what you will be doing—the week after next, when a new serial begins in the **GIRLS' CRYSTAL**.

From this, you'll guess that one of our stories will be coming to an end next Friday. You're right. "Their Quest at the Winter Sports" will come to a most exciting conclusion—and you'll have this grand serial, set in Hollywood, to take its place.

The author will, of course, be none other than Daphne Grayson. So there is something for you to look forward to.

SIX STORIES NEXT WEEK

"The Elephant that Vanished" is the title of next Friday's baffling mystery and detective story, featuring ever-popular Noel Raymond.

Pat Lovell, that delightful young girl reporter, will again appear in another grand complete tale entitled "The Girl Pianist's Secret," and there will be a charming story of Kaye of the Kennels and her pets.

"The Girl Who Haunted Grey Gables" and "Her Unknown Enemy at School" will continue as enthrallingly as ever from where they leave off this week, while, as I said before, "Their Quest at the Winter Sports" will come to an end.

So don't miss any of these grand story-treats, will you? Order your **GIRLS' CRYSTAL** in advance and make sure of reading them all.

Your sincere friend,

YOUR EDITOR

lowed by a shrill whistling, moaning sound that died away in the distance.

His eyes glinting, Noel quickened his pace; as he reached the stable yard, he almost ran into Bob Hartley.

"What's happened?" gasped the young man excitedly. "Something came flying past me in the dark—but I couldn't see what it was. Might have been a giant bird."

Noel grabbed his arm.

"Where's Carfax?" he demanded.

"Here he comes."

Desmond Carfax joined them at that moment, out of breath—his face drawn with agitation.

"Raymond," he gasped, "I've just heard some rotten news: Elsie's gone. One of the servants saw her leave the house, carrying her case. Her room's empty."

"She's probably making for the road," Noel said. "Go after her, Carfax—stop her at all costs. Hartley—you'd better get back to the house. See that none of the other guests leave the place."

As the two men departed, Noel hurried round the stables, flashing his torch over the ground.

Behind the stables was a pile of rotting leaves, covered by a sprinkling of snow.

The young detective's eyes glinted as he bent to examine them; a few minutes later he was stumbling through the melting snow towards the cliffs.

Breathlessly he came to a halt, staring down. The tide was out, leaving a stretch of muddy sand.

Far out across the beach, near the water's edge, was a strange light—a ghostly, flickering flame!

"So I was right!" muttered Noel, under his breath.

A few minutes later he was descending the treacherous path that led to the beach, his gaze fixed on the ghostly flame.

NOEL'S DRAMATIC REAPPEARANCE

SHIVERING from the cold, almost exhausted, Elsie Cranford was found trying to force her way through the snowdrifts towards the main road.

She almost collapsed as Carfax overtook her.

"Elsie—why did you do it?" he breathed huskily.

A choking sob escaped the girl's lips. "I couldn't stand it any longer. Those dreadful disappearances—I was afraid you suspected me, Desmond."

With a little moan, she fell forward in a dead faint; tenderly Desmond Carfax lifted her in his arms, carrying her back to the house.

The night dragged on—and still Noel did not return. With the morning, the thaw set in—and a snow-spattered car drew up outside the house.

From it stepped the long-awaited solicitor, carrying a portfolio.

The relatives clustered round him as he was escorted to the library.

With considerable fussing and fumbling, he produced the vital will.

"Are all the relations of the late Henry Carfax assembled here?" he inquired, peering round.

"Yes, yes," put in Silas Taplow impatiently. "Let's get on with it!"

"Just a minute," intervened Desmond Carfax.

Crossing to the door, he opened it, admitting Elsie Cranford.

There came an indignant murmur from the relatives, and unfriendly glances were turned in the girl's direction.

"What's she doing here?" muttered Taplow, under his breath.

"Silence, please!" said the solicitor. He cleared his throat and rustled the papers. "Ahem! With the exception of Eagle's Nest House, which goes to his nephew Desmond as before—and one or two smaller bequests—my late client left the whole of his valuable collection of curios to his devoted great-niece by marriage—Elsie Cranford."

A gasp of mingled amazement and fury greeted his words.

"This—is this scandalous!" exclaimed Mr. Fanshaw. "Unheard of!"

Silas Taplow laughed unpleasantly, as he rose to his feet.

"I wish her joy of what is left of them!" he snapped. "All the more valuable curios have been stolen."

With a mocking smile at the white-faced, bewildered girl, he made for the door—as it opened, to admit an unexpected newcomer.

Noel Raymond!
"Wait!" Noel said. "Miss Cranford—allow me to return to you your own property!"

He stepped aside, to admit two men, struggling beneath the weight of a heavy bale.

Placing it on the floor, they opened it before the amazed relatives—revealing the missing curios!

Desmond Carfax sprang forward.

"Raymond—where on earth did you find them?" he gasped.

"In a cave on the beach," said Noel.

"Where they were hidden by a confederate of the thieves."

An amazed gasp greeted his words.

"But, man alive—it doesn't make sense," protested Carfax. "What about the snow—and the lack of footprints? The thief couldn't have flown!"

"He did the next best thing," said Noel grimly. "Come with me and I'll show you. All of you, please!"

The relatives followed him, watched closely by the two plain-clothes men.

"You know," remarked young Bob

Hartley, "this is getting thrilling! Who's the thief, Raymond?"

"I rather fancy that he'll give himself away," returned Noel dryly.

He halted at the rear of the stables, and the relatives stared round in perplexity.

Noel crossed to the pile of rotting leaves and, groping beneath them, produced the end of the rope.

"Taplow!" he snapped. "Stand over there—just in front of that heap."

With a bewildered expression, Silas Taplow stepped forward.

"Wait!" jerked Noel, his eyes glinting. "You won't do. Bob Hartley—take Taplow's place, will you?"

The young man hesitated, his cheery grin fading as Noel took a firmer hold on the rope.

"What's the idea?" he demanded. "Do as you're told!" snapped Noel.

Young Hartley's face turned livid.

"I'm hanged if I will!" he snarled—and made a bound towards the stables.

"Hold him!" rapped Noel—and, in a flash, the two plain-clothes men had grasped their struggling prisoner.

"I told you that the thief would give himself away," announced the young detective, smiling grimly at the blank, astonished faces of the onlookers. "And here's the reason—the reason for his fear—and the ingenious method he adopted to transport the stolen curios to his confederate without crossing the snow. Stand back, please!"

As he spoke, Noel jerked at the rope; there came a scream from the women present—a shout from the men.

Something leaped from the pile of leaves—something resembling a massive wooden spoon, six feet in length. Operated by a hidden spring, it swooped forward—and in its swing it flung a huge lump of rock through the air, sending it whistling through the air, to disappear over the cliff.

"A Roman catapult!" shouted Carfax. "I remember uncle telling me that he possessed one—though this is the first time I've seen it."

"Hartley found it behind the stables," explained Noel, "and saw in it the very thing for his purpose. He knew that he had been cut out of your uncle's second will—and he decided to steal the curios while he had the chance. The snow had hampered his plans—but the discovery of the old catapult enabled him to surmount that difficulty.

"He might have got away with the stolen property—if he had not been careless. You see, he changed his boots before returning to the house—but he neglected to brush the turn-ups of his trousers.

"In those turn-ups I saw some half-melted snow—and a rotting leaf. It was that small clue that first put me on the trail!"

"I decided to trap him—and utilised a little device concealed in a silver casket. When that casket was flung out on to the beach it came open—causing an electric spark to fire a magnesium flare. By that means, I was able to trace the casket's destination—and incidentally to trap Hartley's confederate."

Desmond Carfax held out his hand. "I don't know how to thank you, old man," he said huskily. "On my own and Elsie's behalf, I—"

"Don't mention it!" put in Noel cheerfully. He tapped his friend on the shoulder. "You might invite me to the wedding!" he added in an undertone.

And Elsie Crawford, overhearing the words, crimsoned and smiled, her eyes alight with happiness.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY

THE ELEPHANT THAT VANISHED
—is the title of next Friday's thrilling detective story. Don't miss it!

NORMA'S SECRET MISSION

UNWARE of the threatening clouds that were closing in on her, Norma sped swiftly and silently through the trees surrounding Grey Gables.

She was determined at all costs to gain possession of the incriminating negatives before Mr. Penhale returned from his visit to town.

The old house came in view, its grey walls silvered by the moonlight.

On the terrace side, the windows were in darkness; the place looked desolate.

Her heart beating quickly, Norma crept towards the terrace and pulled back the slab of stone that masked the secret entrance.

To her dismay part of the surrounding stonework, loose with age, fell with a hollow clatter.

Norma crouched motionless at the entrance of the tunnel, soaping her ears; but the echoes died away, and no other sound reached her straining ears.

Leaving the secret door slightly ajar—to provide a ready means of escape should the necessity arise—Norma crept down the tunnel, and peered through the eye-holes in the old picture.

The library was deserted, and in partial darkness; but a single red light glowed above the littered desk.

Norma realised that she had come only in the nick of time.

The dim red glow revealed photographic apparatus, obviously arranged for Mr. Penhale's suggested experiment!

There were several rolls of film, a

THE GIRL WHO HAUNTED GREY GABLES

(Continued from page 420.)

camera for enlargement, and other objects less familiar to Norma.

Of Mr. Penhale himself there was no sign.

Her hand shaking, Norma pressed the concealed spring that released the picture from its frame. With a faint whir it slid back into the wall, and Norma stepped into the darkened library.

Holding her breath, she darted across the room to the littered desk. Feverishly she sorted through the pile of negatives, seeking the fateful snapshot.

She discovered it at length, set in a frame on its own, awaiting enlargement.

Swiftly she thrust it under the folds of her robe and turned to retreat, when suddenly her gaze became riveted on another object lying on the desk.

It was a letter—a letter addressed to Mr. Penhale in a large, laborious handwriting that seemed vaguely familiar.

Instinctively she glanced at the straggling signature—and her heart gave a violent jump.

"Ben Tregellis!" she whispered.

Her fingers trembling, she reached for the crumpled letter and looked at the date.

It was the date of her arrival in Cornwall—and the night of the old bo'sun's disappearance!

"Dear sir," she read, "I am calling on you to-night on behalf of my old

friend, Captain Jack Royston—who died some years ago.

"You may guess the reason for my visit, but I warn you that I am not to be put off by bribes or threats. I have the proof—as you will see below—and the time has come for justice to be done."
"BEN TREGELIS."

A message from the past! There followed several lines of close and barely legible handwriting.

Her face rather pale, a glimmer of excitement in her grey eyes, Norma endeavoured to read the remainder of the cryptic message.

Mr. Penhale had been the last to see the old sailor on the fateful night—and here was the indisputable proof!

The blood was throbbing in Norma's temples; she seemed to hear her father's voice calling on her to discover the truth about his old shipmate's disappearance.

The creak of a door brought her back to earth; a cold hand seemed to clutch at her heart as she found herself face to face with Mr. Penhale.

He had entered almost noiselessly—and was standing there, in the doorway, a malevolent glimmer in his dark eyes, his sallow face twisted in an expression that was akin to fear.

"You!" he exclaimed hoarsely, taking a half-step towards her. "Whoever you are—give me that letter!"

Don't miss next Friday's thrilling instalment. Order your GIRLS' CRYSTAL now.

G.C.W. 16

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