

"PERIL AT THE TOWER OF LONDON" — One of the six splendid stories for schoolgirls, inside.

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GIRLS' CRYSTAL ^{2^D} WEEKLY



**'ANOTHER GIRL
WILL TAKE YOUR
PLACE! YOU ARE
TOO LATE!'**

This seemed the end of all Lo's ambitions to win fame as a dancer.

See "The Bandit's Daughter"—inside.

The BANDIT'S DAUGHTER



"YOU ARE TOO LATE!"

LOLA SHARMAN was thrilled at the thought of joining her father in Mexico and taking up a dancing career.

But what a shock it was when she discovered that her father was a bandit known as the Grey Shadow! And Tony Creswick, an English lad who had befriended her, was out to capture the bandit!

Lola determined to keep her father's identity a secret.

She was offered a small part in a theatre show—one which might lead to the fulfilment of her dancing ambition. But on the evening the show was to open she received a note from her father asking her to meet him in the hills.

When he realised that she was in danger of losing her chance of fame, he lifted Lola on to his horse and said he would take her to the theatre himself.

WITH the echo of her father's reckless laugh in her ears, Lola clung to the mane of the galloping horse, her heart torn by conflicting emotions.

How could she ever have doubted him? The whole world might call him a scoundrel, but to her he would always be a gallant and chivalrous gentleman—forced by persecution into the life of a bandit that he was leading.

She glanced at his lean, powerful hand grasping the rein as he coaxed his magnificent horse to even greater efforts; she felt the reassuring pressure of his arm.

"We'll beat them yet, Lola!" he breathed. "I'll get you to the theatre in time for the show!"

A choking lump rose in Lola's throat. The danger of the moment was forgotten, and she was conscious only of a wave of gratitude and affection.

Her father was risking everything on her account; he had placed his liberty, his very life, at stake to assure her career as a dancer!

"Dad, you shouldn't do this for me!" she whispered. "Suppose—suppose they ambush you on the way back?"

The bandit shrugged, a familiar, dare-devil gleam in his eyes.

"And supposing they do? It wouldn't be the first ambush that I've escaped. Don't you worry your head over me, Lola; I can take care of myself. Just you keep your mind on

that dance of yours—your part in the play. Hold on, my dear!"

Lola bent her head, as the horse with its dual burden crashed through a tangled thicket and out on to the winding mountain road.

The crimson of the setting sun was behind them; the valley already lay deep in the gathering shadows.

On they galloped, the swift thud of the horse's hoofs alone breaking the silence; through a dark glade overshadowed by trees, past orchards and vineyards—till the twinkling lights of the town at length came into view, not a quarter of a mile distant.

As they reached the crest of a grassy knoll overlooking the town the Grey Shadow drew rein.

"I must leave you here, Lola," he breathed. "It would be fatal if you were seen in my company. Keep straight ahead down this path, and you'll find yourself on the outskirts of the town. You have half an hour in which to reach the theatre and change for your part. Hurry, my dear—and bless you! I'll be thinking of you and wishing you luck!"

For a moment Lola clung to him, her face pressed close to his lean, unshaven cheek, her eyes smarting with tears.

Then gently the bandit disengaged her arms and lifted her from the saddle.

Her bandit father had risked everything to get Lola to the theatre for her opening performance. Eagerly she raced on to the stage—only to find that, after all, she was too late, and another girl was to have her chance.

By RENEE FRAZER

"Remember, Lola, you will dance for me," he said huskily. "I shall await news of your success!"

With a wave of his hand he manoeuvred his horse skilfully on the narrow path and galloped away into the shadows.

Lola fought back her tears and drew a deep breath of the cool, fragrant air.

Her eyes shone with something of her father's determination. There was no time to lose if she was to reach the theatre in time.

She set out at a run along the narrow path, making towards the twinkling lights.

Grasped tightly in her hand was the attache-case containing the gipsy costume.

But as she neared the town something caused her to halt, her heart missing a beat.

From the direction of the hills came the ominous sound of a shot—followed swiftly by another.

The blood drained from Lola's face as a horrified thought flashed into her mind.

Her father—and the dreaded ambush!

Supposing he had been trapped? She hesitated, turning back, the thought of her errand momentarily swept from her mind.

She stood there, listening intently, feeling sick with apprehension. Then came a distant shout—a shout of anger—and the sound of galloping hoofs fading away into distance.

A little gasp of relief escaped Lola's lips, and the look of dread left her eyes. She could guess what those sounds meant!

Her father had broken through the ambush, in his usual daring fashion. His baffled enemies were pursuing—but they could never hope to overtake him among the wild, rugged hills he knew so well.

But not till the last sounds had died away did Lola turn to retrace her footsteps; then, with a faint shock of dismay, she realised that the twilight had already faded—and she had no idea of the time!

Whatever happened, she must not be late for the show!

Anxiously she broke into a run, arriving at length in the narrow streets of the town.

Dishevelled and out of breath, she

reached the theatre and hurried round to the stage door.

The doorkeeper emerged from his box, but Lola raced past him with a hasty nod, and hurried to her dressing-room.

Even as she reached it, she heard the strains of music—the tuneful melody of the opening gipsy chorus!

With a stab of dismay, she realised that the show had already commenced.

She burst into the dressing-room, to find it deserted; the other artistes were already on the stage, or waiting their turn in the wings.

Hastily Lola dragged off her riding habit and slipped on her gipsy costume.

She was not due on the stage till the middle of the first act; there was still time—if she hurried.

Her hands trembled as she made up her face in front of the mirror and adjusted a tattered red scarf over her dark hair.

Desperately she tried to recapture the spirit of her part—humming the tunes over to herself, endeavouring to merge her own personality into that of the young gipsy dancer.

But somehow the effort failed; she was aware only of her lateness—of the pallor of her face beneath her make-up and her trembling hands.

Anxiously she darted out of the dressing-room and made her way into the wings.

The other artistes stared at her askance, whispering among themselves. Lola found herself confronted by Senor Carlos, the stage manager—a short, excitable Spaniard.

He pounced on her furiously.

"What is this? What does it mean—your lateness?" He did not give Lola time to falter out her apology. "Senor Radcliffe has been telephoning the café; he has sent for your understudy. You are not wanted any more. You are too late. This girl will take your place!"

He indicated a flushed, excited dancer standing by the wings, then he brushed past her.

Lola shrank back, a stunned look in her eyes, her lips trembling. The stage manager's last words echoed like a knell in her ears.

"Too late!"

Lola choked back a sob as she saw all her hopes falling in ruins at her feet. That desperate race, her father's selfless, courageous act—all had been in vain.

She had arrived too late; her part was to be played by another.

Lola clenched her hands, glancing unseeingly out on to the stage, with its blaze of colour and lights.

The opening scene was nearly over. Soon it would be the cue for the gipsy dancer to appear—the ill-fated Marquita! But it would be another who would go on in Lola's stead!

Dazedly she turned away, the haunting lilt of the music in her ears, to stumble blindly towards the dressing-room.

As she reached it she heard voices speaking loudly in an adjoining room—Mr. Radcliffe's office.

The door stood ajar, and Lola recognised the famous producer's curt tones as he interrupted the stage manager's excitable comments.

"The girl we've got to understudy her, is pretty hopeless as a dancer. But I suppose we'll have to let her go on, rather than stop the show. You say that Miss Sharman is not in a fit state to appear?"

"Impossible!" declared the stage manager. "She has arrived only this

minute, without excuse, flustered and breathless. I doubt if she could dance, even if we allowed her to go on. She has proved herself unreliable, as we had been warned—"

Lola caught in her breath sharply, her hands clenching.

What did the stage manager mean by that? What malicious tongue had been at work?

Her face rather pale, she backed away from the door as it was thrown open and Mr. Radcliffe himself strode out.

He halted sharply as he caught sight of her; his face darkened.

"Miss Sharman!" he snapped. "So this is how you repay my trust in you?"

Lola's lips trembled, but she met his gaze squarely.

"I'm sorry—" she breathed.

"I don't want apologies! I gave you your big chance, and you chose to treat it lightly, as of no consequence!"

"No!" whispered Lola brokenly. "No, that's not true! I—I—" She faltered, realising that she dared not explain.

"You see?" muttered the stage-manager. "She has gone all to pieces!"

The famous producer, his expression grim, was staring at Lola. From the direction of the stage came the last crashing bars of the gipsy chorus, the song that ushered in that ill-fated gipsy girl, Marquita!

"Your understudy is ready to go on," he said curtly. "She is a second-rate dancer, but the best we could find at short notice. In any case, whether she appears or not, she will draw her salary. Supposing that I give you one last chance, Miss Sharman—"

Lola drew in her breath sharply, a gleam of incredulous hope dawning in her eyes.

"Wait!" interrupted Mr. Radcliffe, as she started towards him. "If I give you this chance, how do I know that you will justify it? I can't afford to take the risk of your dance being a failure. If you should break down again, as you did that night at the Hacienda Barranca—"

"Oh, I won't!" gasped Lola pleadingly. "I promise I won't disappoint

you. Please—please give me the chance!"

For an instant the famous producer hesitated. There came a low roll of drums from the orchestra. The lights on the stage were slowly dimmed. Somewhere a bell tinkled.

The producer's hand fell suddenly on Lola's shoulder.

"Go on," he rapped tensely, "and do your best."

Lola's eyes lit up. With a glance of tearful gratitude she turned and raced into the wings.

The scene represented the gipsy encampment by night. A red, flickering glow revealed the Romanies seated round their camp-fires.

A troubadour commenced to play a soft, romantic tune on his guitar.

It was the signal for Lola's appearance.

Drawing a quick breath, she danced out on to the stage, standing for a moment poised and motionless in the glare of the crimson spot-lights.

A low, angry murmur arose from the gipsies.

"The traitress!" exclaimed one of them.

"Banish her from the tribe!" came the angry chorus.

Lola flung out her arms in an appealing gesture, turning from the circle of gipsies towards the audience.

The troubadour, accompanied by the orchestra, struck up the haunting tune of the young gipsy's dance for mercy—mercy for herself and her imprisoned sweetheart.

As Lola stood there, facing the hushed, expectant audience, her feet already trembling to commence her dance, her gaze became riveted on someone, standing beneath the faint lights at the back of the auditorium. She felt her heart contract suddenly, and she bit back a stifled cry.

For the figure was that of a uniformed officer of the Mexican mounted police. And with him was Maria Garcia, her bitter enemy!

And as Lola stared, cold with apprehension, she saw Maria pluck the officer by the sleeve and draw him quickly towards the stage entrance.



"Er—Lola—" said Tony haltingly. "If ever you need any advice or help, you know who to come to!" Lola's lips quivered. She would have liked to confide in him. But she dared not. For what would he say if she told him that she was the bandit's daughter?

HER BIG CHANCE

THE drums in the orchestra rolled; the conductor stood with poised baton, his gaze fixed anxiously on Lola.

But her feet seemed as though they were rooted to the stage; a dreadful feeling of faintness had swept over her.

Desperately she fought against her weakness, aware that every eye in the theatre was turned towards her, that her fellow actors were waiting in strained, anxious expectancy, realising that something was wrong.

The orchestra repeated the opening bars. Lola felt as though her knees would collapse beneath her.

She made one last, desperate effort to throw off the stunned feeling that gripped her, and to her bewildered mind the roll of the drums became the clatter of a horse's hoofs.

She was back again with her father. In her imagination she felt the reassuring grip of his arm as it encircled her, and heard his voice, gay and encouraging:

"Remember, Lola, you will dance for me!"

In a flash the dreadful spell was broken. A quick smile lit up Lola's eyes. She nodded to the anxious conductor, and turned with a swift, appealing gesture towards the circle of gypsies.

Softly the music throbbed as Lola swung into her dance, forgetful of all else. Once again she was dancing to her father, in the bandit's stronghold in the hills!

The red glow of the flickering fire-light, the swarthy faces of the Romanies, helped to enhance the illusion.

And Lola danced as she had never danced before, every movement, every gesture holding a poignant appeal that came from her very heart.

A spellbound hush had settled over the audience; the music became softer, dying away, as Lola sank in a crumpled, sobbing heap at the feet of the gypsy chieftain.

Slowly the curtain descended, amid a thunder of wild applause.

Lola found herself surrounded by her fellow-actors. Their enthusiastic congratulations sounded in her ears as she stumbled towards the wings, hardly realising what had happened.

And then dramatically she was brought back to earth. The stage drama gave place suddenly to the drama of real life!

There came a sudden commotion behind the wings. Lola heard Mr. Radcliffe's voice raised protestingly, and another voice—Tony Creswick's.

"Maria, don't be silly! You've got hold of the wrong end of the stick!"

"Let me go!" came Maria's shrill tones. "I know what I am talking about! I have the proof!"

White to the lips, Lola drew back as Maria burst from the wings, accompanied by a police officer, with Tony and Mr. Radcliffe hastily bringing up the rear.

Tony grabbed Maria's arm, but the girl shook him off and pointed at Lola.

"There she is!" she gasped, turning to the officer. "That is the girl you want—La Bella Lola, the bandit's spy!"

DEATHLY pale beneath her dusky make-up, Lola faced her accuser.

The blow had fallen—the blow she had expected for so long. But it was a cruel trick of Fate that it should have come just now—at the moment when success seemed within her grasp.

Tony, his boyish face rather stern, stepped quickly between Lola and the officer.

"Just a minute!" he said. "This business concerns me, and it concerns Mr. Radcliffe here! Miss Sharman is a friend of mine, and a leading dancer at this theatre. In addition, I am interested in the capture of that scoundrel, the Grey Shadow. It's fantastic to accuse Miss Sharman of being associated with him!"

And he looked fully into Lola's eyes. Her gaze faltered beneath his steady glance. Her heart was beating to suffocation. She saw the look of puzzled distress on the boy's face.

"Lola," he urged, "tell them it's a lie—a ridiculous mistake!"

Lola clenched her hands, and threw back her head.

She was not ashamed of her father; she believed in him implicitly—more than ever since their last dramatic meeting. But the suggestion that she was acting as a spy stung her into swift anger.

"It's not true! I am not a spy!" she declared breathlessly, and she stared straight at Maria.

That girl's lips curled in a scornful, meaning smile.

"You hear that?" demanded Tony, turning on her. "Lola denies it! Where's your proof?"

With cool deliberation, Maria thrust a hand into her pocket and took out a torn sheet of paper.

Lola bit back a stifled cry as she recognised it. It was a portion of her father's last message to her—the fatal note urging her to bring him the jewelled headdress.

She had been under the impression that she had destroyed it, but now, too late, she remembered that she had been interrupted by her landlady while in the act of tearing the message across.

A portion of it must have fluttered unnoticed to the floor!

Her heart turned cold as she saw Maria pass the incriminating paper to the officer. Tony and the producer were staring over the latter's shoulder.

Vainly she racked her mind to recollect the exact wording of the note.

"What is this?" demanded the officer, examining it keenly. "There is some reference here to a tiara, and the handwriting is similar to certain specimens we hold known to have been written by the Grey Shadow. There is also a mention of a secret stronghold—"

He spun round on Lola.

"Do you know anything about this message?" he demanded.

Lola was saved from replying by Tony's swift intervention. The boy had obviously grasped the position, and had drawn his own conclusions.

"Look here, that's not a fair question!" he cut in. "There's nothing whatever to connect this paper with Miss Sharman! I suggest that Miss Garcia explains where she found it."

Maria bit her lip. The question put her in an awkward quandary, and Lola could see that she was trying to invent some plausible tale.

"I picked it up in the cafe," she declared, "where Lola had been dancing."

"That's no proof!" flashed Tony. "The cafe is crowded with all kinds of people. Anyone might have dropped it."

Lola stared at him in swift gratitude, while the officer twirled his moustache in obvious perplexity.

He turned to Mr. Radcliffe.

"Do you know anything about this

young woman, senor," he asked—"anything that might throw some light on—"

"I know nothing," declared the producer impatiently, "and I care less! I'm concerned only with Miss Sharman's dancing, and— Listen to that!"

He raised his hand as an impatient clamour of voices came from beyond the stage curtains—a prolonged shout of applause.

"La Bella Lola! La Bella Lola!"

"You hear that?" demanded the producer, grabbing Lola by the arm. "Go on and take your bow! Don't worry about anything else. I'll handle this business."

He almost pushed Lola towards the wings. The gypsy chieftain caught her by the hand, leading her to the curtains and drawing them aside.

The applause became suddenly deafening, interspersed by shouts for an encore.

Though the scene was at an end, Lola was compelled to repeat the dance—this time on the deserted stage—while her fellow-actors stood clustered in the wings.

At length the curtain came down, bringing an almost welcome release. Faint and slightly dizzy, Lola groped her way from the stage, to find Tony waiting for her on his own outside the door of the dressing-room.

He explained that Maria and the police officer had been persuaded to leave. Mr. Radcliffe had flatly refused to take any notice of her story.

Tony's expression was troubled. He looked distinctly uncomfortable.

Lola, for her part, dared not meet his glance.

"Thank you—thank you for standing up for me, Tony!" she breathed.

Tony crimsoned.

"Dash it all, I only did what any other chap would do! I wasn't going to stand by and see you bullied. Er—Lola"—he seemed to find difficulty in choosing his words—"if ever you need any advice—or, maybe, help—you know who you can come to! I mean, I can keep as mum as an oyster, and I'm not the kind of fellow to ask questions when they're not wanted. So if you'd like to tell me anything—"

Lola bit her lip. She knew only too well what Tony meant. He suspected part of the truth, but was too chivalrous to say so.

But though she longed to accept his awkward offer of friendship, something held her back. Later he might be sorry; he might come to hate and despise her when he knew the whole truth—that she was none other than the bandit's daughter!

Besides, he was her father's avowed enemy. Nothing—nothing could alter that.

"There's—there's nothing to tell," she faltered, and, turning away hastily, darted into the dressing-room, slammed the door behind her.

Alone, she threw herself face-down on a couch littered with stage finery, to sob bitterly on this night of her greatest triumph.

THE RUMOURS GROW

FOR several days Lola neither saw nor heard anything of Tony.

He had departed on one of his mysterious errands, which, she now knew, were connected with the rounding up of the elusive bandit, the Grey Shadow.

Each morning she scanned the papers

(Please turn to the back page.)



PERIL at the Tower of LONDON

By PETER LANGLEY

THE MYSTERY JUNE WELCOMED

"I WISH, uncle," said June dreamily, "that I could solve a really big mystery—on my own."

Noel Raymond chuckled as he glanced at his fourteen-year-old niece. She had perched herself on the corner of his desk, and was playing thoughtfully with his folding magnifying-glass.

"What's bitten you now, June?" he asked. "You've been mixed up in quite a number of mysteries one way and another. And this seems to be a slack time of year for us detectives; everyone's too busy enjoying the spring sunshine to require our help."

June looked up eagerly.

"Couldn't we go out and find a mystery?" she asked. "It's a pity they can't be manufactured to order—"

The phone-bell trilled loudly, and Noel picked up the receiver. A slight frown crossed his boyish face; he whistled softly.

"Right, Carter! I'll be along in a few minutes."

He replaced the receiver and glanced wryly at his young niece.

"Sorry, June; I'm afraid our little outing for this morning is off. That was Inspector Carter, of the special branch; he wants to see me about a recent jewel robbery. I must go at once."

June's eyes revealed her disappointment as she slid from the corner of the desk.

"Bother old Scotland Yard!" she said. "I was looking forward to going out with you. Couldn't I come along?"

Noel shook his head regretfully.

"I'm afraid it's nothing in your line, June; just a routine investigation into the movements of a well-known gang." Then, relenting as he saw June's crestfallen expression, he added: "I tell you what! I'll meet you after lunch—and take you out to tea; and while we're out I'll see if I can't lay a little mystery trail for you to follow—a kind of test for your abilities as a sleuth. How's that?"

June's face lit up.

"Uncle, that's a topping idea!" she declared. "Think out something really difficult. Try to trick me—and see if I'm clever enough to bowl you out."

"That's a bargain!" replied Noel, smiling, as he reached for his hat. "I

will meet you at the Tower of London at half-past two. How's that?"

June nodded; and they both departed—Noel to keep his appointment, his niece to look at the shops.

After lunch she made her way to the Tower.

That grim old fortress looked almost cheerful in the bright sunshine; there were quite a number of visitors passing in and out of the gates.

June glanced at her wrist-watch; it still wanted a few minutes to half-past two, but Uncle Noel was usually very punctual. She took out a small packet of chocolates to while away the time.

Happily munching chocolates, she watched the Tower pigeons fluttering on the grey battlements, all unconscious of the centuries of grim mystery and drama enshrouded by those walls.

June smiled at her own fancies, but she was naturally romantically minded—a trait about which Uncle Noel often teased her.

She was aroused suddenly from her reverie as someone brushed against her rather violently—a pale-faced girl wearing a hat rather like her own.

"I—I'm sorry!" faltered the girl. "I wasn't looking where I was going."

"That's quite all right!" replied June cheerfully.

The girl smiled wanly and hurried on, to be lost to sight among the crowd of visitors.

June stared after her in some perplexity, and at that moment she caught sight of a bunch of violets lying on the ground at her feet. She remembered having noticed them pinned to the girl's neat costume.

She bent quickly to pick them up. The flowers were delightfully fresh, and it seemed a shame to let them lie there to be trodden underfoot. Their owner had vanished, so, after a

June thought her mystery at the Tower of London had all been planned for her by Uncle Noel. So eagerly she followed up her first clue—little realising that it was a REAL mystery of her own she had stumbled on.

moment's hesitation, June pinned them to her own coat.

Then she glanced again at her watch. "Goodness! Uncle's five minutes late!" she murmured.

She scanned the visitors coming in through the gates, but there was no sign of her uncle's tall, athletic figure.

A grey-bearded old man was approaching, leaning heavily on a stick. June observed that he wore tinted glasses, and that his coat-collar was turned up, partly shadowing his face. He appeared to be looking round as though in search of someone; after a moment's hesitation he came slowly in her direction.

"A fine day for a visit to the Tower, young lady," he remarked.

June started, for she had not expected him to speak to her.

"Yes," she admitted brightly, "isn't it?"

"You'll be needing a guide," remarked the stranger in an undertone.

June shook her head quickly.

"No, thanks; I—I'm meeting someone," she replied, wishing that the bearded stranger would not stare at her so closely.

"You'll be needing a guide!" repeated the other with strangely significant emphasis. "The crypt—west side—use your eyes!"

Mumbling under his breath, he walked on, as a Beefeater approached in his scarlet-and-gold uniform.

June's heart was beating quickly as she stared after the tall, bearded figure wending his way through the crowd.

Who could he be? And what had he meant by his cryptic remark? There was a mystery here with a vengeance; and only that morning she had complained jokingly to Uncle Noel that—

June started violently, catching in her breath; her eyes widened with a sudden bewildered flash of enlightenment.

"Uncle Noel!" she gasped. "That old man— Oh goodness! What a chump I was not to have guessed!"

June's eyes were dancing. The whole thing seemed as clear as daylight. The "old man" must have been Uncle Noel—in disguise! This was the test he had promised her—the exercise for her detective ability. And to think that he had nearly taken her in!

"Nearly—but not quite," whispered June gaily. "We'll see now who's the smarter, Uncle Noel. I bet I'll solve your little mystery!"

Taking a pencil from her handbag, she scribbled a brief message across the back of an envelope.

Her eyes twinkling, she dropped the envelope under the hedge near to which she had been standing when the bearded "stranger" had spoken to her.

"And now—let me think!" she breathed, puckering her forehead attractively, as she tried to recollect the exact words of the cryptic message. "M'm—I remember! 'The crypt—west side—use your eyes.' Well, that ought to be easy!"

Selecting another chocolate, she looked round for the entrance to the inner ward. She noticed a party of tourists, escorted by a Beefeater, entering a gateway. With a disarming smile June hurried after them and inquired from the burly official where the crypt might be found.

"The crypt, missy? That's in the White Tower—the big square building that's the oldest part of the fortress. You'll be seeing it on the way back."

But June wasn't prepared to wait till then; seizing her chance when the official was pointing out several ancient guns mounted in the courtyard, she slipped silently away from the interested group, to find herself in the shadow of the ancient grey walls of the main keep.

A low, arched doorway invited her to enter; her heart beating quickly, June found herself in a lofty, rather sombre apartment containing a number of glass cases and ancient relics.

At one end of the room was another doorway leading to a gloomy chamber approached by a short flight of steps.

"The crypt!" whispered June, as she caught sight of a notice on the wall. "Goodness! Uncle Noel has chosen a cheery place for his test!"

She descended the steps, looking round her eagerly. The crypt was deserted, except for herself.

June was conscious of a queer sense of uneasiness that she tried in vain to shake off. She put it down to the gloomy atmosphere of the tower, compared with the bright sunshine outside; and that the uncanny silence, broken only by the muffled sound of her own footsteps.

"Nerves!" she told herself. "There's nothing to be afraid of. Now, let's see, what am I expected to find here? He said something about a guide, but there's no one here. On the west side of the crypt—"

She stiffened suddenly as her sharp eyes noticed something protruding from behind a tattered velvet cloak that hung on the wall—the relic of some old-time battle.

Crossing to it quickly, she discovered, in a pocket in the lining, a slim booklet—the official guide-book to the Tower!

"The guide!" breathed June, her eyes sparkling. "This is what he meant. I bet there's some clue inside."

She opened it eagerly, but her face fell as she swiftly turned the pages. There was nothing inside the book except the printed matter—no clue of any kind. Some numbers had been scribbled in a corner of the cover, but they didn't seem to make any sense.

June bit her lip, but she was determined not to be beaten; Uncle Noel must have had some idea in leaving the guide-book—

Opening her handbag, she took out of it the folding magnifying-glass she always carried with her. With its aid she scrutinised the pages of the guide-book in the dim light.

"A finger-print!" she breathed. "Uncle's, I suppose—though it looks a bit large for his. I wonder if it means anything—"

Her voice trailed away suddenly, and she clutched the guide-book rather nervously. From somewhere in the gloom of the crypt had come an eerie,

blood-chilling sound—something like a stifled moan.

June stared apprehensively towards the heavy tapestry that hung from one of the walls; the sound seemed to have come from that direction.

Surely Uncle Noel couldn't be trying to scare her? June felt angry with herself for harbouring the thought for a moment. It was probably just part of the test—a test for her nerves and wits.

With a determined smile she crossed to the wall and jerked aside the tapestry.

Then a terrified scream was torn from her lips as a black abyss seemed to open in front of her, and she felt herself dragged forward into impenetrable darkness.

THE CLUE OF THE GUIDE-BOOK

NOEL glanced anxiously at his watch; the taxi in which he had been driven from the Yard had been held up in a traffic block, and he was over ten minutes late.

"Hope June's not getting anxious!" he muttered, as he alighted outside the gates of the Tower and hurried through the entrance.

There was no sign of his niece. He looked round quickly, his keen eyes scanning the crowd. Perhaps June had not yet turned up?

He was about to retrace his steps when he caught sight of something lying on the ground near the ticket-office. Just a tiny scrap of tin-foil—but the young detective was trained in observing seemingly trivial details.

The foil was of an unusual mauve-tinted shade—used for a particular brand of rather expensive chocolate. He knew that June had treated herself to a packet of this particular chocolate only that morning!

It might be a coincidence; on the other hand—

Noel decided to search farther. And it was as he neared the hedge close to the ticket-office that he saw a small dog worrying a torn envelope.

The young detective smiled; then his smile faded as he took a hurried step forward.

He had caught a glimpse of the address on the envelope—in his own handwriting!

A moment sufficed to retrieve it from the aggrieved terrier; it was the envelope from a letter he had written to June—and on the back was a hastily pencilled message.

Puzzled and a trifle anxious, Noel scanned it:

"Dear Nunky,—It was a clever make-up, but not quite clever enough! I've seen through your little game, and I'm going to follow up the trail. Cheerio! "JUNE."

"What on earth—" ejaculated Noel, imagining for a moment that his niece was indulging in some joke at his expense.

Then, with a start, he recollected his challenge of that morning. For some reason, June must be under the impression that he laid a trail for her to follow! But what did she mean by his "make-up"?

Noel did not waste time in idle surmises. That momentary twinge of anxiety was sufficient to put him on his mettle. June must be found without delay—whether she was spoofing or not.

Passing through the gateway into the inner courtyard, he stared round keenly. A party of sightseers were crossing

Tower Green, led by a guide. There was no one else in sight.

As Noel stood there, hesitantly, his keen eyes spotted something gleaming on the ground close to a low, arched doorway.

Tin-foil—and once again of the same mauve tint!

Noel grinned faintly as he strode towards it.

"June's liking for chocolate has come in useful!" he murmured.

He stepped through the doorway, to find himself in a room, leading to the crypt. The place seemed deserted. Could June have come this way?

As he entered the crypt, he noticed a tattered velvet cloak—one of the exhibits—lying on the floor. It appeared to have been carelessly knocked down by one of the visitors.

The young detective bent to retrieve it, and something crunched under his foot. Glass—a broken magnifying-glass!

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Noel, for he recognised the broken magnifying-glass.

Dropping to one knee, he tried to judge where June had been standing when the glass had fallen—or been knocked out of her hand.

A few splinters of glass clung to the tapestry that concealed the west wall. Noel pulled aside the tapestry, to discover a massive, iron-studded door.

The door was locked and, from its appearance, was not in use; but as Noel examined it more closely he discovered a tiny scrap of material caught in the jamb.

With a swift intake of breath he bent to examine the lock. Though massive, it was not proof against his skill, and with the aid of a gleaming steel instrument he took from his pocket he quietly opened the door. He flashed on his torch, and the brilliant beam revealed a flight of stone steps leading down into a gloomy dungeon.

With an uneasy premonition he hurried down the steps.

"June!" he called.

The only reply was the eerie echo of his own voice. The vaulted dungeon ran for some considerable distance under the tower; it contained several pieces of cannon and rusted chain mail, but had obviously been closed to the public for alteration.

A faint sigh reached Noel's ears; he turned sharply, and the blood drained from his face as, in one stride, he reached a huddled figure lying near a rusted suit of chain mail.

Clutched tightly in her hand was the torn cover of a guide-book.

"June!" exclaimed Noel huskily, as he slipped an arm round his niece's shoulders and lifted her gently from the ground.

June's eyelids flickered; she stared at him dazedly. Then a look of swift relief crossed her face.

"Uncle!" she gasped, holding tightly to his arm. She was half laughing, half crying, and there was a hint of reproach in her grey eyes. "Uncle—then it was you!"

Noel regarded her in anxious perplexity. June had obviously received a bad fright, and she was still very shaken, though otherwise unhurt.

"Just a minute, dear," he said gently. "Let's get this clear. What was me?"

It was June's turn to stare.

"It was you who—who laid the trail. wasn't it, uncle? To test me! Of course, you didn't dream I'd be so clumsy as to fall down those steps—"

Noel interrupted, his hand tightening on her arm; his boyish face was pale and rather grim.

"I know nothing about any trail, June," he said quietly. "And you didn't fall down those steps. If you had, you'd have been severely bruised—or worse. Think, dear. What was this trail you're talking about—and what scared you?"

June pressed a hand to her aching head.

"Scared?" she whispered, and her face turned rather pale. "Why—yes; I remember! Something seemed to reach out at me from the darkness—" She shuddered. "I can't remember anything after that."

"You fainted," replied Noel dryly. "But tell me just what led up to it. Do you feel well enough to—"

June sat bolt upright. "Uncle—if it wasn't you, then—then it's a real mystery!" she breathed. "Oh, goodness—listen!"

Unsteadily she described the events leading to her pulling aside the tapestry.

Noel listened intently, his eyes narrowed.

"You've certainly stumbled on something pretty big, June," he declared grimly. "You can thank your lucky stars that you escaped as lightly as you have. I wish to goodness my tax hadn't been so confoundingly slow."

"I'm glad it was!" declared June, almost happily. "Don't you see, uncle—if you'd been there, none of this would have happened—and there wouldn't be any mystery for me to solve."

"For you to solve?" echoed Noel. "My dear June, after what's happened I should have thought you'd have felt more like bed—"

"Well, I don't!" declared June. "And if you think you're going to send me home, I just won't hear of it. Why, uncle—it's the biggest, the most exciting mystery I ever struck!"

To calm her more than anything else, Noel suggested they should visit a near-by tea-shop and talk things over. June's face lit up.

"Nunky, dear—you're really going to help me solve the mystery?"

"Naturally," rejoined Noel gravely. "I'm as keen to solve it as you are—though perhaps for different reasons. As a matter of fact—"

He did not complete his sentence, but he was thinking of his recent conversation with Inspector Carter at the Yard. In the light of that conversation, June's strange adventure took on a new and more sinister aspect.

They made their way to the tea-shop, and when they had seated themselves, June stared rather puzzledly at the torn cover of the guide-book she still clutched in her hand.

"Whoever attacked me took the book, but not the cover," she said. "That's a bit of luck, for I'm certain this cover is a valuable clue. Apart from the figures scribbled on it, there's a finger-print."

"Finger-print?" echoed Noel. June nodded and Noel examined the cover carefully.

"This finger-print ought to help us," he agreed, "though I can't make out these figures. Now let's go over the whole affair from the beginning. The trouble started when you picked up that bunch of violets. The fellow with the beard was obviously on the look-out for a girl with a bunch of violets; he spotted you—and passed on a message. But whoever was hiding in the crypt realised you weren't the girl he was expecting, so he shut you up. Now I wonder what happened to the real messenger?"

"Perhaps she was too scared to keep the appointment," suggested June.

Noel nodded and turned his attention again to the figures on the guide-book cover. Suddenly he smiled.

"I believe I've got it!" he cried. "Drink up your tea, June, and come along."

He paid the bill and hustled the bewildered June out of the tea-shop.

"Uncle, what is it?" demanded June breathlessly. "Don't keep me in suspense!"

"The guide-book!" replied Noel tersely. "The clue we want is there right enough. Any copy will do."

He crossed to the ticket-office and purchased another copy of the guide.

"Those numbers on the cover," he explained, "refer to pages and paragraphs in the book. Can't think why I didn't tumble to it before. Here we are!" He halted in the shadow of an archway. "Page six—the Armouries; paragraph three—Suit of armour worn by cavalryman of the sixteenth century. And here's another: 'Chain armour supposed to have been worn by the Black Prince'."

"Not yet," whispered June, her voice trembling.

Noel approached the mailed figure and raised the visor of its helmet.

"Nothing here—" he began, and broke off with a swift intake of breath. A faint, unmistakable perfume was wafted to him, sickly and unpleasant. Groping inside the helmet, he pulled out a handkerchief.

"Chloroform!" he murmured, paling slightly. He glanced quickly at June, but she had not heard him.

Her sharp eyes had noticed something lying on the floor, close to the dais. She held it out to Noel.

"What do you make of this, uncle?" she asked eagerly.

Noel glanced at the metal links a trifle abstractedly.

"A piece detached from one of the suits of armour," he suggested.

June shook her head, a curious gleam in her eyes. Deliberately she dropped the links into her handbag.

"Look here, June," said Noel gravely. "I'd like you to take a telegram for me to the nearest post office, and wait there till I join you."



"The crypt—west side—use your eyes," the man said in an undertone. June looked at him in surprise. There was certainly a mystery here.

"But what does it mean?" demanded June in bewilderment.

"Let's go and see," said Noel. He hesitated, glancing into his niece's flushed, eager face. "I'm not certain that I ought to let you come—"

"Uncle, remember your promise!" said June.

"Right!" rejoined Noel, with a faint smile. "Come along!"

A few minutes later they were walking through the armouries of the tower, past rows of motionless, grim-looking figures, sheathed in chain-mail, breast-plates, and visors.

June's eyes were dancing with excitement. She had completely recovered from her recent scare.

"Here we are!" breathed Noel, halting by one of the exhibits and glancing quickly over his shoulder. "Notice anything unusual about it?"

June stared at the armoured figure. "It looks a bit—a bit creepy, doesn't it?" she whispered. "But I can't see anything unusual, except that the helmet is tilted."

The young detective nodded. "I'd noticed that," he breathed. "Keep a look out, June, while I investigate. Anyone coming?"

To his surprise, June made no demur. Her uncle scribbled something on a sheet torn from his notebook. The message was addressed to Inspector Carter, of the Yard, and ran:

"Getting warmer. Definite evidence. Come at once.—RAYMOND."

Slipping the message into her handbag, June departed, looking strangely excited.

Noel heaved a sigh of relief. He had a dual reason for sending June with the message. He wanted to get in touch with the inspector, and he wanted June safely out of the way.

What he had discovered more than confirmed his fears.

Swiftly he set to work to examine the other exhibits indicated by the secret code. To his disappointment, he did not find what he sought; but he was convinced that he was on the right track.

He examined the scribbled numbers afresh. Two of them were rather blurred, and the dim light was not helpful.

Noel crossed to one of the deep embrasures overlooking the moat, and

scanned the pencilled markings by the fading daylight.

And as he stood there, intent on his task, he was unaware of the stealthy, shrouded figure that stepped from behind one of the suits of armour, creeping up behind him.

The figure held a weapon in its hand—a mace taken from the collection on the wall.

Conscious of a slight sound behind him, the young detective turned suddenly, in time to see the heavy mace flash down towards him.

Swift as lightning Noel ducked, throwing out an arm to protect himself.

The weapon was sent clanging to the floor, but Noel was thrown backwards by the impact, to lay half in and half out of the embrasure, his head and shoulders suspended dizzily over the dried-up moat.

And his opponent was forcing him slowly over the ledge!

LOCKED IN THE TOWER!

I WONDER what Uncle Noel's doing now?" breathed June.

She had duly carried out her errand and dispatched the telegram. Now she was engaged in a little investigation of her own.

Her investigation was connected with the metal links she had picked up in the armoury at the Tower.

Uncle Noel, man-like, had declared that they formed part of one of the suits of armour; but June had other ideas.

To test them, she had visited a large departmental store in the neighbourhood, and was engaged in a close study of the latest style in hats.

A gleam of excitement flashed into her eyes as she bent over a tray containing the latest millinery decorations.

"I knew it!" she whispered. "I knew I was right!"

She straightened herself, her mind working quickly. She knew that her discovery was important, and she was anxious to get into touch with Uncle Noel.

He had told her to await his arrival, but at the risk of incurring his displeasure June decided to return to the Tower.

It was almost dusk when she arrived at the gates, and most of the late visitors had left, or were on the point of leaving. Unnoticed, June made her way to the White Tower.

Heavy footsteps were approaching from the direction of the crypt. Prompted by a twinge of sharp uneasiness, June stepped into a dim alcove, waiting with bated breath.

A figure loomed from the shadows, and a sigh of relief escaped June's lips as she saw that it was only one of the Tower Beefeaters, making his rounds.

But she stood quite still, not wishing to attract attention.

The man's footsteps passed, and June heard the clanking of his keys. Then came a reverberating bang, and a distant grating sound, that caused the blood to drain from June's face.

With a shock of cold dismay, she realised the truth.

She had been locked in the Tower!

For a moment sheer panic gripped June's heart. Her hand flew to her mouth, stifling a cry.

Supposing—supposing she was unable to raise the alarm! Supposing she had to remain here all night, surrounded by the grim and sinister emblems of the past!

But in a moment June's natural courage reasserted itself. She had only

to shout loud enough to make someone hear her.

And while the last glimmer of daylight remained she was not going to give way to panic. She had come here with a fixed purpose, and she would carry out that purpose if she could keep a hold on her nerves.

From her pocket June drew a small torch which she had purchased at the stores. Cautiously, her heart thumping, she made her way into the crypt and commenced to make a search of the gloomy chamber. Unexpectedly she came across the object she sought.

Behind one of the showcases in a corner of the room was a girl's battered felt hat.

June snatched it up, her pulses racing, and just then a faint sound behind her caused her to turn.

A stifled cry was torn from her lips as a tall, shadowy figure stepped from an alcove and made a bound towards her.

"Help!" cried June at the top of her voice, at the same time running for dear life.

Up the steps of the crypt and across the adjoining room she fled, her pursuer close at her heels. Every moment she expected to feel the grip of the other's hand on her shoulder, and her blood ran cold at the very thought.

Hardly knowing where she was going, June found herself in the armouries, racing for dear life between the grim suits of mail.

She could hear her pursuer's footsteps padding relentlessly behind her, drawing closer with every moment.

And just then, with startling unexpectedness, one of the suits of mail seemed to come to life. With a dull clang, it stepped from its pedestal, flooring June's pursuer with a swing of its mailed arm.

"All right, June!" came Noel's voice, sounding hollow inside the helmet.

"Uncle!" exclaimed June, her voice choked with mingled relief and blank amazement.

Faint and shaken, she clung to Noel's mailed arm as he raised his visor.

The young detective's boyish face was pale and rather stern.

"Why did you come back, June?" he demanded.

"I—I had to!" whispered June unsteadily. "I found a clue that—"

Her voice faltered. Noel was bending over the fallen man. The latter, in his dark cloak, looked rather like a foreigner.

He opened his eyes, glaring at Noel dazedly as the young detective clapped a pair of handcuffs on his wrists.

"Good work, June!" he said quietly.

"This fellow is the chief of a gang of jewel-thieves. I've already got one of his confederates—the fellow who attacked me—but I managed to knock him out. This is what they were after."

He crossed to the mailed figure on the adjoining pedestal, and unbuckling the breastplate, drew out a paper package. Unwrapping it, he revealed to June's startled gaze a quantity of glittering jewellery.

"This is the stolen property that Inspector Carter phoned me about this morning," he explained. "It was hidden here by a member of the gang who was trying to evade capture."

"The leaders of the gang are well known to Scotland Yard. They were afraid to collect the stuff, knowing that the police were on the look-out. A clue to its whereabouts had been scribbled by the thief on the cover of a guide-book. The fellow is in prison, so they had no other information to work on."

"Apparently, they threatened or bribed some girl to find the hidden jewellery. At the last minute the girl must have let them down, and they were forced to make the attempt themselves after dark. If only we could find that girl we'd know the whole truth, and—"

"We can find her!" whispered June. "She's here—in the Tower!"

"Eh—what makes you think that?" demanded Noel, staring.

"That cry I heard," declared June, "and those links I found. They were nothing to do with chain armour; they— But we're wasting time, uncle. I'm certain that girl has been hidden in the vault under the crypt."

Noel regarded her strangely.

"We'll soon find out, June," he said.

They roused the warders. Noel's official card was sufficient to silence all queries. A search was made of the vault, and behind one of the ancient cannons was found a girlish figure, her eyes closed, her face deathly pale.

"The chloroform handkerchief!" muttered Noel. "One of the scoundrels must have slipped it into that suit of armour to get rid of it."

"She—she's the girl who was wearing the violets," whispered June, her eyes brimming with tears. "Is she—"

"Don't worry," put in Noel reassuringly. "She'll be all right when she comes round. I'll have her taken to hospital. And you, my dear June, are going straight home to bed."

"Uncle! Can't I stay and see the end of it?" demanded June reproachfully. "After all, it's been my mystery! Can't I go to the hospital with you and the girl? I'll be able to look after her—"

Noel, with a faint smile, interrupted her eager outpourings.

"I rather fancy the hospital people can do that perfectly well," he said. "You'll need looking after yourself for a bit, young lady. So it's bed for you!"

But when Noel called at June's house, a couple of hours later, he found his niece, rather pale, but very wide awake, sitting up for him.

"Well, uncle?" she demanded eagerly, jumping up to meet him.

"The girl's all right," said Noel cheerfully. "She's been taken home to her father, an ex-member of the gang. The man has reformed, and the scoundrels used his past as a threat to force the girl to act as their tool. She tried to give warning to the Tower officials, but was attacked and overpowered."

"She asked me to give you a message, thanking you for her rescue."

He regarded his niece quizzically.

"What made you so certain, June, that the girl was in the Tower?"

June's eyes twinkled.

"Those metal links I found, uncle—the links you thought were part of the chain mail. Of course, you wouldn't know, being a man, but there's a fashion just now for ladies' hats to be trimmed with ornaments like that."

"I noticed one of the links lying in the vault, and when I found the others I examined them closely. There was a scrap of green velvet caught up in one of them. That practically clinched it, but I wasn't satisfied till I found the hat and its wearer."

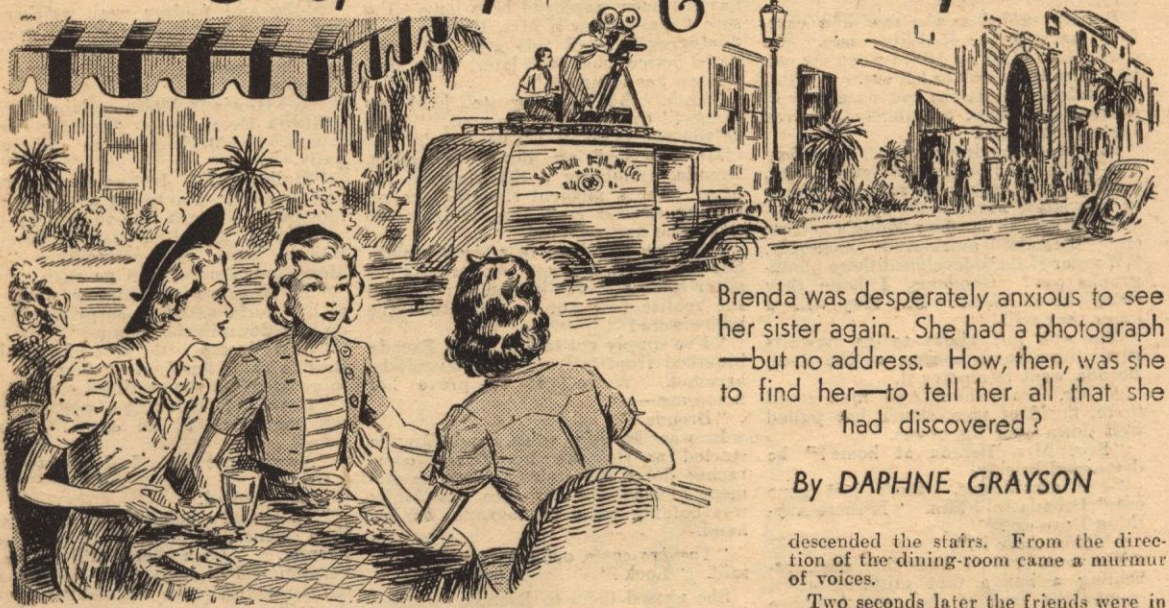
Noel smiled, a gleam of admiration in his eyes.

"That, June," he remarked gravely, "is where the lady detective scores every time!"

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

"THE INVISIBLE ARCHER." That is the intriguing title of next Friday's Noel Raymond story. If you like thrills, don't miss it!

Brenda's Mystery Task in Hollywood



WANTED BY THE POLICE!

BRENDA CASTLE, who was employed in Hollywood by a Mrs. Benson as guide to her English nieces, Molly and Audrey Duncan, had a strange task to carry out.

She and her sister, Marion, had to discover a secret, involving their future happiness, which was connected with a Red Indian vase owned by Mrs. Benson.

Ruby Fletcher, Mrs. Benson's secretary, and a Professor Janson were the sisters' enemies, and they wanted the vase for themselves. To avert suspicion, Brenda had adopted the name of Collins.

While Brenda was working in Mrs. Benson's curio-room, Professor Janson called to see her employer. Mrs. Benson agreed to let him take charge of her curios, as she was going away.

Brenda realised that now the professor would get the precious vase for himself!

BRENDA sat petrified, as the full meaning of this crisis dawned on her. Professor Janson here to take away the vital vase—on which all her hopes depended!

What on earth was she to do?

She realised dimly that Mrs. Benson was speaking again.

"You must stay to lunch, professor," she smiled.

"Thank you indeed, dear Mrs. Benson," replied the professor. "I shall then, perhaps, be able to take away the things this afternoon?"

"Really, it's very good of you. You are most kind."

The man bowed deprecatingly.

"No trouble at all. And—the girls will join us at lunch?" He glanced swiftly at Brenda's bent head as he spoke.

"Yes, of course!" replied Brenda's employer. "Come along, Brenda!"

Brenda rose, her brain racing frantically. There might still be a chance to avert disaster, as the professor was not

removing the curios until after lunch. Already the glimmering of an idea had come to her.

"I—I'll just slip upstairs and have a wash, Mrs. Benson," she said.

"Very well. But don't be too long. Brenda. Lunch is ready to be served."

Swiftly Brenda made her way upstairs, leaving Mrs. Benson and her visitor still in the treasure-room. There was just one way in which she could outwit her enemies without their suspecting anything—and she had perhaps ten minutes to put her plan into operation.

"Molly, have you got your camera?"

Breathlessly she rushed into the room which Molly and Audrey shared. Her two friends had just been in the act of going downstairs, but now they stared at her in surprise.

"Camera?" Molly blinked. "Now? But it's time for lunch, Brenda!"

In a few words as she could, Brenda told them what had happened. The two girls whistled their consternation.

"My hat, what can we do?" Audrey asked.

"Don't you see, that's why I want the camera," Brenda said swiftly.

"But what—"

"I'm going to photograph that vase," Brenda explained. "The professor and Ruby will be in the dining-room—they won't see. I daren't take the vase, but as long as I can get clear photographs of all the symbols on it, that won't matter!"

"Brenda, it's a brain-wave!" Molly exclaimed. "Here's the camera!"

"Is it loaded?"

"Yes—there's a new film in it!"

"And we'd better take along this special lighting-apparatus," Audrey added. "Lucky Mrs. Benson bought it for you, Molly, so that we could take some night snaps. The light in that room might not be too good, but with this we'll be able to snap the vase perfectly!"

"Oh, marvellous!" Brenda breathed. "But let's hurry now. I'm supposed to have come up just to get a wash."

On tiptoe they quickly, but silently,

Brenda was desperately anxious to see her sister again. She had a photograph—but no address. How, then, was she to find her—to tell her all that she had discovered?

By DAPHNE GRAYSON

descended the stairs. From the direction of the dining-room came a murmur of voices.

Two seconds later the friends were in the treasure-room. Brenda was taking the vase out of its showcase, Molly was fixing the lead of the special photographing light into the power point on the wall, while Audrey stood on guard by the closed door.

"Ready?" Molly asked.

Brenda had stood the precious vase on the typing table beside the light. Now, the camera poised, she nodded.

Molly switched on. The powerful light, so intensely brilliant that it hurt the eyes to stare at it, blazed on to the vase.

Click!

"Number one!" Brenda said excitedly.

Molly switched off. Then, while Brenda was turning the film, she moved the vase to another position.

Again the light blazed on, and again the camera clicked. All eight pictures Brenda took, photographing every inch of the vase, even taking two snaps of its interior, for there also were painted a number of the weird Redskin symbols.

"And that's that!" Brenda said jubilantly. "Now the professor can take the vase. He'll think we're beaten, but that's going to be his mistake!"

"Rather!" Molly grinned. "Now you and Audrey go into the dining-room while I slip these things upstairs. I'll develop the film after lunch."

With a light heart, Brenda sat down to lunch. She glowed with a sense of triumph. She saw how pleased Ruby and Professor Janson were looking, and chuckled inwardly.

They thought they had beaten her, but their cunning hadn't succeeded. The beauty of it was they couldn't suspect a thing. They would be lulled into a sense of false security.

Swift action on Brenda's part now, and she would outwit them completely. And she would act swiftly. As soon as the photographs were developed she would take them along to Marion.

She did not know her sister's address, but she knew Marion was working at the Supreme Studios as a film extra. It would be easy enough to find her there.

It meant disobeying Mrs. Benson's decree, but that was a risk she must

take. She simply had to see Marion—everything depended on that now.

Lunch was a delightful meal. Everyone was in a happy mood.

And then, afterwards, Professor Janson insisted that he would start moving Mrs. Benson's treasures immediately.

Brenda smiled as she saw him carefully packing the Redskin vases. She didn't even blink an eyelid when she saw him take them out to his car. But just for Ruby's benefit she put on an air of consternation that completely deceived that jubilant girl.

The professor drove away. Mrs. Benson announced she was going out, leaving Ruby to get on with the typing of her latest novel.

"And now to see how Molly's getting on," Brenda murmured excitedly. "Wonder if she's developed those photographs yet? Goodness, I hope they come out all right! But they will—I know they will!"

She was just about to go upstairs when there came a ring at the door. Brenda went to answer it.

A big, broad-shouldered man stood there, florid of face, slouch hat pulled well down over his brows.

"Say, Mrs. Benson at home?" he demanded briskly.

"I'm afraid not. She's just gone out," Brenda told him. "Is there anything I can do?"

"Mebbe there is."

The man pulled back his coat, revealing a badge that glittered as it caught the rays of the sun. A police badge—and Brenda felt a queer little sensation inside her at sight of it.

"I'm a detective from headquarters," he went on. "Reckon we ain't got that girl yet—seems she got wise and quitted the studios."

Brenda's cheeks suddenly went white. "You—you mean—"

"Sure, sure, this Marion Castle girl! Mrs. Benson told us to get her, and we're on the job now. All we want is a photograph, and we'll have her pronto. Say, whatja staring at?"

But Brenda made no reply. She went on staring, eyes wide with horror, clutching desperately at the door to prevent herself swaying.

The police—looking for her sister. Marion to be arrested on the instructions of Mrs. Benson!

AT THE CASTING BUREAU

BREND A felt stunned—felt this must be some horrible trick of the imagination.

But no; that glittering police badge was not imagination, nor was the detective, standing there and looking down at her curiously.

Marion gone from the Suprema Studios! Marion in danger of arrest!

Perhaps for the first time Brenda was made fully to realise the seriousness of the situation. She had known her sister was in disgrace and that Mrs. Benson was furious with her, believing her to be a thief. But never had Brenda dreamed that Mrs. Benson would take such a step as this.

That scene last night at the carnival, when it had appeared so obvious that Marion had stolen the vase, had brought about this new crisis.

And now—

Now, because the police had been unable to trace her at the studios, they had come here, asking for a photograph of Marion.

"Guess it'll be easy once we've got that," the detective said. "Reckon she must have given a false name at the casting bureau—we've been along there,

too. But a check-up of photographs will soon give us a hunch where to look for her."

Brenda steadied herself, forced a smile.

"I'm sorry, but I can't help you, after all," she said. "You see, I haven't been employed here long. I'm sure I don't know if Mrs. Benson has a photograph of—of this girl. I think you'd better come back later, when Mrs. Benson has returned."

"Huh, that's going to hold up things!" the detective grunted. "Still, as you say, O.K. I'll be back!"

He marched off down the steps. Brenda, trembling a little, closed the door. For a moment she stood there, leaning against it to recover from the shock she had received.

But then she drew in a deep breath. She must warn Marion. Apparently her sister knew she was in danger; but did she realise how hot on her track the police were?

"I've simply got to find her," Brenda breathed frantically. "She mustn't be arrested. We've got to prove her innocence—"

"Brenda!"

It was Molly's voice, and Brenda started as she saw her friend come racing down the stairs. Then excitement gleamed in her eyes, for Molly was holding some photographs in her hand.

"They've come out perfectly," Molly said. "Look!"

She passed them to Brenda. Perfect in detail those photographs of the vase were. Every mark and symbol showed up with uncanny clearness; it would be as easy to decipher them from the photos as from the real thing.

"Marvellous!" Brenda exclaimed jubilantly. "But, Molly, listen—"

And quickly she told her friend of Marion's danger. Molly looked dismayed.

"Goodness! Oh, I'm terribly sorry, Brenda! But what are you going to do?"

"We've got to find Marion."

"Yes; but if the police can't find her how will you be able to? You don't know her address, do you?"

"No; but I can find it out—from the casting bureau."

"But you say the police have already been there."

Brenda nodded.

"Marion evidently did register there under an assumed name, as the detective said. But I didn't tell him I have got a photograph of Marion. With that we can soon trace her. I'm going along to the bureau now," Brenda added.

"And we're coming with you!"

"Hadn't you better keep out of this, Molly?" Brenda asked a little anxiously. "You know what Mrs. Benson said about my meeting Marion again. I've got to take the risk, but there's no need for you to be involved—especially as the police have been brought in."

"Rabbits! I'm coming with you, and I know Audrey will, too."

Brenda smiled.

"All right. I'll just slip upstairs and get Marion's photograph."

Off she raced, up to her room. The photograph was with a number of other papers which she had hidden up the chimney after Ruby had tried to get them.

In a moment she had them down, had found the photograph. Thank goodness Ruby had never found all these papers, or she would have known at once of her own relationship to Marion. Not even to Molly and Audrey had she yet revealed that Marion was her sister.

They still believed her name to be Brenda Collins.

Swiftly she returned the papers to their hiding-place; then, pausing only to pick up her handbag and ram into it all the photographs, she hurried downstairs again.

Molly and Audrey were waiting for her. They left the house, but even as they were hurrying down the drive a long low sports car swept through the gateway.

"It's Gloria!" Molly exclaimed. "Gloria Deane, their film star friend, it was. She braked the car and waved gently."

"Hallo, girls! Just coming to see if you were in. I'm going shopping and thought you might like to join me!"

"I—I'm afraid I can't, Gloria," Brenda said disappointedly. "But Molly and Audrey can go with you."

"What ever's the matter with you all?" Gloria asked in surprise. "You do look down in the dumps!"

"Just—just a little spot of trouble," Brenda said, flushing. "And I've got to go along to the casting bureau."

"But why? Thinking of getting yourself registered as an extra?" Gloria asked.

"No; it's not that. I—I want to trace a friend."

Gloria smiled.

"Then that's going to be easier said than done, believe me," she told Brenda. "Look here, I'll make a bargain. I'll come with you to the bureau and get them all rushing around if you'll come shopping with me. What do you say?"

Brenda had to laugh in spite of her anxiety. How like Gloria that was! And she realised what a help it would be if the famous star did accompany her to the bureau.

Her request, which was bound to necessitate a search through endless records, was not likely to be too well received, especially as she would have to be rather guarded in her reasons for making it. But if Gloria were there to put in a word for her, then, as she had said, everyone would be only too eager to rush around and do anything to please the famous star.

"It's a bargain," Brenda smiled.

"Oh, ripping!" Molly and Audrey exclaimed.

"Jump in!" Gloria said delightedly.

So in they jumped, and then they were off. And very soon they were in the heart of Hollywood's shopping centre and stopping outside one of the film city's most famous stores.

"You—you won't be very long, Gloria?" Brenda asked anxiously, knowing how precious time was to her.

"I'll be as soon as I can," Gloria said. "I just want to get a few things for that Arizona trip I told you about."

"When do you go?" Molly asked eagerly.

"To-morrow," Gloria told them, as they all strode through the big swing doors. "I do wish you girls were coming with me."

"And so do we," they chorused enviously.

But even Gloria, with all her influence, knew that she would be unable to get permission for the friends to accompany her into the Arizona desert with the rest of the film unit which was going there on location.

Now they were in the crowded store, and the manager himself came hurrying over, all smiles, as he spotted Gloria.

Molly and Audrey stared at them interestedly.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" Audrey exclaimed in an amazed whisper. "Look over there!"

She was gazing across to one of the counters where another famous personality of the screen was making purchases. In her pictures that actress was one of the most glamorous of all the stars, and one of the most perfectly dressed, too. But now—

"She's wearing old slacks, and she's got her hair in curlers!" Audrey gasped incredulously.

Brenda smiled.

"Any number of the stars go shopping like that," she said. "I suppose they get so tired of being perfectly groomed in their films that outside the studios they like to be free and easy. On the other hand, of course, other stars like to maintain their reputations for glamour both on and off the screen."

The chuns chattered on, while Gloria made her purchases. Half a dozen assistants, at a nod from the manager, had hustled forward to deal with her slightest request.

But Gloria, perhaps sensing Brenda's anxiety, did not take long over making her selection.

"Please send them along to the studio," she requested. "Oh, and just one more thing! My three friends here would like some slacks—"

"Certainly, Miss Deane."

Brenda & Co. gasped.

"They will go on my account, of course," Gloria added.

"But, Gloria—" Brenda exclaimed.

Gloria's eyes twinkled as she glanced smilingly across at that other star who was still busy purchasing things.

"I've been in here before now, Audrey, wearing slacks—and curlers, too!" she laughed.

Audrey blushed, then was laughing, too.

"I didn't think you heard," she murmured.

"Slacks are so comfortable. Everyone in Hollywood wears them, you know," Gloria went on. "You would like some, wouldn't you?"

"Oh, Gloria!"

"Then that's all right. And now I can see that Brenda is anxious to get along to the bureau. Come along, girls."

The big, imposing building that housed the casting bureau was a hive of activity when they arrived.

"Every extra has to register here," Brenda explained for the benefit of Molly and Audrey. "All the film companies apply here when they want anybody. It's no good going along to the individual studios and trying to get a job; they just sent you back here to get put on the list."

"I see," Molly murmured. "And I suppose here they take every detail."

Brenda nodded.

"Everything," she said. "Height, weight, age, photographs, details of appearance, and any particulars. Details of your wardrobe, and their summing up of what particular type of film you're most suitable for. And your address and telephone number, of course."

They made their way into the inquiry office. Gloria had seen someone she knew and paused for a few moments for a chat, saying she would join them in a few moments.

Brenda, palpitating a little now, made her request.

"What's this girl's name?" the man asked.

"Well, I only know her Christian name. It's Marion—"

"Say, this is the casting bureau, not police headquarters," the man said. "We're not detectives—"

"But I have her photograph," Brenda said quickly. "Here it is."

The man frowned.

"You don't want much, do you?" he grunted. "Reckon you don't realise we've got thousands of records. It'll take hours looking this up, sister. You come back another time."

And then, even as Brenda's heart fell, Gloria came bustling up.

"Now, now, Benny, that's not the courtesy we expect from you," she bantered. "This young lady's a friend of mine. Be a good boy and do as she asks."

Benny was at once all grins.

"Anything you say, Miss Deane. Here, Joey, Connie, Larry, Margot—hustle round and trace up this photo. For Miss Deane."

The bureau became even more active as Benny's four assistants "hustled round."

Brenda smiled gratefully at the film star.

"Thank you, Gloria. If you hadn't been here—"

Yet even so it seemed to Brenda that she had to wait ages. And with every passing minute her anxiety increased.

Off they went once more in Gloria's car down the wide Sunset Boulevard and to the corner of the street where Marion was boarding.

"Brenda," Gloria said, as she braked the car, "I know I've asked you before, and it's none of my business really, but if there's anything wrong—"

Brenda smiled at the film star gratefully.

"You're so kind, Gloria," she said. "But—but I think everything will be all right now. It was just that I was afraid I mightn't be able to trace Marion."

Gloria nodded, though she did not look too convinced. She could see that Brenda was still agitated.

"All right, Brenda. But if ever you want any help, don't hesitate to come to me. If there's anything I can do I shall be only too happy to do it. You won't forget, will you?"

"I won't. And thank you again, Gloria!"

Gloria drove off then. The two girls hurried down the street.



"Hana, can you read the symbols from these photographs?" asked Marion. The Indian girl took the photographs and examined them closely. "They take long time," she said impassively.

By now that detective might have returned to Greenways, seen Mrs. Benson, and been given a photograph of Marion; or if Mrs. Benson wasn't in, Ruby would have answered the door. And Ruby would be only too eager to supply all the information she possibly could.

At any moment Brenda dreaded to see the detective come stalking into the office. Molly and Audrey stood sympathetically by saying little; Gloria, aware of Brenda's perturbation, eyed her curiously.

Then at last Benny came back.

"O.K.!"

Brenda's eyes glowed.

"You've traced her?"

"Sure! Name of Marion Locke. She's staying at a boarding-house off Sunset— But here's the full address."

He'd written it down on a slip of paper. Eagerly Brenda took it.

"Oh, thank goodness! It's very kind of you."

"A pleasure," said Benny, his tune completely changed in the presence of Gloria.

"Come on, Brenda! I'll drive you there," Gloria offered. "Have to leave you then, though!"

"Isn't she sweet?" Molly asked.

"She's adorable!" Brenda said fervently. "But where are we? No. 16 I want—"

"Here it is," Audrey said.

No. 16 was of the typical boarding-house type, with an air of drab respectability about it.

A buxom woman answered the door after Brenda had knocked.

"Miss Locke?" she repeated. "She's out."

"Out?" Brenda gave a gasp of dismay. "Do you know when she will be back? She is coming back, isn't she?"

"I hope so," the woman said, frowning. "She hasn't paid this week's rent yet. Better go up to her room. Up these stairs, and it's the third on the left. There's someone else waiting for her."

Brenda's face went ashen. A terrible fear possessed her: Was—was it the police?

"Who—who is it?" she asked in no more than a frightened whisper.

"A girl—a Redskin girl!" was the amazing answer.

ILANA, THE REDSKIN GIRL

HEART pounding within her, her eyes mirroring her surprise and excitement, Brenda paused outside the door of the third room on the left of the landing.

Waiting for Marion—a Redskin girl! Brenda felt a thrill. She and Marion believed that their future happiness centred around the secret of a Redskin vase, and now here was a Redskin girl come to see her sister!

Surely there must be some definite link here? A sudden thought struck her. Marion had spoken of someone whom she was going to ask to decipher the symbols on that vase.

Could it possibly be this girl? Was this why she had come to see Marion?

Brenda shot a quick, excited look at Molly and Audrey, who stood beside her. They, too, were thinking the same thing.

"Let's go in," Molly said eagerly.

The door was slightly ajar. Brenda pushed it open and strode into the room.

"Ah!"

Their entry was greeted by a startled gasp.

Standing motionless by the table was the Redskin girl, tall and willowy, her hair jet black, as were the pair of eyes that gleamed from her dark-skinned face.

She wore the traditional, brightly coloured clothes of her race; her feet were encased in moccasins.

Brenda smiled.

"You are waiting for Marion?" she asked.

The girl surveyed her with unblinking eyes. Her attractive face was expressionless now. She nodded, but did not speak.

"So are we," Brenda went on. "Who are you? What do you want to see her about?"

"Me no say. Me Ilana. That all."

There was a finality about the Redskin girl's tone that told Brenda she was not to be drawn any further.

Had Ilana come about the vase?

For a moment Brenda was tempted to mention it. If Ilana had come to see Marion about it, then surely she would speak up. But caution made Brenda hesitate.

There was too much at stake to take risks. This girl might be a friend, but she might be an enemy; she might have some connection with Ruby and Professor Janson.

A silence descended on the room. Ilana still stood motionless by the table, never taking her eyes off them, suspicious, her head held proudly in the manner of her race.

Brenda fidgeted, anxiety and excitement coursing through her at the same time. Molly and Audrey stood looking about them curiously.

Three minutes passed without a word being said, the only sounds being the ticking of a little clock on the mantelpiece and the faint whirring of the inevitable ice-box, or refrigerator, which is a feature of every house and apartment in Hollywood.

Then suddenly the sound of hurrying footsteps were heard coming up the stairs outside. The door burst open, and a figure came flying in.

"Marion!" Brenda exclaimed joyfully.

"Brenda!" Her sister rushed across to her. "And Ilana!" she added, looking across at the Redskin girl.

"And here are Molly and Audrey, the friends I've told you about," Brenda smiled.

Marion smiled a welcome to them.

"I'm awfully pleased to meet you,"

Your Editor's Corner



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

MY DEAR READERS.—What an important week this is for birthdays.

To-day (if you're reading this on April 21st) is Princess Elizabeth's birthday. And she's thirteen—the same age as a good many of you, I expect.

You have probably realised that it is important for princesses to grow up a little more quickly than ordinary schoolgirls. Already Princess Elizabeth entertains her own friends, ordering the meals herself. And as you know, she and her sister, Princess Margaret, have even made public appearances by themselves.

On Sunday comes Shakespeare's birthday. You will probably be celebrating this during the week with appropriate songs, plays, and recitations.

And should you see a good many people on that day wearing a red rose, you'll know that they're doing so in honour of St. George, England's patron saint. For April 23rd is also St. George's Day.

Then on the 29th, that's next Saturday, Maurice Tate, the celebrated cricketer has his birthday.

So we must wish them all Many Happy Returns—except Shakespeare, perhaps!

SIX OF THE BEST

I don't know about you, but I've never used a bow-and-arrow since the days when, as a very small boy, it was fashionable to play at being Robin Hood—or one of his merry, merry men.

But there are a number of people in this country who are very skilled at archery.

The mystery figure in next Friday's complete story featuring Noel Raymond certainly was. For the warning messages he sent were always fastened to an arrow.

And when the mystery archer showed that he was in earnest in carrying out these threats to ruin Elsie Clayton's tea-gardens, it was then that Noel Raymond realised he would have to act swiftly to bowl him out.

Don't miss "The Invisible Archer," by Peter Langley, which appears in your GIRLS' CRYSTAL next Friday.

"Pat's Thrill at Smuggler's Cove" is the title of the exciting complete story featuring Pat Lovell, the girl reporter.

Another story of Kaye of the Kennels will also appear, and our three serials will continue as enjoyably as ever.

You'll order your copy in advance, won't you?

Your sincere friend,

YOUR EDITOR.

she said. "Brenda has told me how you have helped us. But, Brenda, why are you here? How did you find out where I was staying? And the vase—oh, Brenda!" The elder girl's face became tragic. "I lost it last night! Ruby got it. And I'd arranged with Ilana to come here to-day to decipher those symbols—"

"And she can decipher them still!" Brenda said excitedly. "Look!"

From her handbag she took the photographs of the vase; passed them over to her sister.

Marion let out a glad cry.

"Brenda! Oh, this is wonderful! Ilana, we haven't got the vase; but will these photographs do? Can you read the symbols from these?"

Ilana, grave-faced and dignified, strode forward. And then, as she was examining the photographs, Brenda caught at her sister's arm.

"Marion, I had to see you for another reason. The police—"

"Yes, I know." Marion nodded worriedly. "They're after me. Is it because of the vase?"

Brenda told her; explained, too, about the detective coming to Greenways.

"Once he gets a photograph of you he'll be able to trace you as we have done!" Brenda cried. "Oh, Marion, they mustn't arrest you—not now, when we're so near to solving everything! Can't you hide—"

She broke off as there came a soft exclamation from Ilana.

"These pictures—they O.K.!" she said. "I read signs. But they take long time. I go away. I come back and tell you what they mean."

"Good old Ilana!" Marion cried excitedly. "How long will it take you?"

"I go now. I come back, maybe, to-night!" Ilana said.

"That's wonderful!" Marion laughed on a thrilled note. "Oh, Brenda, it won't be long now before we can learn the whole secret—the whole mystery! We'll be able to find out just what Ruby's game is, and exactly why we are implicated in this affair."

"And find out why our future happiness is involved," said Brenda, her eyes shining with excitement. "Oh, Marion, won't it be wonderful to get all this dreadful mystery cleared up once and for all? Once we can solve the mystery of the Redskin vase, I'm certain we shall be able to explain everything to Mrs. Benson."

"Yes, and aunty will be sorry she ever said a hard word to you," chipped in Molly. "She's stern when she's roused, but she is just, and ready to admit her mistakes. When everything's come all right you and Marion must stay with us—"

She broke off, swinging round. Footsteps had sounded outside the door. There came a knock—a loud, authoritative knock.

"Who is it?" Molly whispered.

Brenda crossed to the door, opened it cautiously, and then a gasp of dread and consternation left her lips.

Standing there was a uniformed figure, a badge gleaming on his dark blue tunic—a policeman!

"Marion Locke live here?" he demanded, striding into the room. His gaze shot across to Brenda's sister; a grim smile came to his face. "Reckon that's you, sister! I've got a warrant for your arrest, and you're coming along to headquarters with me right now!"

What a disaster this is for Brenda and Marion! It seems as if Ruby will triumph, after all. You must make certain of reading next Friday's thrilling long chapters of this grand story. Order your GIRLS' CRYSTAL to-day!



Rivals of the Dramatic Society

By ELIZABETH CHESTER

CELIA'S CHANCE OF FAME

PAT LOVELL, a song in her heart, went skipping through the stage door of the Theatre Royal as though she trod on air.

She had wonderful news for the cast of "Foretaste of Fortune," which was being given on the morrow by the local amateur dramatic society.

Though Pat was a member, she was not taking part in the show, for she was far too busy to attend rehearsals. But her friend Celia Rayne was, and Celia was such a wonderful young actress that Pat felt certain that a great future lay ahead for her. It needed, however, someone with influence in the theatre to give Celia her chance.

And Pat believed she had found that someone. She had that afternoon interviewed Graham Mauvier, the famous actor-manager, and, greatly daring, had asked him to attend the show. In his typically kind, generous way he had agreed to go along. If he formed a favourable opinion of Celia's ability he might find a part for her in one of his West End plays.

She hastened along the corridors to Celia's dressing-room, knowing that the company would be in the theatre for the dress rehearsal. There was no production on at the theatre at the time, so the amateurs had been able to rent it at a reasonable rate. Pat had already telephoned to tell them that Graham Mauvier would be there tomorrow night, watching their performance, and she knew they'd be on tiptoes with excitement.

She reached Celia's dressing-room and went in. A dear old Victorian lady sat at the dressing-table, her back to Pat. She wore a white curled wig and a pretty black crinoline frock. Thus had Celia to appear in the play.

"Hem! Excuse me, madam," said Pat playfully.

The Victorian lady turned.

"Oh, hallo!" she said casually.

Pat stared at her in amazement. It was not Celia who was facing her, but Julia Cartwright, her understudy—a girl whom Pat did not like very much, for she seemed jealous of Celia's success.

"What ever are you doing in Celia's things, Julia?" asked Pat blankly.

"I'm the understudy, so I'm having to take over her part," said Julia, with ill-concealed satisfaction. "Poor Celia

can't come to-night; her brother has been taken worse."

Pat felt quite limp with shock.

"Her brother? Oh dear! I knew he was ill, but not seriously ill. Poor Celia! How awful, losing her chance like this!"

For, though Pat was concerned for Celia's brother, she could not help thinking of her friend's lost chance. Suppose she could not appear tomorrow night, when the play was performed?

Julia was nodding her head gravely.

"Yes, it's bad luck," she said. "But, naturally, she has to think of her brother before the play. She sent us a telegram to say she is stopping with him. By the way, Pat, someone is needed to take my own little part in the rehearsal to-night. I think Mr. Mortimer wants you for it."

"Oh!" said Pat, her eyes glowing. "I'll go along and find him."

She went off to find fat, cheery Mr. Mortimer, the producer, and he promptly commanded her to get made-up.

In the small part of a parlourmaid Pat had only a brief entrance to make; nevertheless, she was as carefully made-up as if she had been one of the principals.

When she was ready—a perfect Victorian parlourmaid—Pat went into the corridor carrying her script; but she had taken only a few steps when she paused. She had dived her hand into the pocket and pulled out what she thought was a handkerchief, but it was a piece of paper—a telegram.

Pat noticed the signature, and she saw that it was from Celia. Her telegram to the company. As it was not a private message she unfolded and read it.

"Brother taken worse. Regret im-

Pat Lovell hadn't meant to take part in the Dramatic Society's play at all. But she did—because it was the only way of saving the show for her friend who had been so nearly robbed of success.

possible attend rehearsal. Let Julia take over. Best luck.

"CELIA."

Pat wondered where it had been sent from. So far as she could recollect, Celia's family lived some thirty miles away.

Just as she stretched the crumpled telegram to see where it had been handed in she heard running footsteps. Looking up, she saw Julia. She was now in ordinary clothes, having taken off her costume to have necessary alterations made.

"Give me that!" Julia exclaimed angrily. "That's mine. You found it in my pocket!"

But Pat stepped back out of reach. Her quick eyes had already seen that the telegram had been handed in at an office not thirty miles away, but in this town—only half a mile from the theatre!

If Celia had sent it, then she was not with her brother; nor would she have sent a telegram when telephoning would have been so much easier.

In a flash Pat jumped to an alarming conclusion.

Someone else had sent this telegram. It was a fake!

Pat looked up at Julia as that girl, white-faced, snatched at the telegram. There was no mistaking her agitation.

"What is the excitement?" asked Pat, handing over the message. "It's only the one from Celia."

Julia crumpled the telegram and sought to calm herself.

"Oh, that?" she said, after the faintest pause. "I—I thought it was a letter from my aunt, which—which happened to be very private. Sorry I got so angry! I suppose I'm rather strung-up at the moment."

Pat saw that she was crumpling the telegram tightly, and a startling suspicion entered her mind. The excuse about the aunt's letter did not ring true. She suspected that it was the telegram that had caused Julia's agitation; the girl did not want it examined. And that could only mean that—

"Julia, I want to look at that telegram—" began Pat.

But she got no further. The producer came into the corridor calling

Julia, and the girl ran quickly up to him.

Pat stared after her, her suspicions deepening. If Celia had not sent that telegram, then someone else had—someone with an object in making everyone think the brilliant young actress was not appearing at rehearsal. Julia had gained by Celia's supposed absence; she was taking that girl's part—the best part in the play.

But what would happen when Celia did arrive? What would Julia have gained—if she were the culprit? Surely Celia would just take over her role again, leaving Julia with her own tiny part.

Pat went to the wings, and, puzzled, stood there awaiting her cue. On the stage Julia, again in costume, was sitting before a realistic fire, knitting—as the script commanded.

But the fever of enthusiasm which had seized the eager amateur actors at the exciting news of Graham Mauvier's promised visit had now waned. Pat could sense the general disappointment, for Julia was acting badly.

"Oh dear!" sighed Pat. "It's awful."

Awful it was. Julia, who was supposed to be sitting by the fire knitting, listening to the conversation of two younger people, had to show her disapproval without saying a word. Celia had done this in the most natural, telling way, but Julia was grimacing, forgetting to knit, or else doing it badly. Never had her acting been so poor.

Presently Pat heard her own cue. She walked on to the stage confidently.

"You rang, madam?" she asked, remembering her lines.

"Who do you think rang?" asked the old lady—Julia. "The coal-scuttle, girl. Make up the fire."

Pat blundered, as she was supposed to do, and then, apologising, went off.

"Jolly good," said the producer kindly. "Wish you could do the job on the night, I really do."

Then he turned to Julia, still on the stage, pleading with her to "put more life in it." Julia argued with him crossly, and they both grew quite heated over it.

"Well, I don't say you aren't doing your best," said Mr. Mortimer finally. "You are nervous, perhaps. You're not acting half as well as you can, you know, all the same."

"I'll be all right to-morrow," said Julia, and added quickly: "If I have to play the part then."

"What makes you think you'll have to?" asked Pat quietly.

"Why not, if Celia is still away?" was the quick retort. "I suppose no one suggests that anyone else can play the part? No one else knows it. And if anyone is entitled to the lead, I am. My father is the biggest subscriber to the society. If it weren't for him, we couldn't have the theatre."

There was a painful hush. It was a most unpleasant speech. The leading part was given, not to the member who contributed the most money to the society, but to the best actress. But everyone wisely ignored the remarks Julia had made.

Pat, however, took the girl by the arm as she indignantly turned away.

"Julia, can I see that telegram again?" she asked.

"The telegram? Which telegram? Oh—the one from Celia? Goodness knows where it is; I don't."

And Julia tugged her arm free.

Pat looked after her grimly, then turned to the producer and asked him

how much longer she would be needed, as she had to leave shortly.

"Oh, you won't be needed again until the last act," he said. "If you could manage to get back by then. But don't let us down. I've got a nasty feeling that if Celia comes back, we may have trouble with Julia. She might even back down from the show."

Pat could believe that.

"Celia must come back, all the same," she said. "And I just can't understand what has happened."

"Why, a telegram arrived to say her brother had been taken worse," said the producer, in surprise. "I thought you knew."

Pat did not answer that. The time had not come yet to mention the strange mystery of the telegram being dispatched from a local post office. But, as she would not be needed again for some time, Pat determined to go into the matter. She would visit that post office!

Pat showed her Press-card at the small post office-cum-general stores, and said that she wanted to make inquiries about the sender of a telegram to the Theatre Royal, as a practical joke was suspected.

The girl who had taken the telegram was serving on the other counter, and came across. She remembered the telegram clearly, because she had thought it odd that a telegram should be sent such a small distance.

"It was an old lady who sent it," she said.

"An old lady?" Pat exclaimed, surprised. "Oh!"

She realised then that it was possible that Celia had telephoned the message to a relative who lived near by—and the relative, unable to visit the theatre, had dispatched the telegram.

"Rather a queer-looking woman," said the girl. "She wore a black bonnet and cape—quite a character. Like a Victorian old lady, more."

Pat gave a quick start.

"Victorian? White-haired?" she exclaimed.

"Yes. It's not very light on the other side of the counter, and you can't see very clearly through the wire that guards the counter," the girl explained.

"So I didn't really have a chance to look at her very closely. But it did strike me that she was really a lot younger than she seemed judging by her clothes. Er—is anything wrong?"

Pat smiled grimly.

"Nothing much. But I suspect that that old lady was someone playing a joke. She was not an old lady at all, but someone dressed up."

The girl's eyes widened then.

"My word! Now you mention it, I shouldn't be surprised if she was!" she exclaimed.

Pat did not question her much further, and she did not want to be questioned herself, for fear of stirring up trouble. But she abandoned her belief that it was a relative of Celia's who had sent the telegram. The sender of the telegram had been disguised—as a Victorian. She was someone who had access to a wig and make-up; in fact, someone at the theatre!

In grim, thoughtful mood, Pat left the post office.

"Julia. It must have been," she told herself. "She wanted the part. In some way she has kept Celia from coming to the theatre. She sent the telegram—and now, unless Celia comes back, Julia will have the part to-morrow night when Graham Mauvier is in the audience."

But Pat, hurrying back to the theatre, vowed that the plot should

not succeed. Celia must be found. Wherever she was, she must tell her story. Was her brother really ill? Why had she not come to the theatre?

Returning to the theatre, Pat found that the second act had not yet finished. She went at once to Julia's dressing-room, and switching on the light, looked about her carefully. Somewhere here, she suspected, the old-fashioned clothes Julia had used in the post office were hidden.

There was a wardrobe cupboard in a corner of the room, and Pat tried the door. It was locked. Baffled for a moment, not caring to force it, Pat wondered what excuse she could make to ask Julia to open it.

Then she suddenly realised that in her stage clothes Julia had no pockets. In all probability, not suspecting that anyone would search the room, she had left the key behind.

Feeling like a detective, Pat went to the dressing-table, opened the drawers, and searched the likeliest hiding-places. But there was no sign of the key.

But wheeling to the door, she saw Julia's coat hanging there. As the usual place for it was the wardrobe, its being behind the door was unusual.

Pat crossed to the coat, felt in the pockets, and gave a murmur of triumph as her fingers closed on a long key. Thrilled with triumph, she tried it in the wardrobe lock. It fitted.

In a moment she had opened the door. An instant later she found what she sought. An old-fashioned black bonnet, cape, jacket, and skirt were concealed behind a hanging frock in a corner of the wardrobe!

"Proof!" murmured Pat in triumph.

And at that moment the door was swung open. Julia, staring, astounded, alarmed, stood in the doorway.

PAT'S POST OFFICE TOUR

PAT LOVELL was momentarily taken back. She still had the clothes in her hands, and she had the guilty feeling of one caught spying. But Pat was a girl of courage and resource. It was Julia who had the greatest reason to feel guilty, and she took advantage of the girl's stunned surprise.

"So this is what you wore when you sent the faked telegram saying that Celia wouldn't be coming to-night?" said Pat, and held out the garments to Julia.

Julia closed the door and stood with her back to it, breathing unevenly, her eyes startled and anxious.

"I—I don't know what you mean," she said, in a low, shaky voice.

"Where is Celia?" Pat demanded fiercely. "If you think you can keep her out of the way until after to-morrow night, you must be crazy."

Julia slowly recovered her composure. "It's you who are crazy. I sent no telegram; and I don't know where you got those clothes from. As to Celia—she's where she said she was in the telegram: at her home."

Pat eyed her narrowly; for now Julia, although on edge, had lost her first fright. And Pat realised that there was no direct evidence against her. There was nothing to prove that Julia had worn these clothes, even though they had been found in this room.

"Listen, Julia," she said quietly. "I happen to know that that telegram from Celia was sent from a post office only half a mile away from here."

Julia was calmness itself, outwardly at least, when she replied.

"Good gracious! You don't mean that? Why ever didn't she call in, then, or telephone?"

"Because she didn't send the telegram. Because someone wearing these clothes—someone disguised—sent it," said Pat, eyeing her keenly. "And they were found in this locked wardrobe, the key of which was in your pocket."

Julia did not flinch.

"The key was in my pocket?" she exclaimed. "Good gracious! You don't mean you think I dressed up and sent that wire! What an idea! For all I might know, Celia might be coming at any moment—except for that wire. How absurd! Really, Pat, I think you must have been reading too many exciting newspaper stories. I've often thought reporters invented some of the things they say happen. But you're not going to involve me in an exciting news story, thank you. If someone wore those clothes to send the wire, it was probably Celia. And don't ask me why she should do it, either! Perhaps she didn't want to come—perhaps she wanted an excuse for not coming."

It was such a silly suggestion that Pat laughed.

"You'll have to think of something better than that, Julia," she said. "Celia, indeed! Why, even though she didn't know for certain that Graham Mauvier would be in the house tomorrow, she had more than a hope he might be. Can you imagine Celia missing a chance like that unless she had to?"

Julia's reply took her breath away.

"Yes," said Julia. "I can."

Pat simply blinked at that.

"You—you can?" she said, after a pause. "You think that Celia, after all her dreams of going to London, of having a chance—you think she'd throw away this, the chance of a life-time?"

"Yes—because she's highly strung!" retorted Julia. "I'll tell you what I think. Celia is frightened of failing. She's lost her nerve. If Graham Mauvier doesn't think much of her, why—she's a failure. Her dream's gone."

Pat did not answer. It was a point of view she had not even considered; but she did not believe it possible.

"Rubbish," she said curtly. "I've told you what I think, Julia. I still think it."

Still holding the clothes, she walked to the door, but Julia barred her way. "You can think what you like, Miss Headlines," she said, with a faint sneer. "But don't print it in your paper. My father is rich enough to fight a libel action."

She stood aside then, and Pat faced her coolly.

"I don't know where Celia lives," she said. "Or rather, where her people live, so I can't get in touch with her if she is there. But my paper can! You forgot that. Celia reads the 'Gazette'; and I'll see that the 'Gazette' makes it clear that her big chance is given her to-morrow, and that, at any cost, she must be there."

Julia did not reply, but closed the door as Pat, taking the clothes, left. In the corridor, perplexed and puzzled, Pat stood deep in anxious thought. She did not believe Julia's version of what had happened, and yet it was strange that there had come no word from Celia.

Joining the rest of the amateur actors and actresses, Pat heard that Julia's performance, although still a long way short of Celia's, had improved. Everyone else had played up well, and the producer's flagging spirits had revived.

"We'll give a first-rate show to-morrow, after all," he said, "even if Celia can't show up. But I have a feeling she will. If that girl misses

the greatest chance of her life I'll never get over it."

"Nor will she," said Pat. "Does anyone know where her brother lives?"

No one knew. Celia's address where she had a room was known, but not her home address. But everyone was confident that there would be a letter from her in the morning.

That was what Pat herself hoped. It seemed too wild an idea that Julia could be holding Celia prisoner. Even if she had devised some cunning plan to steal Celia's chance, to play the important part herself under the keen eyes of Graham Mauvier, she would hardly go to such extreme lengths as to kidnap another girl.

But it was possible, if she had, as Pat thought, sent one false telegram, that she had sent another, luring Celia home. But, unless Julia could keep the girl at her home, Celia would surely return on the morrow!

Pat Lovell awaited the postman's arrival next morning with great eager-

Pat thought, puzzled, and cogitated. All of a sudden the inspiration jumped into her mind. But not until lunch-time could she put into operation the plan that had come to her mind.

At lunch-time Pat went to the theatre, where she found the stage manager busy supervising the construction of the modified fireplace to be used in Act I. He gave her the key to the dressing-room she had used the previous evening, and she took out the old lady's outfit which she had concealed there in a suitcase.

"Now for it!" Pat mused. "And I hope I'm as good at it as Julia was!"

Finding a white wig, Pat sat at the mirror and made herself up. It was the first time she had undertaken such a daring role as this, and she marvelled at her own nerve. But when at last she had finished her make-up she gained courage.

Provided no one peered at her too closely, she did look quite like an old-fashioned, eccentric woman—the double



"Give me that!" Julia exclaimed angrily. "That's mine!" But Pat stepped back. She had already seen enough of the telegram to realise that it was a fake.

ness. Her letters arrived just before she set out for the office; but, although she received three, there was none from Celia.

Reaching the office of the "Gazette," she telephoned the producer and other members of the amateur dramatic society. But no one had heard from Celia.

Growing more worried, Pat hit on a sudden idea. At her own expense she put a note in the "Personal" column of the paper, asking Celia to telephone her at once on an urgent matter.

Then, in the "write-up" she did of the forthcoming show at the Theatre Royal, she mentioned Celia's name specially, and also stressed the fact that the celebrated Graham Mauvier would be in the audience. If Celia saw the paper in time she would lose not a second in getting to the theatre.

But she might not see the paper until the evening, and if she were thirty miles away there would not be sufficient time for her to rush to the theatre.

Something else had to be done, and done quickly. A broadcast SOS might find her, but the circumstances did not justify it, as Pat knew. Yet what other way was there of finding her?

of the woman who had sent that telegram the previous evening.

And, remembering what the girl at the post office had said of the difficulty of seeing people clearly through the wire mesh that guarded the counter, Pat felt that she would certainly be mistaken for whoever had worn this disguise before.

Full of hope, she left the theatre and hailed a taxicab.

What Pat intended to find was the post office from which another telegram had been sent to Celia.

Celia had been kept out of the way. How? In a flash of inspiration, Pat had guessed a possible solution. But whether it was right or wrong only this experiment could prove.

She believed that Julia, knowing Celia's home address, knowing that she had gone there, had sent her a telegram, telling her that the play was postponed. That alone would keep Celia away, unless Julia's own version was correct.

Hopeful, excited, nervous, Pat made a round of the local post offices. People stared at her, and she feared that her disguise was not good enough. Yet, really, any such old woman would have

excited comment; and Pat heard no remark to the effect that she was a girl made up.

At every post office she said the same thing—that she had handed in a telegram yesterday and forgotten the address. Had they kept a copy?

Four she tried, but in none of them was she remembered by the clerk; and, of course, since she could not give the address, identification of the telegram was not easy.

It was two o'clock before she had finished. She had had no lunch, and she was due back at the office. One post office only remained, a small one a mile away, and Pat's taxi bill was high enough as it was.

"After office hours; my last chance," she decided.

And, rushing back to the theatre, she changed into her own clothes again.

When her busy day was over, the "Gazette," with the interview of Graham Mauvier on the front page, was on sale, and in an adjoining column was the paragraph about the local dramatic society and Celia's leading role in the play.

"If only she sees it!" Pat sighed.

But the "Gazette" would not reach a place thirty miles away for another hour at the earliest.

Frantically Pat rushed to the theatre and changed once more into her disguise; then, without much hope of success, she went into the last post office, a mere counter in a little general store.

As she walked through the shop she heard an assistant whisper to another, and what he said fired her.

"That funny old girl again!" was his remark.

Pat went to the post office counter, and quaked a little as the girl there eyed her, with a smile.

"You remember me, my dear?" croaked Pat.

"I do, yes. You brought a telegram in yesterday," said the girl.

Pat nearly forgot herself and smiled; but she nodded gravely. And in a quaking voice, that sounded realistically old, she explained that she had forgotten the address, and could she look at the telegram? The girl said she would try to find it, and disappeared for a few minutes.

When she returned she was carrying a slip of paper, which she pushed across the counter.

Pat looked at her, and, eyes gleaming, she noted the address. It was to Celia Rayne, Moor Farm, Fulwark Lessing, and the message ran:

"Play postponed one week. No hurry to return.—MORTIMER."

Mr. Mortimer, the producer, had been chosen as the sender, and Celia, receiving the telegram, would not question its validity.

Pat moved to the side counter, took a telegraph form, and wrote, in a shaky hand:

"Play will be produced to-night. Return essential. Mauvier will be watching from stalls. Telephone immediately.—MORTIMER."

Pat used the name "Mortimer" again, so that no questions should be asked. And the girl asked none. Having paid for the telegram, Pat left the post office with a light heart.

"There's a chance yet," she told herself. "If only she gets the telegram in time! Hurrah!"

But would Celia get that vital telegram in time? The success of the show depended on it!

IN THE LEADING ROLE!

JULIA CARTWRIGHT was nowhere to be found. In ten minutes the curtain would go up, but Julia could not be found anywhere in the Theatre Royal.

The last that had been seen of her was when she had taken a telephone call. Then she had gone—vanished! The producer was almost frantic, and Pat Lovell's assurance that Celia would show up seemed to give him no solace.

"We're sunk—utterly lost!" he groaned, almost tearing his hair. "We'll have to get in touch with Graham Mauvier and put him off."

Pat shook her head. "Impossible!" she said. "I tell you Celia will show up!"

"Why do you think that?" he demanded.

Pat had resolved to keep her secret about the telegrams until after the show. But the sudden disappearance of Julia had decided her that she must speak now. She told the producer everything, and he listened with a startled expression, almost with disbelief.

"Great Scott!" he gasped, when she had finished her recital. "Then—then Celia's brother may not be desperately ill? She thinks the play has been postponed. But—but she hasn't telephoned!"

Pat had to admit that. No call had come from Celia.

"But don't forget that Julia disappeared after a phone call came," she said grimly. "I was waiting for that call, too. But you called me away. It came. And my idea is that Julia took it. She knew that her game was up, and she hadn't the nerve to stay."

It was a probable explanation, but the agitated producer was now without a lead. There was no one who could take the part at a moment's notice.

"It's madness to go on!" he protested. "Madness!"

Down the corridor came a call boy. "Mr. Mortimer, wanted on the telephone!" he said.

The producer rushed off, and Pat followed him. As he took the call he beamed, and beckoned Pat, who stepped into the telephone-box with him.

"Here's Pat!" he said. "Hold on, Celia!"

"Celia!" cried Pat into the phone. "Pat! I've just seen the paper. I got the wire, and now I've got the paper. What ever has happened?" came Celia's musical voice. "First a wire, saying—"

"The play's on! Come quickly! Where are you?" interrupted Pat.

"On my way. Waiting for the connection at the junction. Take me another fifteen or twenty minutes," said Celia breathlessly. "The train's coming in now, I must rush—"

She rang off, and Pat turned to the producer, her eyes sparkling with excitement. Celia was on the way. If the show could be held up, all was well. But the producer was already shaking his head.

"The house is filling up," he said anxiously. "We can't keep an audience like this waiting. We daren't prejudice Graham Mauvier at the start, and I've heard he has arrived."

Pat clutched his arm.

"Wait! In the first scene, remember, the old lady says nothing. Just sits there. My goodness, I've seen it done often enough; let me go on! Let me sit there! And somehow, before the speaking part comes, I'll have to get off the stage and—if she's here—Celia will come on. Can it be done?"

The producer hesitated, and then nodded. It could be done.

"Yes, if you can carry it through," he said. "It can be done. I can wangle it. We'll arrange to fuse the lights as soon as she arrives. Such things can happen to the best shows."

A minute later Pat was being made up as the old lady. Then, far sooner than she wanted it to happen, she was on the stage, sitting by the fireside, knitting, waiting for the curtain to go up.

And she was glad she had nothing to say. Somewhere in the stalls—at which she dared not even look—sat the famous actor-manager, watching her. Pat, nervous, anxious, remembered how Celia had played the part, and tried to mimic her.

In front was a veritable sea of people—a packed house—and Pat was suffering from stage fright. She felt that she could not have uttered one line. She wondered how the others could manage to. Once one did blunder; but the other quickly covered it.

Pat quaked. She heard the lines drawing to a crisis. Now now—now the boy crossed to her, and Pat, hands on lap, closed her eyes and very gently eased her chin on to her chest.

"Pon my word, she has been asleep all the time!" he said.

Then he and the girl tiptoed to make their exit.

Pat was left alone on the stage—to wake up, to act, to speak before this packed house! Or else— She went cold; she shivered. And at that moment every light went out.

Pat found the use of her limbs and scrambled up. A hand took her arm and she was led from the stage, while the producer apologised to the audience and explained that the defect would be remedied in a minute.

Meanwhile, Pat felt her wig taken from her, her frock was slipped off, and the maid's given her. There was a rustling, and then Celia's voice:

"Well done, Pat!"

When the lights flashed on again there was Celia, as the old lady, in the chair. And, in her accustomed manner, she rose.

The play was saved.

"**MAGNIFICENT!**" said Mr. Graham Mauvier. He was in Celia's dressing-room, after the show, congratulating her.

Pat Lovell was there, every bit as happy as Celia.

"I'm so glad!" whispered Celia.

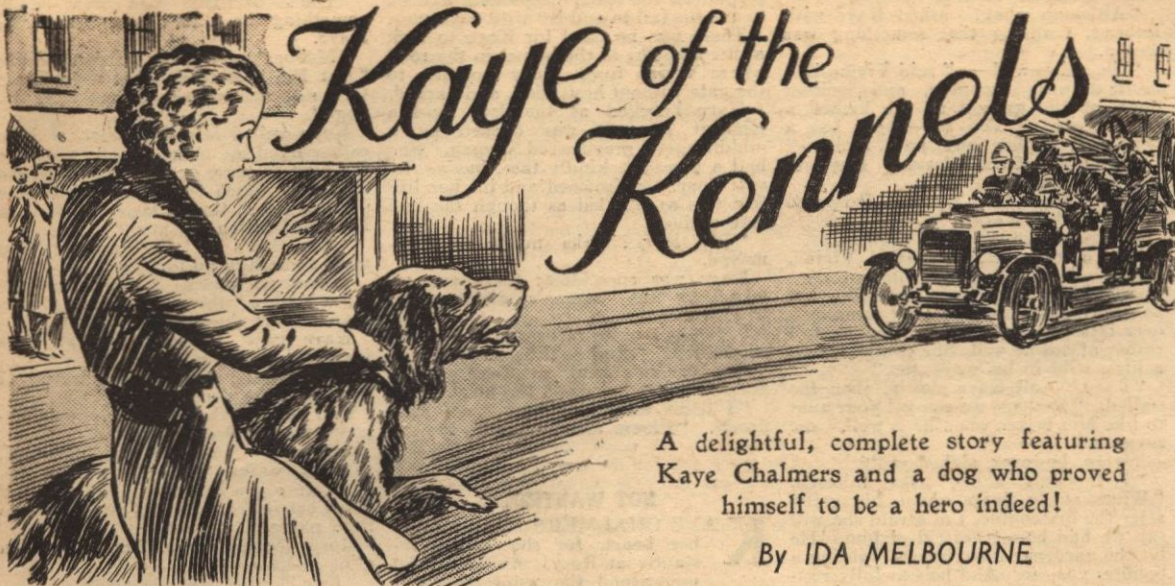
"At first, I thought you had stage fright. I could see the signs of it," said the famous actor-manager. "When you sat by the fireside. And I half expected the fusing of the lights to unnerve you completely. But after that—my word! What an actress!"

Then Pat laughed; Celia laughed, and they told him the truth. He laughed then, and congratulated not only Celia, but Pat, too, for her nerve in saving the show. But of her other efforts to save the show she said nothing; nor was anything said to the rest of the society. But Julia resigned next day, and Celia left to take a part in a new London play, with Graham Mauvier heading the cast.

Celia had won her spurs, but she never forgot the debt she owed Pat Lovell, whose quick-wittedness ensured her the great chance that had put her feet on the ladder of success.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

Don't miss the delightful Pat Lovell story that appears in next Friday's issue of the **GIRLS' CRYSTAL**. Written by Elizabeth Chester, it is an exciting and entertaining story that you will love.



A delightful, complete story featuring
Kaye Chalmers and a dog who proved
himself to be a hero indeed!

By IDA MELBOURNE

THE DOG WHO RAN INTO TROUBLE

"NOW be a good dog!" said Kaye Chalmers in her most soothing tone, as she tried to grip a black, smooth-coated retriever by the collar.

The retriever did not belong to Kaye; in fact she had never seen it before this afternoon, but as it was aimlessly wandering about the High Street, in danger of being run over, someone had to take charge of it. And Kaye, who always felt a load of responsibility on her shoulders where dogs were concerned, had caught up with it, hoping to find out where it lived.

Kaye urged him back to the safety of the pavement, and looked right and left for someone who had the appearance of looking for a dog. No one seemed to be calling or searching for one, however.

Brutus, Kaye's big St. Bernard, exchanged sniffs with the retriever, and Kaye bent to examine the brass plate on the stray's collar. But before she could even try to decipher the name and address engraved on it, there came the urgent clang of a fire-bell, and down the street came speeding the local fire-engine.

Kaye looked up with interest, so did Brutus, but the retriever was most interested of all. As the bell clanged again, he jumped forward, paused in the road, and barked.

"Here!" cried Kaye sharply.
"Hold that dog back!" snapped the policeman.

Kaye ran forward, but the retriever eluded her and raced on. Kaye's heart stood still, for the dog ran diagonally across the path of the engine. It seemed that only a miracle could save its life. With such a heavy load, and in a crowded street, the driver of the engine would hardly dare to swerve. And if he did not—

The bell clanged; someone shouted; a woman gave a sharp scream; and then the retriever swung sideways, barked, darted to get behind the engine, and was struck by some part of it.

With a squeal, he swung round, and rolled over and over.

Galvanized into fresh life, Kaye darted forward, and she was the first to reach him. Dropping to her knees, she

examined him anxiously, for he did not stir at all.

"He asked for it, and got it," said someone.

"Why didn't you keep him out of the way?"

"Is he badly hurt?"

Kaye paid no heed to anyone; she was thinking only of the luckless dog. Some people were deeply sympathetic, others were blaming Kaye and the dog. And in the midst of it all a policeman arrived on the scene.

Making a careful examination, Kaye decided that no bones were broken, and no serious damage had been done. He lived. But he was suffering from concussion—knocked out by a bang on the head.

"He'll be all right," she murmured to a sympathetic woman. "Just stunned."

But Kaye could not lift the heavy retriever alone, and lying in the roadway, he was blocking the traffic. The policeman, strong and competent, gave her a hand, and the motionless dog was stretched out on the pavement.

"A pity you didn't keep him back," said the policeman. "If that engine had swerved someone might have been killed. Dogs wandering at large on the highway are a menace. You ought to know better than to allow it."

Kaye reddened at the undeserved rebuke.

"I did my best," she said, "but he's not my dog. I saw him wandering about, and tried to hold him."

The policeman's manner changed. He became more amiable.

"I see. That alters it," he said.

At that moment a schoolgirl pushed her way through the crowd. She was white and trembling, and she gave a gasp of horror as she saw the retriever.

"Oh, it's Rory!" she cried. "It's—"

Her voice choked, and the tears welled into her eyes.

Kaye, realising that this was the injured dog's owner, put a comforting arm around her.

"Steady," she whispered. "He's not seriously hurt."

A little colour returned to the girl's white cheeks.

"Thank—thank goodness," she gulped, and held up the broken lead she was carrying. "He—he gave me the slip. Oh, poor Rory! He's such a lovely rascal. I—I suppose it was the fire-engine again."

"Again?" exclaimed Kaye.

"Again!" said the policeman, more severely. "You'd better keep him in order. A dog that runs in front of fire-engines is dangerous. I'd better have your name and address."

Kaye saw the girl bite her lip; a deep anxiety showed itself on her face. She was clearly afraid of the policeman and his official-looking notebook.

"Don't worry," Kaye murmured. "It won't mean a fine."

"Not if it doesn't happen again," said the policeman.

And then he turned to move away the crowd that was gathering in size. Kaye, anxious to get the dog somewhere quiet, asked the girl to run down to the next side-street, and look for a small blue saloon car. She gave her the number to make certain that she found the right one. It was Kaye's grandfather's car, and in all probability, having by this time changed his library book, he would be waiting in it for her.

"Will you explain what has happened, and ask my grandfather to come here?" said Kaye.

The girl took the message, found the car, and returned with it in a few minutes' time. Meanwhile, the policeman took a few notes, and finally, when the car arrived, helped to lift the unconscious dog into it.

Kaye and the girl, whose name was Vivian Farnes, sat in the back holding him, while Kaye's grandfather drove slowly back to the kennels. He was a retired veterinary surgeon, so knew exactly what to do.

At the kennels, Rory was put into a comfortable, darkened kennel, while Kaye and her grandfather gave him a more careful examination. At the end of it they were able to assure the girl that he was not badly hurt, and would be restored to full health in a few days' time.

"Oh dear, I'm so glad!" sighed Vivian. "I've only had him a month, but he's a darling!"

"Only a month?" exclaimed Kaye, surprised.

"That's all. He was a stray, and we took him in," the girl explained. "Auntie told the police, and they said that if he wasn't claimed, we could keep him. No one did claim him, so now he's ours. When I found him he seemed to take to me, and aunt was awfully decent about him, although she—"

She broke off, looking worried. "Although what?" asked Kaye with interest, realising that something was wrong.

"Oh, only—well—" said Vivian in a hesitant way, frowning, and looking down at the ground as she kicked a small stone. "You see—aunt has a little dog of her own now, and—" She did not finish, leaving Kaye to guess the rest.

"And she doesn't like Rory so much?" asked Kaye.

The girl hesitated for a moment. "In a way, yes," admitted Vivian. "Rory's big, and aunt's little terrier worries him. Rory doesn't bite him, but he growls sometimes. I don't think he'd ever bite him, you know. But aunt's rather afraid he will. She thinks Rory's a little wild in his ways, too."

"I see," said Kaye slowly, then she smiled. "Perhaps we can get your aunt to like him better when he is well," she suggested.

Vivian, however, sighed sadly. "I—I don't know," she faltered. "When aunt hears about his going after the fire-engine, I'm afraid she will say we had better get rid of him. He bit the gardener when he was lighting a bonfire, you see. And he's awfully restless at night, too. I keep saying he will settle down with us soon, but—"

She broke off and Kaye slipped a consoling arm about her shoulders.

"He'll win your aunt round," she said. "Don't worry."

But when Vivian had gone, Kaye looked sad and thoughtful herself. She did not like to think of Rory being unhappy in his new home, and wondered where he had been before, and how he had strayed.

An hour later Rory came round enough to take an interest in things, and he seemed to understand that Kaye was a kind friend doing her best for him.

"You keep quiet, chappie," she urged him. "And when you are feeling really better, we'll have a nice chat."

Rory thumped his tail, and then, still exhausted and weak, lay flat again in the darkened kennel. He was so well-groomed and well-fed, that Kaye knew that materially, at any rate, he had had a good home; and Vivian certainly loved him.

Rory was a strong dog, and his recovery was rapid. The next day he was quite lively, although Kaye kept him quiet; and on the third day he was well enough to go for walks and to eat heartily.

"Nice dog, that," commented Kaye's grandfather. "I can't imagine anyone turning him adrift, and you'd think he'd be too intelligent to stray without finding his way back."

That was Kaye's opinion, and she wondered how he had managed to get himself lost. But he showed no sign at all of wanting to get out of the kennels, and was, in fact, perfectly happy there.

There could not have been a quieter dog, and Kaye saw no tendency in him to bite or snap—not even at a tramp they met in the lane.

"Must have been the gardener's fault," she told herself; and determined to put that view to Vivian's aunt.

As Rory was better, the next day Kaye decided to give Vivian a surprise by taking her pet home.

Vivian's home was a mile and a half away from the kennels, just a pleasant walk; so Kaye took Rory there on the lead.

When a short distance from his temporary home he seemed to realise what was happening, and Kaye watched him to see how he took it. With relief, she noticed that he was pleased. He started

to pull on the lead; he panted, and he swung his tail to and fro with eagerness.

There was no need for Kaye to look at the numbers of the houses in the road where Vivian lived; Rory took her to the gate without hesitation, and barked.

Kaye knocked at the door, and a moment later it was opened by a middle-aged, grey-haired woman. She had a pleasant, kindly face, but as she saw Rory, she frowned and bit her lip. She was as startled as though she had seen a ghost.

"Oh, Rory!" she murmured, dismayed.

Kaye was speechless; there was no mistaking the woman's dismay—and what it meant.

"He—he's quite recovered now," she murmured. "And he'll be no trouble."

But Vivian's aunt, as Kaye rightly guessed her to be, shook her head.

"I don't want him back," she said firmly. "Please take him away!"

NOT WANTED!

KAYE CHALMERS felt a stab at her heart, for she looked instantly at Rory. As though he understood the words, his tail dropped, and his ears went back; while into his gentle eyes there came a sad, worried look.

He was not wanted, and he knew it.

"Oh, you don't mean that!" protested Kaye, deeply dismayed. "Oh, poor Rory! And Vivian is devoted to him."

Vivian's aunt drew up, as though she intended to be firm with herself, and to keep to her decision.

"Yes, yes; I know," she murmured. "And I wish we had never taken him in, in the first place. I did it out of kindness, but I was silly. He is too old a dog to find a new home—at least, with us," she added. "Didn't Vivian give you my message?"

"What message?" Kaye frowned.

"To say what I wanted you to find him a new home."

"I'm afraid she didn't," confessed Kaye.

"Then it was very naughty of her," said the aunt. "Very naughty indeed, and I shall be cross with her. The house is much more peaceful without Rory. And that he should come back to-day, of all days, is most unfortunate, for the gardener is here. He is a good man at his work, and I had quite a job persuading him to stay after Rory bit him."

She made to close the door, and Kaye tightened her grip on Rory's lead.

"Very well," she said quietly. "I'll do my best to find another home for him."

She turned away, then, hearing the whir of a lawn-mower at the back of the house, she suddenly determined to interview the gardener.

Rory went willingly enough down the path that led to the back garden of the small house. Nor did he give any sign of disapproval when he saw the jobbing gardener, whose weekly half-day this was. But the man, an elderly but genial countryman, frowned at him.

"None of your nonsense, now," he reproved.

But Rory gave no snarl, nor other sign that he disliked the man, as Kaye took care to notice. And she could usually tell, long before other people could, when an animal was confronting someone of whom it did not approve.

"I heard he once bit you," said Kaye, coming straight to the point.

"He did. Only once, to be fair," the man said. "But once is enough. I don't suppose he meant any harm, but he tore my trousers."

"Um! Perhaps you were doing something he didn't like," hazarded Kaye.

"Mebbe," agreed the gardener dryly. "But I'm here to do what the mistress tells me, not to take orders from the dog!"

Kaye smiled faintly at that, and she rather liked the man. He did not seem the kind to tease or hit out or kick out at a dog, which she had guessed when she had heard that a tame dog such as Rory had bitten the man.

"Yes, that's so," she agreed. "But what made him go for you?"

"Goodness knows. I was only lighting a bonfire," the man replied. "Perhaps he's frightened of fire."

Kaye gave a start, and an idea jumped into her mind.

"Frightened of fire. My word! I wonder!" she exclaimed.

And bidding the gardener good-afternoon, she led Rory along.

"Rory, I'm just guessing," she said, as they walked back to the kennels, "but were you in a fire? Did your old home catch fire, and did you run from it in panic?"

Rory looked up at her, a sudden glint in his eyes.

"Fire!" said Kaye sharply.

Rory's eyes brightened. There came a look of keenness to his face that she had not seen there before. He was suddenly alert, like a gun dog in action.

"Why, you queer thing!" murmured Kaye, puzzled. "You know the word, and—"

She got no farther, for at that moment she saw a policeman cycling towards her along the road. Reaching her, he dismounted and saluted, for he was the one who had taken notes of Rory's accident.

"Good-afternoon, miss," he said. "I was just calling on this dog's owner."

Kaye smiled wryly.

"He hasn't an owner. He has been disowned," she said.

"Disowned!" the policeman exclaimed sharply. "That's awkward—very awkward, because—well," he added, with a slight grimace. "I was coming to tell the owner that unless the dog is kept under proper control we shall have to take action. The fire captain has lodged a complaint. On two occasions the dog has chased the engine, and once he was lurking round the station."

"Oh!" murmured Kaye. "Then—"

"He'll have to be kept under control. If the owner disowns him, there's only one thing to do," added the policeman.

Kaye knew what that was. Rory's days were numbered, unless—

"Oh, no! We can't let that happen," she exclaimed. "Poor Rory! I'm sure somewhere he has a home, that—"

From the distance came the clang of a fire-engine bell, and Rory stiffened. He barked. His ears went up, and his eyes became bright with eagerness, just as they had done at the mention of the word "fire."

"There! His old enemy, eh? If the engine were near, he'd chase it!" exclaimed the policeman sharply.

And Rory was certainly straining at the lead. It took all Kaye's strength to hold him.

"Must be a kink he's got," frowned the policeman. "Keep him back!"

But Kaye suddenly gave the dog his head. Instead of trying to hold him back, she moved forward with him.

"Where are you going?" the policeman asked.

"To the fire," Kaye retorted. "That's where he wants to go, and that's where we're going!"

For Kaye, realising that fires and fire-engines really mattered to Rory, made

up her mind to solve the mystery, to find out why.

RORY SURPRISES THE FIREMEN

WITH Rory pulling hard, Kaye had to keep going at a trot all the way to the house, half a mile away, where fire had broken out. The engine was in the roadway, and a small crowd had gathered. But Rory pushed his way determinedly through, tugging Kaye with him.

He looked—he smelt the smoke and looked again as he saw the escape run up the front of the house.

A fireman saw him, and turned angrily upon Kaye.

"Keep him back!" he shouted. "Do you think we haven't enough to do without keeping a dog from biting us?"

But Kaye knew that Rory did not mean to bite; for an idea had come into her mind, a solution of this riddle.

"He wants to help!" she protested. The fireman did not heed, for the man at the top of the ladder had been beaten back by smoke and flames. The fire was intense, and already a woman, overcome by fumes had been brought out, followed by a half-hysterical servant-girl.

"Anyone else there?" called the brigade captain.

"No one—all out!" gasped the girl.

Rory barked, looked up at Kaye eagerly, and strained at the lead, making it quite clear that he wanted to be allowed his liberty—wanted to be allowed to go into the blazing house.

"You queer fellow!" murmured Kaye. "What is it? Are you a fireman's dog—is that it?"

That was the solution that Kaye had guessed, the explanation of Rory's chasing the engine, and his excitement when the gardener had lit a bonfire. Rory had not bitten the man in anger, but had tried to save him. He had torn the man's trousers in trying to pull him from the blaze. And now he wanted to go into the blazing house.

Kaye put her hand to the swivel of the lead, tempted to set him free; but she looked up as there came a startled cry from a woman neighbour.

"Sonnie—Sonnie! My boy—he was in the house! Is he out?" she cried, in hysterical panic. "Where is Mrs. Jordan?"

But the woman who lived in the house was unconscious, and she and the maid in the ambulance were being hurried away. The woman neighbour, frantic, was sure that her small boy, whom she had sent to the house with a message, was still in there. He had not returned, and he was not anywhere to be seen now.

Roaring flames licked up the side of the house and crackled through the roof. Smoke belched out in black clouds. Nevertheless, despite the obvious danger, a fireman, wearing a mask, entered the building. He returned a few minutes later, shaking his head. It seemed that, after all, the missing boy was not there.

Impulsively Kaye released Rory, and like a shot from a gun he charged forward and plunged through the back door.

Kaye made to follow, but a fireman caught her by the arm.

"No, you don't! If you go in there someone else will have to risk his life saving you! There's nothing to go in for. Everyone is out."

"Except the dog," said Kaye.

"He took the risk. If he has any sense he will come out. He can't get

beyond the kitchen. The door leading to the rest of the house is closed."

Kaye tore her arm free, and, dodging him, rushed through the smoke.

"Rory!" she called.

Rory was pawing at a door in the kitchen, and whining. But before Kaye could reach him, the fireman had hold of her again.

"That's the larder!" he shouted. "The dog's after food!"

He pulled Kaye out through the doorway, and another fireman, stepping forward, dragged her by the arms.

"Don't let her go! She's as crazy as the dog!" said the first man.

He rushed back into the house and caught at Rory's collar.

Snarling, Rory tugged himself free and snapped. But the fireman did not intend to leave him there, and made another attempt to drag him out.

Once again Rory snapped. So the fireman, thinking that he was after meat in the larder, seized the knob of the door and pulled it. But the door was locked.

"Hey, Bill!" he yelled. "Give me a hand!"

"Club him if he won't come," retorted the other man, pushing Kaye away, "or that dog will be the death of someone!"

Kaye ran with him to Rory, taking the dog by the collar.

"Drag him out! It's only the larder, and the door's locked!" said the first fireman.

Kaye looked at the door, and saw that the key was not there. She peeped at the keyhole, and then pressed her face against the panels, listening.

Next moment she wheeled agitatedly upon the fireman.

"An axe—quick! There's someone in there! Quick!" she cried urgently.

The fireman hesitated for a moment, and Kaye, impatient, "snatched" at the axe which the nearer one held and drove it at the door panel. Three mighty blows split the wood, and then, levering the axe, she tore a piece out.

Kaye stared through into the larder, and gasped aloud.

Crouched on the floor beside an overturned chair and a smashed jam-jar was a small boy, motionless, but moaning.

"Look!" she gasped, coughing in the thickening pall of smoke.

The firemen looked, and then burst the panels enough to enable them to turn the key, which was on the inside of the lock.

Kaye, half-suffocated, staggered out, following Rory, who tugged the hem of her frock to guide her, for her smoke-filled eyes were blinded.

The fire captain was outside, and he took her arm.

"You crazy girl!" he began, only to break off as he saw one of the firemen carrying the unconscious boy.

"Sonnie!" cried the distracted neighbour.

But Kaye did not witness the final scene; for five minutes everything was a blank to her. When she recovered she was in an ambulance with Rory, the boy, and the mother.

RORY'S photograph was in every paper the next morning, and the full story of the small boy who had locked himself in the larder to taste jam was told. He had fallen, bumped his head, and so had known nothing of the fire. It was only a minor form of concussion he suffered from, so his recovery was assured. Kaye, of course, recovered very quickly, and Rory was none the worse for his brave rescue of the boy.

No one denied that but for Rory the boy would have died in the fire. Rory was a hero, and at the kennels he held a reception of reporters and Press photographers who went there to get his story.

But there was someone else who arrived there also—someone who had seen his photograph in the paper and had recognised him—a man who usually wore a fireman's uniform.

"Pal!" he shouted. "After all these months—"

Rory rushed at him in frenzied delight, barking and whining.

Kaye was the first to hear the story, which duly appeared in all the papers. Brave Pal, the fireman's dog, went with his master whenever there was a fire, and his sagacity and scent already had saved a dozen lives. Then had come a fire in which he had fallen through a blazing staircase. Dazed, he had roamed away. His scent and memory momentarily gone, he had wandered during the weeks that followed some seventy miles from home. What had happened between then and Vivian finding him could only be surmised. But now there was no need to worry. Rory—otherwise Pal—had found his beloved master again!

Vivian came round to see Kaye, and heard the full story. Naturally she was disappointed to hear that she had indeed lost Rory—but glad he had been so happy to find his own master again.

And as she said, she was already growing fonder of her aunt's little terrier.

So Kaye realised that now two dogs were completely happy.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

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Her Unknown Enemy at School

By GAIL WESTERN

THE GIRL IN THE TOWER

OLIVE FRENCH, Fourth Form captain of St. Kit's School, and Letty Johnson, her chum, had been helping Jess Grant, a new-comer to the Fourth, to unmask a mysterious enemy at the school who was trying to get Jess expelled.

They knew that in the village lived a girl who was Jess' very double, and who was helping the unknown enemy.

Thanks to Jess' enemy, Jess and Olive fell into disfavour, and, to save Olive from losing her captaincy, Jess ran away from school.

Following up a clue they had found, Olive and Letty went to a large house called Twin Towers. But when they reached it they stopped in amazement.

For on the doorstep stood one of the Sixth Formers, Billie Carlton. And Billie Carlton was one of the girls they half-suspected of being Jess' enemy.

OLIVE and Letty exchanged startled glances. The same thought was in both their minds. Was Billie Carlton Jess' unknown enemy?

Her behaviour had certainly been suspicious. The persistent way she had clung to them during the walk from St. Kit's, and her eagerness to know where they were going, was surprising, to say the least.

And now the prefect was actually calling at Twin Towers—the house their missing chum had so frantically urged them to visit!

Screened by the bushes, the two Fourth Formers peered up the drive. They saw the door open and a grey-haired, dour-looking butler appear. Billie Carlton had a few words with him, then she handed him a letter, and with a nod, turned away.

What did that letter contain? Was it just an innocent missive addressed to Mrs. Malvering—or could it be connected with Jess Grant's alarming disappearance?

Olive and Letty got no time to speculate, for already the prefect was walking back down the drive towards them.

Olive plucked at her fat chum's sleeve.

"She mustn't see us," she whispered. "Quick—out of sight!"

And she pulled her among the bushes. There they both crouched down. Un-suspectingly Billie Carlton strode by,

and a moment later they heard the gate close behind her.

Letty rubbed a plump cheek with a perplexed hand.

"What's it mean, old scout?" she asked. "Is Billie the innocent she's always made herself out to be, or is she the wretch we're looking for? Is she Jess' giddy enemy?"

Olive shook her head. She did not know what to say, what to think. Although the prefect had been on their list of suspects, until now both she and her chum had been certain that their quarry was Winifred Butler, the surly Fifth Former.

But could it be that they had been mistaken?

Olive shook her head in bafflement, and a weary sigh escaped her lips. Oh, if only they could discover the truth! If only they could clear up all this strange mystery! Then abruptly her lips grew resolute.

"Billie Carlton can wait," she said. "Our first job is to discover what that message Jess scratched on the wall meant."

Letty nodded eagerly. She was as impatient as the Form captain to follow up that clue. The message had been incomplete; only too obviously, Jess had had no time to finish it. It had simply stated: "Twin Towers—go—" And there it had come to an abrupt end.

"But surely Mrs. Malvering can't be in the plot!" the fat girl murmured. "I've never met her, but by all accounts she's an aristocratic old dame—simply rolling in cash. How could she be linked with Jess?"

"It seems to me," Olive said slowly, "that the only thing we can do is to sneak around and keep our eyes open. I don't know what to look for, but—"

Olive and Letty were certain they had seen Jess Grant waving from the barred room of the West Tower. Yet when they went to investigate, they found the room deserted—and no trace of their missing chum!

She broke off, for suddenly Letty had grabbed her excitedly by the arm.

"Look! Oh, my hat!" gasped the fat girl, pointing with an agitated finger. "Look up there—at the west tower!"

Startled, Olive did so, and abruptly she caught in her breath. For at the barred window in the tower had appeared a girlish figure. The distance was too great for the Fourth Formers to identify the girl, but they could see that she was dressed in school clothes. And she seemed to be shouting and waving!

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Olive. "Suppose it's Jess! Suppose she has been taken a prisoner!"

Instantly the reason for that frantic appeal they had seen scratched on the wall of the secret tunnel would be explained. Explained, also, would be the reason why their missing chum had vanished so completely, without the slightest trace.

Impulsively Olive waved back, then together she and Letty went running up the drive. Beside the grey-stoned house they pulled up, staring eagerly at the nearest tower that rose, like some huge chimney, above the rooftops. But the window was empty now. There was no sign of that dim-seen figure.

Then suddenly Letty gave a startled gasp as she saw her chum march boldly up to the front porch.

"You've—you're never going to knock!" she exclaimed.

"I certainly am!" was the grim reply. "It can't do any harm to make inquiries."

Seizing the massive knocker, Olive beat a tattoo on the door, then, as she waited for her summons to be answered, she glanced through the window beside the porch.

She found herself staring into a pleasantly furnished sitting-room. There was nothing particularly striking about it, and Olive was about to turn away, when suddenly a framed cabinet photograph, standing on a bureau by the door, caught her attention. An amazed cry escaped her lips, and excitedly she beckoned.

"Letty, come here!" she urged. The fat girl crossed to the window, then her own jaw dropped as she saw what it was that the Form captain was pointing at.

"Why, it's a photo of Jess!" she cried. "But—but what can Jess' picture

be doing here, at Twin Towers? I'm certain Jess has never heard of Mrs. Malvering, so why—"

She broke off, and they both turned hurriedly, for the door had opened, and standing there was the grey-haired, dour-looking butler, to whom, a few minutes previously, Billie Carlton had handed her note.

The butler's eyes were narrowed in a frown, and it was almost suspiciously that he surveyed the two schoolgirls.

"Well?" he asked brusquely.

Olive hardly knew what to say, but she hid her embarrassment and tried to appear casual.

"We have called to see Jess Grant," she announced.

"Jess Grant?"

The man gave a start, and for a moment a look of fear seemed to creep into his eyes, but he quickly recovered from his surprise and shook his head.

"I think there must be some mistake, miss," he said. "No one of that name lives here. Jess Grant?" he repeated the name reflectively. "No, miss, she's never been in this house."

Olive bit her lip, but Letty, ever impulsive, gave an irate snort.

"Rats!" she cried. "You're telling fibs. She's here now. Why, we saw her ourselves—up at that window!"

And she pointed up to the west tower. The butler frowned.

"I am afraid there's some mistake," he repeated again. "The young lady you saw must have been Mrs. Malvering's niece. Her private sitting-room is situated in the tower."

"But—" began Letty; then broke off, nonplussed. Then, remembering the photograph she and Olive had seen, she gave a triumphant cry. "If you've never heard of Jess Grant," she shouted, "then what's her picture doing in the sitting-room?"

"P-p-picture?"

There could be no mistaking the man's agitation now. Letty gave an excited nod.

"Yes, her picture," she said again; and before he could stop her she had dashed past him and thrown open the door on the right. Olive quickly joined her, and accusingly they pointed towards the bureau.

"That one over there we mean," said the Form captain.

"That, miss? But that's a photograph of Mrs. Malvering's niece," declared the butler, apparently bewildered. As he spoke he walked forward, picked up the frame, and turned it round.

The Fourth Formers took one look at it, then they gasped. For although the photograph was that of a young girl it bore no resemblance at all to their missing chum!

STILL MORE BAFFLING

LETTY stared in blank amazement, but Olive, quicker-witted than her chum, instantly realised what had happened.

"That's not the photo that was standing on the bureau a moment or two ago!" she snapped. "Someone's substituted another. The one we saw was of Jess Grant, I tell you."

The butler seemed to lose patience.

"I tell you I have never heard of anyone of that name," he declared. "The only girl who lives here is Mrs. Malvering's niece. And I have something better to do than to stay here arguing with you. Please get about your business. If you don't I shall be obliged to telephone for the police."

A little frightened by his manner, Letty backed uneasily; but Olive still stood her ground.

"I think we had better have a word with Mrs. Malvering herself," she said.

"That you won't. In fact, you can't. Mrs. Malvering has been away and she isn't expected home until this evening."

There was a suggestion of triumph in the butler's voice, and the chums' suspicions deepened. They were certain that he had something to hide. But, in face of his denials, what could they do?

It was Olive who brought the angry scene to an end by plucking at Letty's sleeve.

"Come on, Letty!" she said. "It's no good staying here, arguing. But"—in grim warning her gaze went to the scowling butler—"don't think you're going to get away with this. We're far from satisfied, and when Mrs. Malvering's back we'll call again."

"You bet we will," said the fat girl. The butler glared, but he made no comment, and as they regained the porch steps he slammed the door on them. Silently they made their way back down the drive. It was not until they had reached the road that Letty clutched at her chum's arm and spoke.

"What are we going to do, old scout?" she asked. "I don't believe a word that Johnny told us. I'm positive Jess is somewhere in that house!"

Olive gave a heavy sigh.

"I feel the same," she admitted, "but we can hardly break in and search, can we?"

"Perhaps not, but we can inform the police!" snapped Letty.

"The police?" Olive looked horrified. "Great Scott, no! That's the last thing we can do, Letty. For one thing, don't forget everyone thinks Jess stole the sports club funds! Why, if the police found her they'd arrest her! Besides, they'd never believe anyone was locked up in Mrs. Malvering's house. She's a J.P. and no end of a celebrity!"

The fat girl threw out her arms in an exasperated gesture.

"But something must be done!" she gasped. "If we're right—if Jess really is a prisoner—we can't leave her locked up!"

Comfortingly Olive put her arm around her chum's shoulders and she smiled, though there was a fierce glint in her eyes.

"We certainly can't," she agreed. "What's more, we're not going to. But

we've both got to be patient. It would be disastrous to try to raise the alarm. No, we've got to tackle this business ourselves—to-night!"

"To-night?" Letty echoed in surprise. "Yes. You remember that chart we found? It showed that one of the secret passages under Peewit Isle connected up with a house in the district. Well, that house is Twin Towers!"

"Twin Towers? But—but how do you know?"

"Because the house on the chart had two towers, that's why. Anyway, I mean to put my theory to the test. After lights-out to-night we've got to steal out and do a bit of exploring, and if we do manage to get into Twin Towers—"

Olive paused, and Letty's worried look vanished. She gave an excited whoop.

"Oh, good egg!" she cried. "You certainly are full of brain-waves, old scout! I see what you mean. Once we get into Twin Towers we can make our way up into the turret and release Jess!"

"That's it," agreed Olive.

Excitedly discussing their plan, they made their way back to St. Kit's. The first person they saw as they turned through the imposing school gateway was Billie Carlton, the prefect they had seen calling at Mrs. Malvering's residence.

Apparently ignorant of their suspicions against her, the Sixth Former greeted them with her usual pleasant smile.

"Hallo, so you're back!" she said. "Hope you caught the post."

"Post?" said Olive; and then, as she remembered the excuse they had given in order to get rid of the persistent prefect, she nodded. "Oh, rather! But where did you disappear to?" she asked. "We quite expected to run into you again."

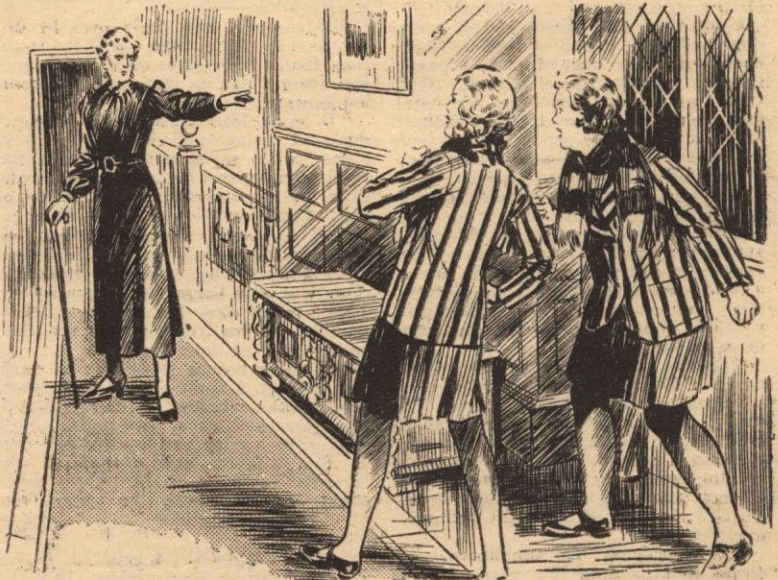
Billie Carlton laughed.

"Oh, I didn't stay out long! I only went to deliver a message for someone."

"A—a message?"

In astonishment, Olive and Letty stared. Was the prefect's innocence assumed, or was she trying to deceive them?"

"Yes, Lorna Meredith had a note she wanted delivered; and, as she couldn't



Olive and Letty stood still, filled with horror. Then the owner of Twin Towers spoke. "Who are you?" she demanded. "And how did you find your way here?"

get to Twin Towers herself—"Billie broke off, and surveyed them in bewilderment. "Why, what ever's the matter?" she demanded.

"Nun-nun-nothing!" stutted Letty.

"It's—it's only that we didn't think Lorna knew Mrs. Malvering," put in Olive hastily. "You see—"

Fortunately, there was no need to say more, for at that moment Miss Charters, the Fourth Form mistress, appeared on the entrance steps; and she beckoned as she caught sight of the prefect.

"Billie," she called, "can you spare a minute or two, please?"

The Sixth Former hurried across the quad, and, left alone, Olive and Letty exchanged startled, wondering glances.

Had they, after all, misjudged Billie Carlton? Had her call at Twin Towers really been of an innocent nature?

"But if she was taking a note for Lorna," Letty gasped, horror-stricken, "then that suggests—" She shook her head wildly. "No, I can't believe that, old scout! I can't believe anything mean about Lorna!"

Olive sighed. She did not know what to think. No sooner did they think they were on the point of unmasking Jess' unknown enemy than the mystery took another baffling, unexpected twist. First of all, they had suspected Stephanie Warner, then Winifred Butler, then Billie Carlton, and now—

"Oh, it's worse than a Chinese puzzle!" declared the Form captain. "But we'll solve it yet, Letty! As for Jess—well, we'll discover the truth about her this very night!"

Having once made up their minds what to do, they were impatient to carry out their plan. Usually half-holidays seemed to fly by on golden wings, but to-day time appeared to stand still. An eternity passed before roll-call, but at long last the Fourth Formers' bed-time arrived.

Thanks to Miss Bramleigh having relaxed her recently imposed restriction, the girls retired without supervision. The result was, it would be easy for Olive and Letty to steal downstairs without anyone being the wiser.

Once the rest of the Form had fallen asleep, they threw back the blankets, dressed, then on tiptoe made their way down to the store-room on the ground floor.

Here they had discovered a secret door in the old panelling. Their hearts thumping, they opened it and passed through into the tunnel beyond. With Olive, an electric torch in her hand, leading the way, they hurried on until they reached the spot where side passages radiated in every direction.

Anxiously they peered about them. Did one of those underground passages lead to Twin Towers?

On a previous occasion they had explored several of them, so they tried one of the others at random. It proved a cul-de-sac. Disappointed, they groped their way along another. Again only a blank, moss-covered wall rewarded them at the end.

"There's only one more," Letty muttered. "If that also proves a flop—"

"But it won't!" cut in Olive. "It can't! I'm positive that house marked on the chart was Twin Towers!"

Again they set off, their footsteps echoing eerily, icy drops of water from the roof pattering down on their heads. On and on, and then the fat girl gave a rueful cry.

"Another dud!" she announced. "It comes to an end a few yards farther on— No, by golly!" Her eyes lit up and, in wild excitement, she plunged forward. "There's a door here!" she

cried. "Oh, my giddy aunt, we've struck lucky at last, old scout!"

Olive was nearly as excited as Letty, and her fingers trembled as she seized the ancient iron latch, lifted it, and pressed. Creaking slightly, the door swung open, and the chums hardly dared breathe as they looked about them in the torchlight. It was to find themselves standing on the threshold of what appeared to be a library. In triumph, they stared at each other.

"Hurrah!" exclaimed Letty.

"I knew it!" added Olive in a thrilled whisper. "This must be Twin Towers. But watch your step, Letty! No one must guess we're here. If anyone found us—"

She broke off as the fat girl, who had been examining the door, plucked at her sleeve.

"Golly, just look at this!" Letty urged. "This door's really a picture. When it's closed there's no sign of it."

As she spoke, she gave a practical demonstration, and Olive's eyes opened wide as she found herself confronted, not by an ordinary door, but by a life-sized oil painting of an English Cavalier, set in a massive gilt frame. So cunningly was the secret door arranged that now there was not the slightest trace of its existence.

"But—but how do you open it from this side?" the Form captain asked.

She ran her hand over the frame, and suddenly felt a small part of the ornamental carving give way beneath the pressure of her fingers. There was an almost inaudible click, and the big picture swung away from the wall.

Letty gave an approving nod.

"Good for you, old scout!" she said. "But come on! Let's get busy!"

Their hearts in their mouths, they stole across to the door, opened it, and looked out.

The library was evidently on the first floor, for at both ends of the long corridor outside were staircases, one leading up, the other down. The electric light down in the hall was on, showing that at least some of the occupants of the house were still up.

"Not a sound!" warned Olive; and nervously she led the way along the corridor and up the winding staircase. By looking through a window there, she got her bearings. "We're on the west side of the house," she announced in a whisper, "so—"

She stopped, and their eyes lit up; for, as they reached the top of the steps, they found themselves on a small landing, from which an iron spiral staircase led upward.

"It must lead right to the tower," declared Letty, and her cheeks were aglow with satisfaction. "Golly, but we'll soon prove whether that old fraud of a butler was telling crammers or not! Come on!"

And, forgetting the need for caution, she went racing up the iron staircase. More quietly, Olive followed. Suddenly their way was barred by a small door. They tried the handle, and their pent-up nerves relaxed, for the door swung open at their touch.

The room before them was in darkness, though a shaft of moonlight came through the window, revealing that it was furnished as a bed-room. Both girls gave a gasp as they saw the bars at the window and recognised the curtains. There could be no doubt about it. This was the room from which had come those frantic beckonings.

"Jess!" called Olive softly. "Jess!"

There was no response, so, thinking that their chum might be asleep, the Form captain tiptoed to the bed and stretched down an eager hand.

"Jess," she called again, then stopped, the blood draining from her cheeks. In dismay, she wheeled round and stared at Letty. "There's no one here!" she announced.

"No—no one here!" The fat girl's consternation matched her own. "But what can have become of her? What—"

She broke off as Olive switched on the light and swiftly looked about them. The room, though furnished, showed no signs of having recently been occupied. The dressing-table was bare. The cupboards were empty. There was not even a cake of soap in the holder on the washstand.

"D'you think we've mistaken the room, after all?" asked Letty after a grim silence.

Olive shook her head.

"No, this is the right room, I'm positive of that," she replied. "They must have taken Jess away, if it was her we saw. Perhaps that butler got scared. Perhaps he thought we might come back and see Mrs. Malvering."

As she spoke her gaze roved around the room and abruptly she dropped to one knee, her attention attracted by something under the bed that winked in the light. It was part of a metal brooch.

"Look at this!" she urged.

Letty did so, then she caught her breath.

"Why, it—it looks like that Seagull brooch Jess was so fond of," she gasped. "It's difficult to be certain, for there's only a bit of it there. But it certainly looks like it."

Olive's lips set fiercely.

"It's hers right enough," she said. "And that proves it, Letty. Jess was locked up here. The question is: where is she now? They can't have taken her far. Come on!"

Resolutely she made for the door. Rather nervously Letty followed. She was as anxious as the Form captain to trace their missing chum, but suddenly she realised how awkward their position was. They could prove nothing and Mrs. Malvering, the owner of the house, was a rich, well-known woman. It seemed incredible to suppose that she had had any hand in this kidnapping.

"Su-su-suppose we're discovered?" stammered the fat girl.

Olive's own heart missed a beat at the thought, but she tried to appear calm and unconcerned.

"We'll have to chance that," she said, and led the way back down the spiral staircase.

Once more on the first-floor corridor they paused, looking about them, wondering which of the many rooms to try next. They got no chance to decide, for suddenly there came the development Letty had feared. The door at the far end of the passage opened and from out of the room stepped a tall, forbidding lady dressed in black satin.

Mrs. Malvering herself!

STEPHANIE MAKES A SCENE

FOR one terrible moment all three stood still. Olive and Letty were filled with horror. As for the aristocratic owner of Twin Towers, there was a look of scandalised amazement on her face. With an obvious effort she spoke:

"Who are you?" she demanded. "And how did you find your way here?"

She emphasised her words by tapping on the floor with the ebony stick with which she supported herself.

Olive licked lips that had suddenly

gone dry. What reply could she make? Certain it was that she dared not accuse this grim old lady. Why, it was absurd to think that she had any knowledge of any wrong-doing!

Impatiently Mrs. Malvering tapped on the floor again and through the lorgnettes she raised to her eyes she glowered at the two unhappy school-girls.

"Answer at once," she ordered. "You cannot both have lost your tongues. Who admitted you to my house? What is your business here?"

"It's—it's like this, ma'am," began Olive, then broke off in consternation as from behind her there came a crash, followed by the smashing of pottery. Letty, backing in alarm, had blundered against a pedestal on which stood a pot of ferns. Over went the pedestal and over went the pot.

"Oh gi-gi-golly!" gasped the fat girl. Helplessly she stared at the damage, then an irate cry made her whip round in alarm. The old lady was shaking her stick at her.

"You wicked, clumsy girl, look what you have done now! Not content with forcing your way into my house—Mrs. Malvering broke off, to march across to the banisters. "Dunn!" she called. "Dunn—here at once!"

From somewhere below came the butler's voice in reply, and Letty, losing her head completely, plucked in panic at Olive's arm.

"Bolt for it! Quick—it's our only hope!" she gasped and, turning, she took to her heels and fled.

Mrs. Malvering furiously shook her ebony stick.

"Come back! Don't you dare—Dunn! Dunn!" she called again. "Why don't you make haste! There are two girls up here—thieves! Come and seize them, man, at once!"

There came a startled shout, then the thud of hurrying feet. It was Olive's turn to get panicky. Seeing her chum beckoning frantically from the library door, she raced across to her. Mrs. Malvering made no attempt to stop them. Angriily she continued to call to the manservant to hurry to her assistance.

Into the library the chums plunged, to slam the door behind them, then exchange agitated glances.

"We'll never be able to explain now," Olive panted. "If we're caught—"

There was a door leading into the room, but neither of them made for it. Too scared to stop to think, they darted across to the oil-painting and operated the secret catch. The framed canvas swung aside, and through the opening they tumbled, and only just in the nick of time, for as they pulled the picture to again, they heard angry voices in the library.

"They are not here, madam."
"But they must be somewhere, man. Perhaps they are hiding. Perhaps they escaped through my study. Look for them. Don't stand gaping there."

Mrs. Malvering's aristocratic voice was shrill with indignation, and Olive and Letty, their hearts thumping, their faces white with anxiety, went fleeing back along the underground labyrinth.

Not until they were safely back at school did they pause, and then, as they tiptoed their way to their dormitory, Letty looked fearfully at the Form captain.

"D'you think Mrs. Malvering will make inquiries?" she asked. "D'you think we'll be bowled out? It'll mean expulsion, old scout, if we're nabbed, you know. For we can't prove anything—about Jess, I mean."



HALLO, EVERYBODY.—Here is your Penelope again, with lots to chatter about — as usual.

Do you ever listen-in to the talks on the wireless about Education?

I do, quite often. Sometimes with only one ear, I must confess, for I have so many other things I'm always trying to do at the same time as listen-in.

If you do take an interest in these talks, I wonder if you agree with me that school seems to be a much more friendly place now than it used to be when our mothers and fathers were small.

Schoolgirls—and boys, too, for that matter—regard their teachers as chums, no longer as people to be merely afraid of.

Yet teachers are respected as much as ever—which I think is splendid. For to respect a person, without fearing them, does make for happier schooldays—as well as better work, I think.

SUMMER FINERY

But there I go, talking about school, when you're still in holiday mood probably, even if most of you are back at school now.

I wonder what you were doing with your young selves over the holiday? Helping mother in the house, I expect, taking the dog out, and visiting your chums.

Perhaps you were also sorting out your last year's summery clothes, to see how they look this year.

I don't know why it is, I'm sure, but garments that we thought were as good as new when we put them away last year, always seem to have a look of "something wrong" with them when they come out again to face a new spring or summer.

My own summery dresses all seem to have faded abominably. I suppose it's my own fault for liking pale colours so much—like pink and blue and pale green.

So I've been busy with some two-penny packets of dye, tinting them up again. I've used the dyes quite weak, just to refresh the colours of these dresses—and it's surprising

Olive's face was as grim as her own, yet she tried to speak confidently

"Keep smiling," she replied. "It'll all come right in the end. I'm not worrying about myself. It's Jess I'm thinking of."

"I know. It's rotten. Yet we can't

FROM ONE GIRL TO ANOTHER

Cheery Chatter and Helpful Hints by Penelope

what a difference it has made to them.

I've also been doing a spot of shortening. This question of length doesn't apply to you young things, of course, who always wear brief skirts. But for us nearly-grown-ups, it's a serious business. No more dresses coming to the calves—but seventeen inches from the ground!

A TAILORED JACKET

If you had a three-quarter-length coat last year that you feel doesn't look quite right, somehow, this year, why not turn it into a smart, tailored jacket?

You just cut the bottom part off, until the jacket is hip-length, and turn it up and press carefully.



If you've grown a bit plumper over the year, you'll probably find that this jacket fits fairly tightly now. And that's just how it should be. But if you're one of those girls

who's always slim and slinky, well, perhaps with mother's help, you could nip in the waist a bit, to make the jacket shapely.

These coloured check jackets are so useful—for they can be worn over different plain skirts, you see.

HAND CARE

I'm so anxious that my hands shall be nice for the warmer days when they are so much in evidence, that I bought myself a pot of rather special hand cream the other day, which is supposed to keep the hands smooth and white.

And with it was a Free Gift. What do you think it was?

A pair of sleeping gloves! White cotton ones they are, that fit the hands very loosely. The idea, you see, is that you should apply the cream to your hands last thing at night. Then to allow it to do its good work while you sleep—without spoiling the sheets—you wear the bed-gloves.

I haven't worn them yet, but you must admit the idea is a sound one—even if it would make some fathers and brothers laugh.

Good-bye now until next week!
Your own

PENELOPE

do a thing. No matter how right our suspicions may be—"

Letty broke off as they entered the Fourth Form dormitory, for from the darkness had come a malicious voice:

"So you've condescended to come to bed, have you?" it asked.

The light clicked on, and to their dismay they found themselves confronted by Stephanie Warner. There was a glitter in that girl's grey eyes. "Not so much noise, Stephanie," Olive urged. "If anyone hears us—"

Stephanie tossed her head. "I don't care who hears us!" she retorted. "I haven't done anything wrong. I haven't been snooping about after a wretched thief."

"Thief!" gasped Olive. "Yes, that wretch Jess Grant. You can't kid me. That's why you broke bounds. I don't mind if you prefer the company of a thief to a decent girl, but what I do mind is—"

Again Stephanie's voice rose to a shout, and Olive, scared lest the noise should attract attention, clutched Letty by the arm.

"Never mind her," she urged. "Get undressed before someone comes to investigate."

Stephanie laughed harshly as she saw their concern.

"That's right, try to sneak into bed!" she cried. "But you're not going to escape scot-free this time. I knew all along you were still keeping in touch with that interloper Jess Grant. No one would believe me, but now—"

She stopped as from several of the other beds came sleepy murmurs.

"What's the matter?" she repeated. "If you want to know, you'd better ask your precious Form captain. She and her pal have been breaking bounds."

"Breaking bounds?"

There came a cry of consternation. By now the whole Form was awake, and in amazement they sat up and stared across the dormitory.

"Yes, breaking bounds," Stephanie said once more. "I told you all along they didn't mean to keep their promise. They don't care if you lose your studies again; if you lose your other privileges—"

"Here, steady on, Stephanie!" cut in Olive indignantly.

But the other girl paid no heed.

"It's true. It was thanks to you we lost them before, and now, just when we've got them restored, you and your precious pal go breaking bounds. Does that show any loyalty to the Form? Suppose you're caught? Suppose—"

Stephanie's furious tirade came to an abrupt stop, and Olive and Letty both caught in their breath, for from somewhere below an irate voice demanded:

"What's going on there? Aren't you girls in bed?"

The speaker was Miss Charters, the Fourth Form mistress, and as she heard her ascending the stairs Stephanie glanced triumphantly around.

"What did I tell you?" she said. "Now we're in the soup, and it's your precious Form captain who's to blame!"

And accusingly she pointed to Olive.

Will this mean fresh trouble for Olive and Letty? Meanwhile, where can Jess be? Don't miss a word of the chapters of this story that appear in next Friday's GIRLS' CRYSTAL.

anxiously, dreading to read of her father's capture.

But the temporary scare gradually died down; there were rumours—but nothing else. Once again the daring outlaw had given his enemies the slip, and apparently was lying low.

Lola, her fears partly forgotten, threw her whole heart into her dancing.

In the afternoons she danced at the cafe—in the evenings at the theatre.

Her time was fully occupied, and she was happy—as happy as possible, in view of the cloud that still hung over her father's name.

Then out of a seemingly blue sky came a thunderbolt that threatened to wreck everything.

For some time there had been rumours about her—spread, needless to say, by Maria.

Lola ignored them. She was beginning to get used to the furtive whispering when she appeared at the cafe; often she overheard snatches of conversation:

"You've heard about La Bella Lola? They say she is in league with the Grey Shadow—"

"Bah! It is possibly a lying rumour!"

Lola danced on, smiling as though she had not heard—smiling pluckily to keep up her courage.

But the real blow did not fall till almost a week after her last meeting with her father—and her triumphant debut at the theatre.

It was as she was finishing her dance one afternoon at the cafe that she became aware that her audience was unusually restless and inattentive.

Someone had entered with a newspaper, and an excited crowd was surrounding him.

Loud murmurs reached Lola's ears. "This is too much; the scoundrel should be made to pay dearly!"

"What are the police doing? None of us are safe—"

"And we won't be safe until he is in prison!"

Lola faltered in her dance; but no one saw her. The musicians had joined the crowd.

With a dreadful premonition at her heart Lola crept up behind the group and managed to catch a glimpse of the paper.

The glaring, badly printed headlines seemed to leap out to greet her:

THE BANDIT'S DAUGHTER

(Continued from page 28.)

**"THE GREY SHADOW AGAIN!
BANDIT BURNS DOWN
HACIENDA!
OCCUPANTS NARROWLY ESCAPE
WITH THEIR LIVES!"**

Lola's eyes widened with horror; a feeling of dreadful faintness swept over her.

It couldn't—it couldn't be true! Unnoticed in the excitement, she crept to the dressing-room and changed into her outdoor things.

Out in the crowded market-place she found the excitement even more tense.

Rumours were spreading wildly. The burning of the hacienda had been an act of revenge; the victim was a wealthy Englishman.

Almost choked with suspense, Lola purchased a paper; in the shadow of a doorway she read the report.

The ill-fated hacienda was several miles distant from the town—the country residence of an influential oil magnate, James Creswick.

Creswick? Lola's heart missed a beat as she read the name—but, of course, it was a coincidence. It could have no connection with Tony!

Anxiously she read on. The outrage was declared to be the work of the Grey Shadow and his gang; they had been seen in the vicinity of the hacienda, and it was believed that the elusive bandit cherished some secret grudge against the Englishman.

The paper trembled in Lola's hand. A few words of her father—practically forgotten—flashed back into her mind with a new and startling implication.

He had spoken bitterly of Tony Creswick—had mentioned an old score to be settled!

But he couldn't—he would never have done a thing like this!

Her gallant, chivalrous father—she must not even think such a thing!

Lola crushed the paper in her hands, flinging the hateful thing to the ground.

Her face deathly pale, she hurried back to her lodgings.

At the clean and comfortable little house where she was staying, Lola found her kindly landlady immersed in the newspaper, reading about the Grey Shadow. Her usually placid face was indignant as she looked up at Lola.

"The sooner this bandit is brought to justice, the better!" she said. "I'd not hesitate to put the police on his track the moment I heard of his whereabouts."

Lola stared at the good lady, her face pale. She realised now how easy it was for people to believe ill of a person—how cleverly her father's enemies had carried out their plans.

She murmured something in reply to the landlady's remark, and hurried upstairs to change for the evening performance.

The show must go on—even though her whole world seemed to be collapsing about her ears!

That evening at the theatre the rumours and whispering were even more pronounced. A number of Lola's fellow-artists regarded her askance. Girls with whom she had been on friendly terms contrived to ignore her.

Lola tried pluckily to appear as though nothing unusual had happened. Mr. Radcliffe was late in arriving, and Lola did not see the producer until her turn came to go on to the stage.

He was standing in the wings, his face grave and anxious.

He beckoned to her as she appeared.

"Put on your very best show to-night, Miss Sharman," he said tersely. "He made no mention of the rumours, but added: 'The public are restive this evening; we've got to get 'em in a good temper.'"

Lola nodded, her face rather pale. Plucking up her courage, she awaited her cue—the haunting gypsy love-song played on the guitar.

Drawing a deep breath, Lola darted out on to the stage into the crimson glare of the spotlights.

For an instant there was a tense silence as she turned to face the audience.

And then, barely audible at first, but growing louder with every moment, a hissing broke out in the packed house—a hissing that grew in volume and was mingled with angry shouts:

"Shame!"

"Throw her out!"

"The bandit's spy!"

Is this the end of Lola's dancing career? What will she do if she is forced to give it up now? You must be sure to read next Friday's chapters of this enthralling serial. Order your GIRLS' CRYSTAL in advance.

G.C.W.27

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