

251 from ...
"Daphne's Feud with the Phantom Four" One of the six grand stories for schoolgirls inside.

No. 194 Vol. 8.

EVERY FRIDAY.

Week Ending July 8th, 1939.

GIRLS' CRYSTAL ^{2^D}

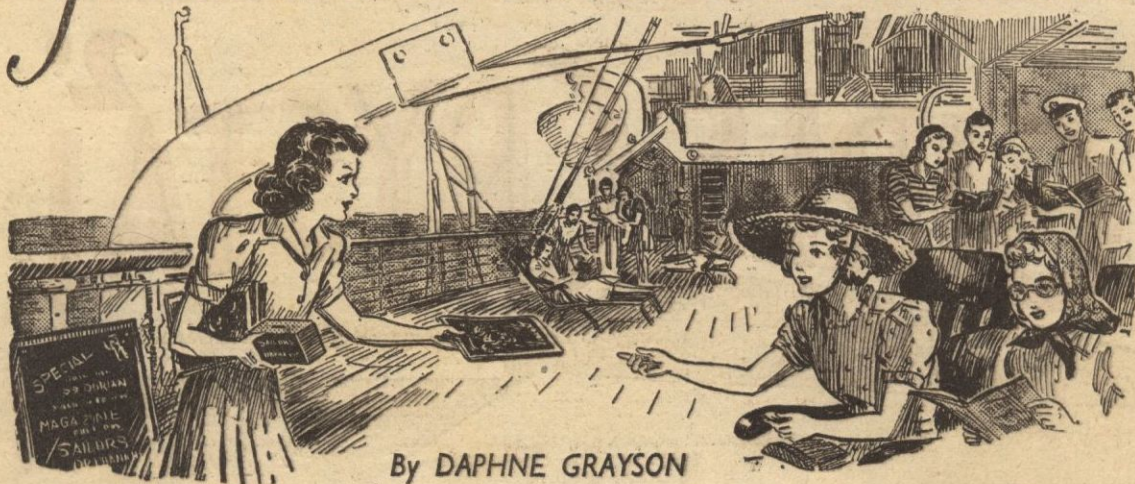
Incorporating The SCHOOLGIRLS' WEEKLY.



**THE YOUNG STEWARDESS
MUST NOT BE SEEN!**

See this dramatic incident from "The Cruising Merry-makers"—inside.

The CRUISING MERRYMAKERS



By DAPHNE GRAYSON

THE INTRUDER IN THE CABIN

WELL, shipmates, and what's the verdict?" asked Sally Warner, an eager light in her blue eyes.

"Oh, jolly good, Sally!"

"Why, you're a born humorist!"

"This'll make the old mag sell, if nothing else does."

Sally's tanned cheeks flushed with pleasure.

There could be no doubting her friends' enthusiastic approval, both for the amusing article she had written, and for the whole idea of producing a humorous magazine to be sold to the passengers on board the s.s. Dorian, the proceeds to go to a sailors' orphanage.

Sally & Co. had been busy preparing the magazine for the last day or two, as a matter of fact. They were all contributing features, and now the results of hard-working brains were beginning to roll in.

Sally, who had been appointed editress, surveyed the little pile of "copy" in front of her on the glass-topped table.

"Not much more to come in now," she said, and then looked severely at the boy sitting beside her. "But I've a bone to pick with you, Don, you old slacker! Where's this deep-sea thriller of yours entitled 'The Mystery Mermaid'?"

Don Weston grinned.

"Only another page, Sally," he told her. "Have it finished by lunch-time. But, I say," he added, "where's my sundae? Looks as if I shall be here till Sunday before I get it!"

"And my peach melba," Fay Manners said. "We must have ordered them at least a quarter of an hour ago."

Service in the Dorian's promenade deck cafe, where the editorial "pov-wow" was being held, was usually the model of swiftness and efficiency. But this morning it certainly seemed to have fallen down.

"Something gone wrong with the system," Sally opined. "But back to business. The ship's printer wants all the copy by this afternoon if the mag is to be ready for to-morrow. Incidentally, I saw him just before I came along here, and he gave me the latest issue of the Dorian's own newspaper. Like to have a look at it—"

"I'd like my sundae!" Don Weston

said impatiently. "Where's that stewardess—"

"Save your breath. Here she comes," Sally smiled. "Clear the deck, shipmates!"

And, putting the pile of articles on one side of the table, Sally leaned back in her chair, holding up the ship's newspaper as she did so.

The stewardess came up, carrying a tray loaded with the refreshments which the chums had ordered. She couldn't have been more than sixteen, and the pale blue uniform she wore seemed to accentuate the pallor of her cheeks.

She stood beside Sally, and was in the act of lowering the tray on to the table when suddenly she went rigid, her horrified gaze fastened on the newspaper.

"Oh!"

It was not a gasp; it was a little shriek that left her lips then.

Crash!

The loaded tray, only half-balanced on the table, suddenly toppled over. Down on to the carpeted floor it fell, iced drinks and sundaes flying in all directions.

"Golly! Help! That's caused it!"

Sally cried, leaping to her feet.

"My sundae!" Don grinned. "I wait half the blessed morning—" But he broke off as he saw the stricken, terrified look on the young stewardess' face. "Crumbs, what happened?"

"I—I'm terribly sorry!" the girl faltered.

"These things happen," Sally said, gazing at her sympathetically. "But nothing broken, fortunately, although Don's sundae seems to have done a dive into my iced cream soda! Rally round, chums, and help clear up the wreckage, or—"

The Cruising Merrymakers' Magazine looked like being a roaring success. But only Sally knew that its "stop press news" might help to clear the name of an innocent girl!

"Thank you, miss, but I can manage. No; I'll do the clearing up—"

"You certainly will, Joan Miller!" came an angry voice; and on to the scene strode a grim-faced woman whom Sally knew to be the chief stewardess for this section of the liner. "This is disgraceful! Look at those refreshments! Look at the carpet!"

"It—it was an accident, Miss Grinter!" Joan Miller said fearfully.

"It was your carelessness—your inefficiency!" Miss Grinter stormed on. "No wonder I'm always having complaints about you! No wonder Mrs. Warren, of Cabin No. 25, refuses to have you anywhere near her! I shall report you to the captain, Miller! You are obviously not suited here! I shall ask him to dismiss you!"

"Oh, no! No, please don't do that, Miss Grinter!" the girl pleaded.

Sally felt sweep through her a wave of sympathy for the young stewardess, who stood there, so frightened, so pathetic in her trembling confusion.

She had heard that the chief stewardess was something of a martinet, and clearly her reputation was justified. But there was no need for her to humiliate the unfortunate girl in this fashion in front of everybody else in the cafe.

Sally did one of those things which was so typical of her impulsive nature.

"Excuse me," she said, "but—but the girl wasn't to blame. I think I must have jolted her arm as I leaned back in my chair."

Her friends looked at her in surprise. A look of incredulous relief and gratitude sprang into the eyes of the young stewardess.

Miss Grinter, however, did not look so pleased.

"I was sure, miss, that Miller—"

"No," Sally insisted. "I take the blame. Please don't report her."

"Very well, miss."

Miss Grinter, with a glare at the young stewardess, turned away, after snapping instructions to her to clear up the wreckage as quickly as possible.

"Oh, thank you, miss—thank you!" Joan said huskily, giving Sally a grateful smile. "But it wasn't your fault, really—"

"Forget it," Sally smiled.

Joan hurried away to fetch cloths and a vacuum cleaner. Sally, leaving her

chums, went below to hand her copy in to the ship's printer, and then retraced her steps up to the promenade deck.

The sea breeze, just gentle enough to temper the heat of the blazing sun, rustled her curls as she strode along. The Atlantic was a shimmering blue, through which the Dorian steamed serenely on towards Tangier, her next port of call on the long voyage to Australia.

"Golly, I feel chirpy!" Sally murmured. "Wonder if people like grumpy Grinter ever feel chirpy—"

And abruptly she found herself thinking of the chief stewardess, and then of the girl whom, on the spur of the moment, she had helped.

Curious about Joan Miller. Why had she given that little scream—it was immediately following that that she had dropped the tray. What had startled the young stewardess?

Sally stopped humming and frowned puzzledly as she went on down a carpeted corridor towards her cabin. And then, a moment later, she suddenly pulled up dead, her eyes widening in amazement.

She had reached an angle of the passage, and there, some dozen yards or so in front of her, a slim, uniformed figure was just in the act of opening one of the cabin doors.

It was the figure of Joan Miller, the young stewardess. Furtively she was opening that door, and now she crept into the cabin. The door closed quietly behind her.

Sally felt her heart begin to beat more rapidly. She glanced at the number on the cabin door—No. 25. Why, that was the one occupied by Mrs. Warren, who, according to Miss Grinter, had forbidden the young stewardess to go anywhere near her cabin!

Yet now, acting most mysteriously, Joan had just entered it in spite of those orders.

A low whistle escaped Sally's lips. "And I saw Mrs. Warren going down to the dining-room," she muttered. "Looks as if Joan knows that, too. Golly, she's asking for trouble. If she were caught—"

In that moment Sally gave little thought to Joan's behaviour, which was peculiar, to say the least of it. She was more concerned, for the girl's sake, at the possibility of her being caught here in a cabin which she had been forbidden to enter.

Again Sally acted on the impulse. She hurried forward, hesitated just for a second outside Cabin No. 25, then quickly opened the door and went in.

But again, on the threshold, she pulled up. For there was Joan, on her knees beside Mrs. Warren's bed, feverishly searching.

"Joan—" Sally exclaimed. "Oh!" With a frantic gasp the young stewardess turned, scrambling to her feet. "Oh!" she said again. "It—it's you, miss!"

Sally nodded, frowning now. The strangeness of this girl's behaviour came home to her.

"What ever are you doing, Joan?" she asked. "I thought you weren't supposed to come in here—"

"I'm not, miss," Joan replied, a queer gleam in her eyes. "But I had to come. I'm looking for something. It's in here—somewhere. And I must find it— Oh, goodness!" Her voice suddenly became frantic. "Look, she's coming!"

"Who's coming?"

"Mrs. Warren!"

Sally swung round. The cabin door was partly ajar, and hurrying down

the corridor Sally could just see the tall figure of Mrs. Warren.

"Golly, she's coming in here!" Sally said in alarm.

Joan clutched at Sally's arm.

"Oh, what shall I do?" she cried.

"She mustn't find me here. What shall I do, miss? She'll see me if I run out!"

Sally's brain whirled. The girl's pleading was so genuine; her panic so real. But what was it she had come in here to find?

Quickly, keenly, Sally looked at the young stewardess. Instinctively, in that moment, she trusted her.

"Hide—behind that trunk!" she said urgently, pointing to the large trunk that stood open on the floor.

"Oh, miss! You—you mean—"

"I'll try to keep her out!" Sally said.

"Don't show yourself until the coast is clear!"

Whereupon Sally strode towards the door.

SALLY'S STARTLING DISCOVERY

WAS she doing right? Should she shield the young stewardess in this way?

Sally couldn't help asking herself the questions again. But in a fleeting moment she dismissed them. She had summed up Joan, and she was ready to stand by the opinion she had formed.

She opened the door. She smiled delightedly as if seeing Mrs. Warren for the first time.

"Oh, there you are, Mrs. Warren!" she exclaimed. "I—I was hoping to see you. I looked into your cabin—"

"Hallo, my dear!"

Mrs. Warren was nearing forty, perhaps, but she didn't look her age. She always dressed very smartly, and she had a very charming manner. There was nothing she liked more than joining in the fun with younger company, which was why Sally had seen quite a lot of her during the voyage.

"Would you believe it," she went on genially. "I got all the way down into the dining-room and then discovered I hadn't a hankie with me. Come into the cabin, my dear."

Hastily Sally took the woman's arm.

"As a matter of fact," she said, "I wanted you to come along to mine. I've had yesterday's snaps developed, and I thought you might like to see them. You've come out perfectly, Mrs. Warren."

"I'd love to!" Mrs. Warren smiled. "But first let me get my hankie—"

Sally, however, didn't give her the chance. Sally laughingly tugged her down the corridor, and not until they reached her cabin did she release Mrs. Warren's arm.

Sally had spoken the truth about the developed snaps, and she showed them to Mrs. Warren. After which the woman said they must go down to lunch together. She collected her hankie on the way, but now Sally had no fears. Joan, of course, had escaped from the cabin.

Lunch with Don and Fay and the rest of the crowd was a cheery meal. Sally had news for them.

"The printer has invited us all down to watch him setting up our copy in type," she told them. "He said he'd let us do some ourselves."

"My hat, that'll be jolly interesting!" Don said eagerly. "Good for him!"

Lunch over, Sally returned to her cabin, having arranged to meet her chums in twenty minutes' time. She went eagerly, for she had an idea she might be receiving a visitor. And she was right. Joan Miller was already waiting in the cabin when she entered.

"I—I hope you don't mind my coming in, miss?" the young stewardess said anxiously.

"Of course not," Sally laughed. "Make yourself comfy. Have a chocolate."

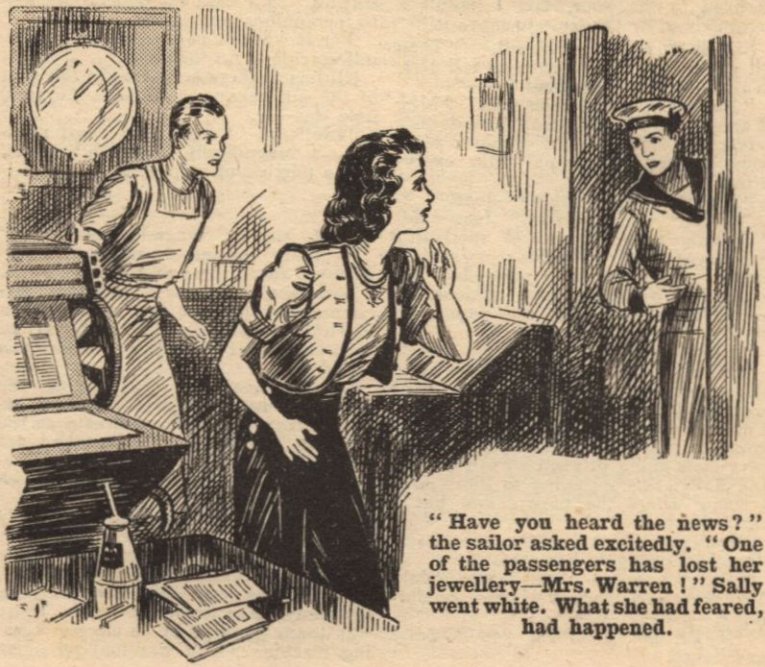
"You're very kind. I want to thank you for what you've done, miss—"

"Sally's the name."

"And—and to explain," Joan went on. "You must think I've been acting strangely—Sally."

"Well, yes," Sally had to admit.

"But it's nothing dishonest—I swear it isn't!" Joan said. "You see, I'm trying to save Margery—she's my sister—from disgrace. I'm searching for some papers which will prove she isn't a thief. And those papers are on this boat—in Cabin No. 25!"



"Have you heard the news?" the sailor asked excitedly. "One of the passengers has lost her jewellery—Mrs. Warren!" Sally went white. What she had feared, had happened.

Sally looked startled. She became even more startled as Joan went on with her story.

Her elder sister, Margery, had been a stewardess on board the Dorian during its previous voyage from Australia to London. One of the passengers had had her valuable jewellery stolen, and Margery had been accused of the theft.

"But she was innocent, although no one would believe her in face of the evidence!" Joan said fiercely. "I saw her just after her arrest, and she told me about these papers which she knew were hidden somewhere in Mrs. Warren's cabin. So I got a job as stewardess in this boat, determined to find these papers. My name isn't really Miller, it's Forbes. I had to change it, of course, in case the company suspected my relationship with Margery."

Sally listened, becoming more and more interested.

Again and again Joan had searched Cabin No. 25 for the papers, until her behaviour had aroused the suspicions of Mrs. Warren, who had then complained to Miss Grinter.

"Still, I hadn't found the papers," Joan continued. "I was getting desperate. Then this morning, when I was bringing you and your friends those refreshments, I happened to see a paragraph in that copy of the ship's newspaper. It said that Margery was appearing in court to-morrow."

"So that's why you gave that little scream, and then dropped the tray?" Sally said, understanding now.

"Yes. The missing jewellery still hasn't been found, but the police evidently consider they have sufficient evidence against my sister," Joan went on. "I made another attempt to find the papers, and that was when you found me in Mrs. Warren's cabin. And, Sally"—now Joan's voice became excited—"I know where they are at last."

"Where?" Sally asked eagerly.

"They're hidden in a small cashbox under the standard lamp," Joan said. "It has a rounded base. I poked under it with a stick while you were taking Mrs. Warren to your cabin. The box is there, Sally, but the lamp is fixed to the floor, and I hadn't a screwdriver, or the time to move it."

"Golly!" Sally exclaimed. "Then all you've got to do now is to tell Mrs. Warren, and get permission—"

"No—no, Sally!" Joan said. "Mrs. Warren doesn't like me; she doesn't trust me. She might think it's all some absurd story, and ruin everything."

"I'm sure she wouldn't, Joan."

"I won't take the risk," Joan said. "Nothing must happen to spoil this one chance of proving Margery's innocence. But—but the trouble is," she added, her voice becoming anxious, "I won't be able to get the papers in time."

"Why, what do you mean?"

"Miss Grinter has it in for me after this morning's incident," Joan said worriedly. "In five minutes' time I'm due down in the kitchens. She's going to make me work there, and she says she's going to keep an eye on me. Oh, Sally, time's getting so short now. I know where the papers are, but I can't get them."

She paused, mingled hope and despair showing in her eyes.

"Sally, you've been wonderful! You've helped me. I—I was wondering if—if—"

"If I'll get them for you?" Sally questioned.

"Yes, I hate asking you such a tremendous favour, but—but—well, you know what it means to me—to my sister. And I swear I've told you the truth! Don't you see, if I can get the papers before to-morrow, I can tell Captain Carr, and he'll be able to wireless to the police authorities in England. Sally—"

Sally smiled.

"All right, Joan, I'll do it. And now's the time, because Mrs. Warren always has a rest on deck after lunch. Don't you worry, Joan. Rely on me."

"Bless you, Sally!" Joan's voice was husky. "And now I must fly. You'll let me know what happens?"

"Of course."

Joan went then. While Sally stood for a few moments deep in thought, running over in her mind again the amazing story she had just heard. But not for a moment did she doubt its truth. She believed every word of what Joan had told her.

Sally went out on to the deck. She would need a screwdriver, and then she must hurry along to Mrs. Warren's cabin before that woman returned from her after-lunch rest.

The screwdriver was soon procured from one of the crew. Two minutes later Sally was cautiously approaching Cabin No. 25.

She went into the cabin. Over by the bed was the tall reading lamp. In a moment Sally got to work with the screwdriver; in a couple of minutes she had taken out two of the screws. She tilted over the lamp—

There, underneath the rounded base, as Joan had said, was a small black cashbox.

"Hurrah!" Sally cheered to herself.

Quickly she set about screwing the lamp into position again. Time was getting short; at any moment now Mrs. Warren might return.

She left the cabin, hugging the cashbox under her arm, with only a minute to spare. Even as she was hurrying back to her own cabin she passed Mrs. Warren in the corridor.

Excitedly Sally burst into her cabin. Placing the box on the flap of her writing bureau, she opened the lid. And then—

Sally's jaw sagged; her eyes became staring. In a flash excitement changed to incredulous amazement.

For it was not papers she found herself staring at in that box.

Glittering there as it caught the rays of the sun streaming through the port-hole was—

Jewellery! A sparkling pearl necklace, a magnificent diamond bracelet, and a number of gold rings!

"I'M seeing things—I must be!"

Sally muttered, running a bewildered hand through her thick curls.

And then Sally's eyes gleamed. Excitement swept over her again. Joan had said that the jewels her sister had been accused of stealing had never been found.

Could it be possible that this was the missing jewellery? That in some extraordinary way, unaccountable at the moment, the stolen valuables had got into this box, which Margery had believed contained the papers which would prove her innocence?

"I must see Joan and tell her," Sally decided.

Down to the big kitchens, with their long rows of gleaming electric cookers, with shelves on which stood huge, spotlessly clean pans, she went. There was Joan, standing by an electric washing machine which was making quick

work of the stacks of used crockery from lunch.

In a moment Sally was talking to her, after securing permission from the officer in charge of the kitchens. Joan's eyes opened wide in amazement when Sally whisperingly told her what had happened and described the jewellery.

"No, that's not the stolen stuff," she whispered back. "Sally, that sounds like Mrs. Warren's own jewellery!"

"Golly!" Sally gasped in dismay.

"But how did it come to be in that box? Where are the papers?" Joan asked.

"There's a mix-up somewhere," Sally said. "My hat! The sooner I get the stuff back into Mrs. Warren's cabin the better! If she finds them missing—" Sally felt herself go hot and cold by turns. "Joan, you're positive the papers are in Cabin No. 25? Then I'll have a hunt for them when I return the sparklers. But— Oh goodness! Mrs. Warren will be in her cabin now. I can't take them back yet!"

Joan was looking frantic.

"Oh, Sally, this is my fault! I don't want you to get into trouble on my account. But I never dreamed—"

"Of course you didn't. But I'll put things right. Mrs. Warren has fixed habits. She goes for her afternoon stroll at three o'clock. I'll take the stuff back then. In the meantime it'll be safe enough hidden under the mattress of my bed. Report later, Joan!"

She went back to her cabin. With fingers that trembled she thrust the black box under the mattress of her bed. She had hardly done so when there came a chorus of shouts from outside.

"Hey, there, Sally!"

"Aren't we going down to see our mag printed?"

Trying to still the mad beating of her heart, Sally joined her friends.

She went with them down to the printing-room. There was a clacking sound as one man worked the small, foot-driven printing machine. The pungent smell of printers' ink pervaded the room. Another man stood in front of a series of partitioned trays containing type.

"Hallo, youngsters!" he greeted cheerily. "Come in and see how it's done. Nothing elaborate in the old Dorian's printing-room—no big presses or intricate machines. Everything done by hand. But you'll find it interesting, I think. I'm just starting on your job now."

They crowded round him. Interesting it was, seeing him put the small pieces of type in position letter by letter, taking each piece from its particular section in the trays without looking, and being right every time.

Sally had a shot at it, learning that the type had to be put in upside down, and the lines ran from left to right.

"Something like Chinese," Sally said, so fascinated that for a while at least she had forgotten her problems. "And it is Chinese to me, too. Takes me ages finding the letters."

"Speed comes with experience, of course—" the man was saying, and broke off to stare in surprise as a member of the crew suddenly burst into the room. "What's the hurry, Jim?" he asked, with a grin.

"Have you heard the news?" the sailor asked excitedly. "A real sensation, I can tell you! One of the passengers has lost her jewellery—a Mrs. Warren!"

Sally went white. The lines of type she had set dropped from her suddenly nerveless fingers.

"Bit of a shock, ain't it?" Jim said. "Remember we had the same business

last trip, Alf? Robbery then—and strikes me the same thing's happened now. Bet you half a dollar the Old Man gives orders for the ship to be searched!"

Sally stood there in trembling consternation. The ship likely to be searched—and the missing jewellery was in her cabin!

SALLY'S STOP-PRESS SENSATION

EXCUSE me, folk! I—I've just thought of something!" Sally strove to hide the agitation in her voice, but she knew she didn't altogether succeed.

"You mean you're going?" Don Weston stared at her in surprise. "Here, wait for us—"

But Sally was already gone, heedless of the conjecture and bewilderment her headlong flight must arouse among her friends.

There was only one thought in her mind. She must return the jewels to Mrs. Warren's cabin. She must get them out of her possession before disastrous things began to happen!

Sally simply flew. But another shock awaited her.

Reaching her cabin, flinging back the mattress, her groping fingers encountered—nothing.

The little black box containing the jewellery had vanished!

"Gone! Gosh, oh, golly!" Sally exclaimed.

She stood there, blinking in her amazement. The mattress flopped back into position. She didn't know whether to be relieved or anxious.

A quick search of the cabin satisfied her that the jewellery wasn't anywhere there. Then where was it? Who had taken it from under the bed?

Joan! Sally started. Did the young stewardess know anything about it? Down to the kitchens Sally once more made her way.

The mystery became solved. Joan nodded in reply to Sally's questions.

"Yes, I took the box, Sally," she whispered. "I didn't want to get you into any sort of trouble. I thought there might be awkward complications. Miss Grinter went away, and I managed to slip out. Don't worry, Sally. I put the box back under the lamp standard. Mrs. Warren must have hidden her jewellery there. She'll soon find it. But, Sally, I'm worried about those papers—"

A few moments later, however, Joan Miller was to find herself worried—sorely worried, indeed—on another score.

For even as Sally was moving away Miss Grinter entered the kitchens. She looked even more grim than usual. But there was also a glitter in her grey eyes which seemed to chill Sally.

"Miller!" the chief stewardess said harshly. "You will come with me to your room. The game is up now, my girl! You've been caught!"

Joan gave a little gasp.

"I don't understand, Miss Grinter."

"Mrs. Warren's jewellery has been found!" the chief stewardess rasped. "I don't know how you thought you would get away with it after your suspicious behaviour. But there will be no more of it—no more of these robberies on the Dorian!"

Sally felt her head begin to whirl.

"Miss Grinter, what do you mean?"

"I mean that the stolen jewellery has been found in this girl's room!" the woman said. "Come, Miller! Captain Carr wishes to question you—not that much questioning will be necessary."

"Oh, it's not true—it can't be true!" Joan cried in a stricken voice.

Sally tried to control her buzzing brain. Quickly, sharply, she looked at Joan—and now suspicion came to her. She could not help it.

All along she had trusted Joan, but now—

Joan admitted having taken the jewellery from Sally's cabin. She said she had returned it to Cabin No. 25—but was that the truth? Had she indeed meant to steal them—had all this story of hers been merely the means to an end?

Slowly Sally followed as the chief stewardess escorted Joan to her small room on one of the lower decks. A crowd was there, buzzing with the sensational development.

Captain Carr, very grave of face, stood talking to Mrs. Warren and one of his officers. A bunch of passengers were grouped around the door, among them Don and Fay, and Sally's other friends.

Miss Grinter and another stewardess had found the jewellery under Joan's



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

MY DEAR READERS,—I expect you're all feeling holiday-minded now, aren't you?

This Editor of yours certainly is; for, you see, I shall be far away from the office this time next week.

I have decided on a motor tour, after all, exploring Cornwall, Devon, and Somerset. Though I may become so fond of one particular spot that I shall stay there for several days.

Certainly I shall have to stay long enough to send a postcard to the office, for Penelope says she insists on having one from me! (Perhaps she's afraid that I shall pop back unexpectedly unless she knows for sure that I'm at Land's End, or somewhere else well away from Fleetway House!)

While I'm on holiday our cheery Penelope will be in charge here at the office, of course; then she will go on her holiday as I come back.

So you needn't worry that you won't be able to get your **GIRLS' CRYSTAL** owing to this holiday business, for I have been planning all sorts of extra-good stories for you.

"The Frightened Speed Girl" is the title of next Friday's thrilling mystery story. In it you will learn of the intriguing adventures that befell Noel Raymond when he discovered a magnificent racing car lying abandoned in a field.

There will also be complete stories featuring the Cruising Merrymakers and Judy Jordan, and last, but by no means least, there will be long instalments of our three grand serials.

Order your **GIRLS' CRYSTAL** well in advance, won't you?

Your sincere friend,

YOUR EDITOR

bed. Mrs. Warren, remembering Joan's suspicious behaviour in the past, had persuaded them to make the search.

Wildly, passionately, Joan protested her innocence, but Captain Carr shook his head.

"I'm afraid I can't believe you," he said sternly. "Mrs. Warren, what do you wish to do in the matter?"

Mrs. Warren looked pale and upset. "I shall take action," she said; but her voice was distressed. "I hate having to do it, but for other passengers' sakes I think I am right to make an example of her. It is a matter for the police, Captain Carr."

"Very well, Mrs. Warren." The skipper signalled to one of the officers. "Have this girl locked away," he ordered. "She will be taken into custody when we dock at Tangier!"

"No, no!" Joan cried. "It's a trick—a trick, I tell you! I'm innocent!"

Her eyes were on Sally as she made that vehement protest—eyes that were brimming with tears.

Sally bit her lip. She wanted to believe Joan; and yet, in the face of this evidence—

"Not much doubt about her being guilty," Don said, as Joan was led away. "And to think you saved her from getting the sack this morning, Sally! Well, she's asked for it now. Cheer up, Sal, old gal! Gosh, don't look so upset."

But Sally was upset. She could not cheer up. For the rest of that afternoon, then the evening, she was thinking all the time of Joan, unable to make up her mind whether she was indeed a cunning thief.

At seven there was dinner. At half-past eight dancing began in the ball-room. But Sally did not go; she did not feel like dancing. She wanted to think, and, slipping away from her bewildered friends, she went for a stroll on deck.

Night had fallen with the suddenness and intensity peculiar to subtropical parts. There was no moon; it was a darkness that could almost be felt.

Sally, wandering about in a shadowy part of the deck, suddenly paused. A figure hove in sight—a figure acting with furtive caution. It was Miss Grinter, the chief stewardess. Unaware of Sally's close proximity, Miss Grinter abruptly flitted along the deck and vanished from sight in the darkness.

"What's she up to?" Sally muttered. "Acting jolly queerly—"

Unconsciously Sally found herself following on tiptoe. Then again she paused. A voice came to her out of the blackness—Miss Grinter's voice. She could not see the chief stewardess, so dark it was, nor could she see the person to whom Miss Grinter was talking.

"Didn't I say it would work perfectly?" the chief stewardess was saying, an exultant note in her rasping voice. "We needn't fear Joan now. Nor her sister. We've got those proofs of her innocence, and I'll destroy them to-morrow."

She paused. Sally felt her heart thumping as she listened. So Joan was innocent!

But who was this other person? Sally strained her eyes through the darkness, but she could see nothing. And Miss Grinter's companion did not speak.

"Now we can carry on looking for those missing jewels," the rascally chief stewardess continued. "Where could that fool have hidden them? They're somewhere on the boat. We couldn't find them on the last trip, but we won't fail this time!"

Sally felt herself thrill. The missing jewels—they must be the ones which Joan's sister had been accused of stealing. And they were actually hidden somewhere on the Dorian!

But now, through the darkness, she heard movements. Swiftly, noiseless as a shadow, Sally hurried back to the lighted part of the deck. Her eyes were gleaming excitedly.

"Golly, if I can only bowl out Miss Grinter and this other unknown snake-in-the-grass, I could save Joan—and her sister!" she muttered.

Her brain became busy. And, half an hour later, Sally was hurrying into her cabin. There she sat down at the bureau, thoughtfully sucked at the end of her pen, and then began to write.

Five minutes after that Sally was flying post-haste down to the printing-room.

"Mr. Blake!" she cried, bursting in. "You haven't started printing the mag yet, have you?"

"No; but we're just about to begin, so—"

"Then don't! I've a special notice I want putting in!" Sally said. "Most important—must have a prominent position. Can you do it?"

"Sure thing! Why not make a stop-press of it?" the printer suggested.

Sally laughed.

"The very ideal! Here's the copy, Mr. Blake. Don't grin when you read it—just get it printed! And the mags will be ready for distribution to-morrow morning?"

"They'll be ready before breakfast!" Mr. Blake promised.

"That's lovely!" Sally smiled, and glowed with tingling anticipation.

"HOW'RE they going, Don?"

"Selling like hot cakes, Sally!" It was the following morning, just before breakfast, and Sally & Co. were having a busy time. The printed copies of their magazine had been delivered, and now the chums were parading round selling them.

And no doubting the success of the "Cruising Merrymakers' Mag!" Half the edition had already been sold, and passengers were clamouring for copies.

"I say, Sally, got another bundle?" cried Fay Manners, running up at that moment. "I've sold out!"

"More in my cabin," Sally said. "Hallo, another customer! Thank you, sir! That leaves me with just one. Ah, I know who's going to have that!"

Off went Sally, in the gayest of spirits—very different from her mood of yesterday. Sally was excited. Sally was wondering if her ruse for saving Joan and Margery Forbes from disgrace was going to succeed. The first part of her plan she had put into operation—that had been done last night. Now for the next move—now to dispose of this copy of the magazine. And her customer was—

Miss Grinter, the chief stewardess.

"The only one I have left, Miss Grinter," she cried. "Won't you buy it, please? Needn't pay me now if you haven't your handbag with you."

"Yes, I'll take it, miss. Thank you." Miss Grinter's tone, when she addressed passengers, was very different from that she used when ordering about the staff under her control.

Off went the chief stewardess, gazing interestedly at the magazine. And off went Sally, too—along to Captain Carr's private cabin.

The captain was pleased to see her. Captain Carr knew Sally's uncle, whom she was joining in Sydney, and he had promised to "keep an eye" on her during the voyage.

"Morning, Sally!" he greeted genially. "This is a very pleasant surprise to—"

"You're going to be more than surprised when you hear what I've got to say," Sally told him tensely.

"What's biting you, Sally? Out with it!"

"That stewardess, Joan Miller, didn't steal that jewellery. And I can prove it—"

"Now, look here, Sally—"

"I tell you I'm in earnest!" Sally caught at his arm. "Now you're coming with me, Captain Carr. We've got an appointment in Hold No. 9, on D Deck. Come along—and no arguments!"

Captain Carr did argue. But Sally refused to heed. Tugging at his arm, she almost dragged him out of his cabin and down to Hold No. 9. They went in, and Sally closed the door.

"Now we hide," she told him coolly.

"Sally, what nonsense is this—"

"Behind these old packing-cases—just the spot!" Sally went on.

She dragged him behind the cases, and they crouched there. There was an earnestness about her that couldn't help but impress Captain Carr.

"Sally, what do you think you're playing at?" he demanded.

"Wait and see," Sally told him.

They waited. Sally found herself trembling with suspense. A quarter of an hour passed. Oh golly! Was her idea going to work out? Would she be able to prove—

She tensed. The door of the hold opened, and Miss Grinter, the chief stewardess, cautiously peered in.

Captain Carr stiffened.

"I think this has gone on long enough, Sally," he hissed.

"It's only just starting," Sally whispered back excitedly. "Watch—and listen. You're due for a few shocks—"

Sally's mouth sagged open. Next moment it was she who received a shock.

She had expected Miss Grinter to come down to the hold. She had hoped that the stewardess' unknown accomplice would be with her. Her hope was justified. But when Sally saw who that person was—

It was Mrs. Warren!

"Golly!" Sally almost betrayed herself in her utter amazement. Mrs. Warren! No, surely she could not be—

"You're sure it's not a trap?" Mrs. Warren asked, looking doubtfully at Miss Grinter.

"How can it be, Sadie?" the stewardess retorted. "The jewellery is as likely to be hidden here as anywhere—and not fake stuff, either, like that we planted on Joan Miller!"

Beside her, Sally felt Captain Carr go rigid, saw his face harden.

"Yes, that was a clever move on your part, Lou," Mrs. Agnes Warren, alias Sadie Parsons, complimented. "It was clever, too, the way we put the blame on that other kid—Margery Forbes! But not so clever in losing track of the jewellery. Come on, let's get busy looking for it. Hidden here, eh? Well, the only place seems to be in those cases—"

"Have you heard enough, Captain Carr?" Sally asked in a loud voice, rising to her feet.

"Quite enough!" the skipper said, also showing himself.

The two women seemed to become rooted to the spot on which they stood. Their faces went ashen.

"It is a trap—" Sadie Parsons shrieked.

"Just that," Sally smiled coolly. "No; it's no use running. You're on a ship, remember—there's no escape." "I must ask you both to accompany me to my cabin," Captain Carr said. "If you refuse to come of your own free will—"

But the two women went. They knew they were beaten. They knew they had betrayed themselves. Up on deck, as they were all making their way to Captain Carr's quarters, Don Weston, Fay Manners, and the rest of the crowd came running up at sight of Sally.

"Sally!" Don exclaimed. "What's this stop-press item in the mag? We haven't seen it before. Who wrote it? How did it get there—"

"Guilty," Sally laughingly confessed.

"Like to read it, Captain Carr?"

The skipper, taking the magazine, looked at the stop press announcement.

"LINER THEFT."

"A report has just been received about the trial of the stewardess who has been accused of being concerned in a jewel robbery on board the Dorian during its voyage from Australia to London. She told the court that the missing jewellery is still hidden in Hold No 9 of the ship. She was silenced, however, amid laughter."

Captain Carr's stern face relaxed into a grin.

"I see. So that's how you worked it, Sally?" he asked. "You reckoned on the crooks thinking there might be some truth in the statement and going down to the hold to search."

"Exactly," Sally smiled. "And it worked! But I think Miss Grinter can clear up the rest."

Miss Grinter and her partner did. They were members of a gang of jewel thieves who operated on luxury liners. The thief who had been responsible for the original theft had tried to throw the blame on Margery Forbes, but he had not been clever enough, and had himself been arrested on suspicion.

He had, however, placed certain letters he had received, which would clear Margery, in a box, and this he had hidden under the standard lamp in Cabin No. 25. He'd also hidden the stolen jewels, just before he was arrested.

Joan and Margery knew that the letters were hidden in the cabin, and Joan, getting a job as stewardess, had tried to find them. But Sadie and her accomplice had become suspicious, themselves found the box of letters, and substituted "Mrs. Warren's" fake jewellery, hoping to trap Joan when she discovered it. Then, becoming impatient, Sadie had "planted" the fake jewels in Joan's cabin, so that the girl would be accused of stealing it.

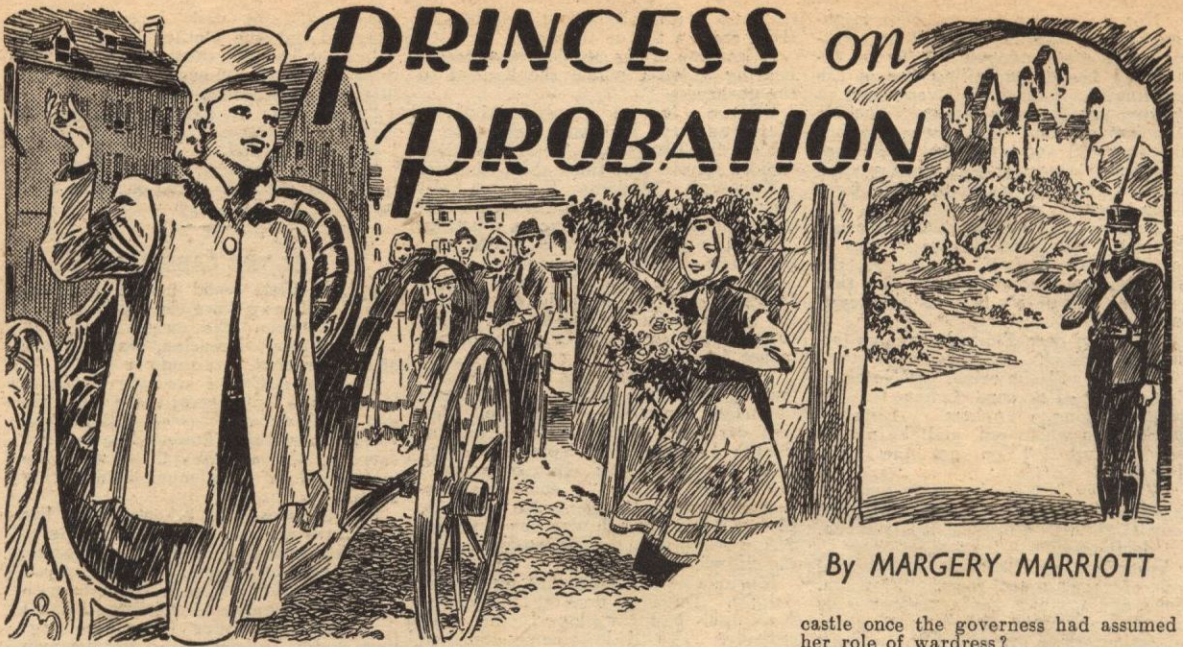
The real jewellery, that the arrested crook had hidden, was eventually found behind the wainscoting of Cabin No. 25—actually in Sadie's own cabin!

But by then Sadie Parsons and Louise Grinter had been placed under lock and key, and Joan Forbes had been released. Her sister, too, was released when Captain Carr wirelessly the whole story to London.

As for Sally, she was congratulated on all sides for her clever exposure of the crooks. But, happy though she was that she had been able to help the young stewardess, Sally was just as delighted that her magazine was such a tremendous success!

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

Another grand long story about the Cruising Merrymakers appears next Friday. Make sure of reading it—order your GIRLS' CRYSTAL to-day!



By MARGERY MARRIOTT

FLORINDA'S PUNISHMENT

PRINCESS FLORINDA OF STOLZBURG was told by her uncle, Baron Hermann, that she would become queen at the end of a year, during which time she was to be placed "on probation." Her brother, Prince Peter, had been outlawed for treason, thanks to a plot in which, Florinda believed, the Count von Mee and his daughter, Melita, were implicated.

Despite her uncle's ban, Florinda determined to clear her brother, who was hiding in the mountains, helped by a boy named Bernhard.

Thanks to the Von Mees, the villagers turned against Florinda, but she hoped to regain their regard by arranging a carnival for them.

Then Florinda discovered Melita von Mee in her room, ransacking her dressing-table. When, indignantly, she tried to turn the girl out, Melita pretended that Florinda had hurt her.

At that moment Baron Hermann arrived on the scene. He believed that Florinda had been bullying Melita!

AS she realised that Melita had deliberately schemed to turn her uncle against her, Florinda turned desperately to the baron.

"Please, uncle, listen to what I have to say!" she begged.

Ignoring her, the baron crossed to Melita, still gulping and trembling on the bed. Putting an arm about her, he led her to the door, murmuring words of consolation.

"Wait for me in my study, dear child," he said. "Don't upset yourself. And now," he barked, swinging round to Florinda, "now, miss, I have something to say to you. Hooliganism! Never would I have believed it of you if I had not seen it with my own eyes. You, my own niece, princess of our country, behaving like a savage!"

"But I wasn't, uncle," Florinda protested. "I just pulled Melita gently. She threw herself across the room. I—I caught her rifling my things! There!" And she pointed.

The baron did not even glance at the drawers. His face darkened.

"I don't believe you, Florinda! I

heard what Melita said. I remember what she told me last night, and I am thinking of things I have noticed. You do not like her, Florinda. I have suspected as much. This proves it. But," he went on thunderously, "I will not have such behaviour. Come with me!"

Seizing her arm, he marched her to the school-room, and there, despite her protests and pleas, thrust her inside.

"You will spend the day here," he barked. "I shall send Madame Karenina to set you a task and see that you do not leave. Even your meals will be sent to you. Perhaps that, my girl, will teach you some of the discipline you so plainly need!"

The door closed with a bang. The baron's footsteps receded. Strickenly, Florinda clutched at her desk.

"Oh, my—my goodness!" she groaned. "The carnival!"

What should she do? It was vital that she attended the carnival.

There was only one thing she could do—escape!

It would mean running a terrible risk. The baron would be furious. She would be endangering her chances of becoming queen. And yet—

"If I can slip out," Florinda mused, "and if only the carnival is a success, then uncle's anger won't matter. For when he learns that I've regained my popularity with the villagers he will forgive me."

She jumped to her feet, but even as she crossed to the door she heard footsteps out in the corridor.

Thinking that it must be Madame Karenina, her governess, Florinda dejectedly turned back towards her desk. For how could she possibly leave the

It was the day of the Carnival—and Princess Florinda had been ordered to stay in the castle schoolroom. But neither her uncle, guards, nor governess could keep Florinda from that Carnival!

castle once the governess had assumed her role of wardress?

But it was not Madame Karenina who entered. It was Natasha, Florinda's devoted maid-in-waiting, who agitatedly opened the door.

"Oh, your Highness," she said, her voice tremulous with emotion, "I've just heard. The baron was telling Madame Karenina. She's on her way here now. I—I had to see you, your Highness. What—what are we going to do?" she cried distractedly.

"Dear Natasha," Florinda said softly, pressing the maid's trembling arm. "I know how you feel, and it's so lovely of you to think of me like this. Do?" she echoed. Keenly she looked at Natasha's white, agitated face. "I was going to bolt. Do you think there's still a chance?"

Natasha shook her head.

"None, your Highness. Both ends of the corridor are blocked. At one end the baron is with Madame Karenina; at the other there are guards, with orders not to allow you past. Oh, your Highness," Natasha went on, her voice breaking, "isn't there anything we can do? Anything I can do? I don't care what it is, your Highness. If you can think of something, just—just say what it is and I'll do it!"

There was such unselfish devotion in the maid's appeal, and such obvious distraction in her whole being, that Florinda was strangely moved. Wonderful to know Natasha was so fond of her—so loyal and faithful.

But of what use could that loyalty be now? There was no way of employing it. Just nothing whatever to do except resign herself to defeat.

"Thank you, Natasha; you're so sweet!" Florinda murmured, with a wan smile. "But it's no good. The carnival's off—for me, anyway. But you go to it; you try to enjoy yourself."

"Oh, but I couldn't, your Highness, knowing this! I—I don't mind. Lots of people aren't going—Madame Karenina, your uncle, and—"

Florinda gently interrupted the maid, then.

"Madame Karenina?" she said. "We didn't send her an invitation. Besides, she will have to stay in detention with me. Not that that will be much of an ordeal to her. Most governesses seem to love detention."

"Not Madame Karenina, your Highness," said Natasha. "She'll be seething. She was annoyed not to be invited. I heard her telling one of the housemaids. I think she's very keen on meeting people, your Highness—people with money, and—and with positions like yourself, and since she heard that a very rich American girl was supposed to be giving the carnival she's been dying to go."

Florinda half-smiled. Considering that the "rich American girl" was to have been she herself, in disguise, the affair had its humorous side. But that was all. It didn't help in the least, unless—

And all at once Florinda became terrifically excited.

"My golly!" she cried. "Natasha, I've got it—I'm sure I have! It's worth trying, anyhow. Listen!" Quickly she whispered, and the maid's face lit up. "You get the idea, Natasha?"

"Yes, yes!" Natasha said, nodding eagerly. "Why, it's a wonderful plan, your Highness. I'm sure it'll succeed. I'll do it now."

As excited as Florinda, she hurried out of the school-room. Florinda, alone again, flung her arms out wide and did a couple of whirls of sheer jubilation, then pretended to be most awfully meek and disconsolate as the door opened again and the governess entered.

It was apparent at once that Madame Karenina was in a black mood, for she glared at the princess through her spectacles.

"Florinda, I am shocked by your behaviour," she declared. "Using brute force on poor Melita! Go to your desk. Get out your algebra book. You know the lesson—No. 14. Commence work on it at once!"

"Certainly, Madame Karenina," Florinda said meekly, and did as she had been ordered.

If it hadn't been that she wanted to allay the governess' suspicions with regard to her own feelings, she would have given way to the indignation aroused in her by the reference to Melita von Mee.

Using brute force on the little spy! What rubbish! That was how it might have seemed, thanks to Melita's hypocritical conduct in front of the baron, conduct which had resulted in this humiliation. But she hadn't used anything like the force that Melita deserved.

Out came the books, and Florinda, picking up a pen, set to work. Madame Karenina, at her own desk, blinking with growing vexation, tried to soothe her irritated nerves and improve her mind with the little book of poems she invariably carried about with her.

But to-day the poems seemed to have lost their charm. Madame Karenina kept clicking her tongue, shifting restlessly, and darting incensed looks at Florinda, who appeared not to notice them.

Florinda did notice them, however. Florinda had been hopefully watching for such signs of exasperation. For the more reluctant Madame Karenina was to keep guard over her, the better her chances of getting rid of the governess.

Florinda worked out two algebraic problems, and then took the text-book to Madame Karenina.

"Please, Madame Karenina," she said demurely, "will you explain how to do the next problem?"

Madame Karenina gave an impatient click of her tongue.

"Really, Florinda," she protested, "you are most forgetful. I went to no end of pains yesterday afternoon to—

Oh, who is it?" she added irritably, as there came a tap on the door.

It was one of the maids who entered, bearing a letter which she handed to the governess.

"There is no reply, Madame Karenina," the girl said, and, with a curtsy to Florinda, whom she then noticed for the first time, she withdrew.

Frowning, Madame Karenina slit open the envelope and withdrew a small piece of pasteboard, like a visiting-card. One glance she gave it, and then her whole expression changed.

She beamed, then she coughed and frowned, and thoughtfully she tapped the card against her cheek, as if trying to make up her mind. Finally she got to her feet.

"Florinda," she said, "I am—er—leaving you for a while. I have some important business to attend to. You will carry on in my absence just as though I were here. Your meals are being brought to you. But, of course," she added hastily, "I shall have returned before lunch. No pranks, please!" she warned, wagging a finger.

And really most tremendously excited, she fluttered out.

Florinda nearly burst with suppressed delight. Done it, done it! Madame Karenina had swallowed the bait entirely. The little scheme she had concocted with Natasha had been a marvellous success.

The card delivered to the unsuspecting governess had been one of the official invitations which Natasha, organising the carnival, had sent out to certain selected guests. Florinda had recognised it at once; besides, she'd arranged for it to be sent in that way, so there'd really been no need for her to catch even a glimpse of it.

Madame Karenina was off to the carnival; off to pay her simpering respects to "Sadie Pepperjohn," the rich American hostess.

"Well, I'm jolly well not going to disappoint her," Florinda chuckled, as she sped to the school-room door. "She'll meet Sadie Pepperjohn all right. But she won't know it's little me. She'd better not! It'd ruin everything—and give her forty fits! Now all I've got to do it— Oh!"

With a startled little gasp, Florinda broke off. There was one thing she had forgotten. The civic guards! She saw them now, as she peeped up and down the corridor, a group of them at either end—with orders from the baron to intercept her should she try to get past them.

"Oh golly!" she groaned. "That's done it! What a chump I am! I'm no better off, after all. Why, Natasha," she added, as her maid appeared at one end of the corridor. "And what on earth's she got in that bundle?"

Wonderingly, Florinda shut the door. She had not long to wait before Natasha slipped in, and Florinda, looking at her with a hopeful, puzzled smile, saw that the bundle was wrapped in brown paper.

"Quick, your Highness, get into these. It's your disguise for the carnival!" Natasha said breathlessly. "The guards won't stop you because they'll think it's me!"

"You?" said Florinda, frowning.

"Yes, your Highness. I told them I'd come here to change into fancy costume; that I was going to wear these things. It—it was all I could think of," Natasha said, almost apologetically.

"All?" Florinda cried, her face lighting up. "Oh, Natasha, I think you're simply marvellous! Be a dear and keep guard at the door. I'll change in a jiffy!"

Excitedly, she dumped the parcel on

her desk, and with feverish hands dragged out the clothes it contained. When she had put them on, she donned a pair of horn-rimmed spectacles, then fitted into position a wig.

"How do I look?" she asked Natasha.

Natasha smiled. "A real American lady, your Highness," she replied. "No one will ever recognise you." -----

AT THE CARNIVAL

THE little wood behind the inn, half-way down the winding path between the castle and the capital, Frenslau, was a place of enchantment that summer day.

Glorious shafts of sunlight streamed through the leafy trees; there was light and shadow; rich green foliage and vivid coloured wild flowers, like rainbow carpets; the air was filled with the musical choir of a myriad twittering birds.

But there was no other sign of life to disturb the peacefulness; nothing at all, until—suddenly a figure appeared!

Like a woodland nymph it came upon the scene, flitting from tree to tree with light, swift steps, and peering all about it as it went. For it was seeking, remarkably enough, a horse-drawn carriage. Here, in this lonely glade, it was expecting to find that.

Princess Florinda, changed out of all recognition by her disguise, was on her way to the carnival; on her way to tackle the most momentous task of her short, but already memorable, spell of probation.

Her eyes, keen and alert, shone through the horn-rimmed glasses; and her whole face was flushed with excitement.

It had been simple enough escaping from the castle—thanks to Natasha's ingenuity, and her readiness to sacrifice her own pleasures for the sake of her mistress. But there was still a chance that the maid would also be able to slip away. Fervently, Florinda hoped so, though at the moment she was scarcely giving Natasha a thought.

Now where was the carriage that had been commissioned to drive her, as Sadie Pepperjohn, sponsor of the carnival, to the scene of gaiety at the lake? Somewhere about here, Natasha had said, and Florinda frowned all at once, staring about her in perplexity.

Next moment she almost jumped out of her skin. Without the slightest warning, a shadow fell across her side; and a familiar voice, startling all the same, because it was so unexpected, breezily exclaimed:

"At your service, your Royal Highness!"

With a gasp, Florinda spun round. A young man was bowing; his soft hat, adorned with two yellow feathers, swept across his chest in the most exaggerated gesture. He was dark and moustached, unlike anyone Florinda had seen before. But the voice—and the yellow feathers—

"You!" she cried, and laughed. "Golly, Bernhard, you gave me quite a fright! But what are you doing here? I'm trying to find a carriage that's to take me to the lake—"

"Your question is answered by your statement," said Bernhard, replacing his hat at a jaunty angle. "The carriage is yonder." He pointed to a group of bushes. "I," and he clicked his heels, "am its coachman. Come, your Highness!"

He crooked an arm, and Florinda, stifling her astonishment, permitted him to lead her through the trees. The carriage was an open one, drawn by a

well-groomed black horse. Bernhard helped the princess to clamber in, then sprang up beside her and seized the reins.

"I very nearly didn't come," Florinda said, as they began the zig-zag descent to the lakeside; then she related all that had happened.

When Bernhard heard how Florinda had caught the count's daughter ransacking her boudoir for her brother's watch, his brow darkened; and when Florinda told him of the treacherous way Melita had accused her of ill-treating her, his eyes glinted.

"Little savage," he said hotly. "She's pretty dangerous. She'll be there to-day, I take it? Well, look out for yourself, Florinda. If she gets half an idea there's anything funny about you—crash! She'll ruin the whole thing!"

Grimly Florinda nodded.

The success of her elaborate plan to restore herself in the estimation of the villagers depended on absolute secrecy as to Sadie Pepperjohn's real identity. Only at the proper time would it be advisable for Florinda to remove her disguise and reveal that she was actually their princess. By then she would have mingled with the villagers, joined in their fun and sports, shown in a dozen natural ways what she was really like. They'd be ready to listen to her then; willing to hear her defence, that it had been someone else who had injured the little child with the royal carriage.

But if she were unmasked before she had a chance to do all that, if there were a scene—then gone would be all hope of vindicating herself and securing the papers that might mean everything in the world to her brother.

Resolutely Florinda stared ahead of her. There might be anxiety and apprehension in her heart, but she wasn't afraid.

"I'll pull it off, Bernhard," she vowed quietly.

And so it was in that spirit of determination, conscious of the risks she was running, and yet ready, almost eager, to brave them, that Princess Florinda drove to the scene of festivities.

The lake, silvery and placid, was always lovely. But to-day it had been transformed. On the water were gaily decorated boats; on the banks were marquees, flags, streamers, and myriad multi-coloured electric bulbs which, at nightfall, would turn the scene into fairyland.

It was on the main landing-stage that Florinda's roving gaze finally came to rest. For there she was to be received; and there a vast crowd was gathered, murmuring and jostling as the carriage was seen.

What excitement when she arrived!

Everyone craning to catch a glimpse of her; scores of men and women, dozens of boys and girls in their picturesque native costumes; the mayor, overlaid with a sense of his own importance, strutting to greet her.

"Welcome, Miss Pepperjohn; Welcome to your own carnival!" Florinda beamed.

"Say, how cute of you all!" she drawled. "How do you do, folks? Pleased to make your acquaintance."

She waved gaily, and there were quite a few waves in return. Then someone stepped past the mayor; a tall, debonair man, and wearing a monocle. With him was a girl. The man bowed.

"Allow me to add my respects, too,

Miss Pepperjohn," he said. "I am Count von Mee. This is my daughter, Melita."

"We're so awfully glad to be here, and we think it's just perfectly adorable of you, don't we, daddy?" Melita simpered.

By an effort, Florinda retained her smile; by an effort, she forced herself to shake her enemies by the hand. But she seethed with scorn and anger. The count was responsible for her brother's plight; and Melita was helping her father by crafty attacks against her.

Supposing she made a slip; supposing her disguise wasn't so fool-proof, after all—

But evidently it was, Florinda realised to her relief, for the Von Mees, bowing and curtsying respectfully, made way for someone else.

Florinda drew a quick breath of thankfulness. One danger past. But another occurred almost at once, for up bobbed Madame Karenina. And

With a light laugh she surveyed the crowd.

"On with the fun, all of you!" she cried. "Don't let me take you away from everything. I'm coming to join in. I guess there are heaps of good things to sample, and I'm not going to miss one of them."

Gratefully the crowd broke up; exchanging looks and whispers of approbation, they scattered back to stalls and boats, while Florinda, gracefully declining the mayor's offer to act as chaperon, began a tour of inspection alone.

Not that she was ever really alone. All sorts of people she chatted to, trying to make them feel—and herself, too—that she was one of them, and finding it delightfully easy. She joined in the fun of the fair, she chuckled at a pillow-fight between two young men seated astride greasy poles that jutted out over the water; she tried her hand in a skittle contest, and, thoroughly trounced by a peasant



Florinda's heart stood still as she watched Madame Karenina extract the card from the envelope. Would her governess accept the invitation and go off to the carnival?

bobbed was the proper word to describe her attempt at a graceful curtsy.

"Oh, my dear Miss Pepperjohn!" the governess gushed. "If you knew how honoured I am to meet you like this! And to think you have organised this wonderful function at your own expense—"

"I'm selfish, I guess," Florinda declared. "I like to see folks enjoying themselves. What was the name?" she queried. "Oh, Madame Karenina! Of course. Glad you got my invite. Sorry it came so late."

And because of the twinkle in her eyes, Florinda turned away then. As she did so, she caught a meaning glance from Bernhard, who brushed past her to go to the carriage.

"Going to look for Jorgensen," he whispered, out of the corner of his mouth. "The chap who's bringing Von Mee those papers, you know. Will see you later. Keep it up."

Next moment, pressing her arm encouragingly, he was gone.

For just an instant Florinda felt dreadfully alone, dreadfully unprotected. Then she roused herself.

lass, won the onlookers' hearts by the way she took defeat.

Then into a motor-boat, bedecked from stem to stern with white flowers in the form of a swan.

Away it glided across the lake, for the other bank, and now Florinda's eyes shone as a procession of tiny boats, each resembling a cygnet, trailed after it like an anxious brood following the mother.

More gaiety on the other side! More people to mingle with, more exciting things to see and do.

Everybody having a glorious time; everybody greeting Florinda with grateful smiles, so that her heart glowed. Oh, how marvellous! Things were working out beautifully. Not much doubt that when she did reveal herself, after the feast around the huge camp-fires that were to be lighted, everyone would be ready to give her a hearing.

And then she frowned. But what of Bernhard? How was he getting on in his quest for the mysterious Jorgensen? Had he located the man yet?

"Wish I could run into Bernhard," she mused, craning about her on tiptoe. But alas! It was a wish which was

denied fulfilment until well into the afternoon—just before the prize-giving, at which Sadie Pepperjohn, as donor, was naturally to officiate.

Florinda had gone to watch the finals of the archery contest. The butts were besieged by an enormous crowd. Excitement ran high. Someone was performing in remarkable fashion apparently—someone whom Florinda, squeezing through to the front as everyone readily made way for her, recognised immediately.

"So that's where he is!" she murmured, her eyes sparkling. "Looking for Jorgensen, the bad lad! And, golly, the count! Business with pleasure!"

For Bernhard's opponent in the final was none other than the rascally Von Mee. A very ruffled, infuriated Von Mee, in fact. He had finished his final shoot, with two arrows in an inner circle, and one in the bull.

And now, amid breathless silence, Bernhard stepped forward for his last effort. With the speed of lightning three arrows flashed on their way, so unerringly aimed that one after another they landed in the bull, and so amazingly close that their feathers almost touched as they quivered to a standstill.

A roar of cheering rent the air. Bernhard was champion!

With a scowl the count ignored the lad's outstretched hand and flung away. Before Florinda could dodge he had cannoned into her, and, being the sort of man he was, did not even give her a glance, let alone apologise. He strode off and disappeared.

But did Florinda care? Not in the least, Bernhard—champion archer of the carnival! She almost felt as if she'd won the trophy herself, and when she managed to beckon him to one side her eyes were glowing.

"Why, you clever old thing!" she cried. "I didn't know you could shoot like that. But I thought," she added, pretending to be annoyed, "I thought you'd got work to do."

"You mean Jorgensen?" said Bernhard, linking an arm through hers and

leading her away towards some folk-dancing. "Oh, I've seen about him. He's not coming until nightfall. I heard Von Mee talking to one of his pals. Well we put it across the swanker that time, didn't we?" he chuckled.

At the memory of the count's mortification, Florinda smiled. Wonderfully elated she felt about everything. They paused by the folk-dancing, then, and Florinda looked on in sheer fascination. The dance ended to a storm of applause. Other dances followed, and when the crowd joined in, Bernhard seized Florinda's hands.

"Come on!" he cried, gaily. "Best leg forward, and doesn't matter if you don't know the steps. No one does. You just make 'em up—like this."

Laughing happily, Florinda allowed herself to be whirled around in the most carefree of waltzes. Scores of people were doing the same thing, not caring how they looked, or how often they were nearly sent flying, so long as they enjoyed themselves.

At last, quite breathless, Florinda and Bernhard retired, to sit upon the stump of a tree and watch, while dusk began to cast its grey mantle over the scene. And presently Florinda looked at her friend.

"Soon be dark, Bernhard. They'll light the fire. I'll have to present the prizes, and then—"

"Off with the motley, eh?" Bernhard said. He patted her hand. "Don't fret, Florinda. You've done well. They'll give you a hearing, I know. You'll win through, just see if you don't. But not like that," he suddenly added, and, leaning forward, gave her wig a little tug. "Half your hair showing!"

"No!" Florinda cried, in alarm. Swiftly she adjusted the wig. "Is that all right? Oh, Bernhard, was there much showing—enough to be seen?"

"Of course not," Bernhard laughed. "I was only pulling your leg. About an inch, that's all. No one could have spotted it. It's too dim now. It must have been knocked during the dance."

Florinda gave a smile of relief, then started, clasping Bernhard's arm, as

someone came tearing towards them. It was Natasha, and Florinda knew, even before the maid, gasping and stumbling, reached them, that something serious was the matter.

"Why, Natasha what is it?" she cried, springing up.

"Your Highness!" Natasha panted. "Your Highness—quick! It's Melita! Melita and her father. I heard them by the path. They know who you are." She pointed with a hand that shook. "They've guessed you're in disguise. And Melita—Melita's gone to the castle—"

"Gone to the castle!" Florinda ended, in alarm.

"Yes, your Highness. She's going to see if you're still there. If you're not—if you're not," Natasha finished, in utter distraction, "she's going to bring the baron here, to bowl you out and order you back!"

SHE MUST OUTWIT MELITA

SOBBERING with exhaustion and despair, the loyal Natasha sank on to the tree-stump and covered her face with her hands. Florinda barely moved. All she did was to rest a hand, very gently, very affectionately on the maid's bowed, shaking shoulder.

But she was thinking at lightning speed.

Melita and the count had discovered her secret, and if Melita did bring the baron here—oh goodness, it would ruin everything! He'd have her sent back to the castle without giving her a chance to complete her plan. If she resisted—well, he had but to order her forcible removal and she'd be powerless.

Only one thing could save her, Melita must be prevented from reaching him.

"Florinda," came Bernhard's grim voice at that moment, "we've got to do something. You rush back and change. There's a short cut up the slope here. I'll take you. Get back into detention and—"

But Florinda, looking at him steadily, shook her head.

"No," she said, "that wouldn't do. I've a better idea. I'll go to the castle, yes; but I'll see that Melita doesn't get a chance to talk to my uncle. There'd be no time for me to change and go through all sorts of preambles."

Quickly she turned to the maid, who would have risen, only Florinda gently pressed her back.

"How did they find out, Natasha? Did you learn that?"

"Yes, your Highness. It was—your wig! At the archery butts the count knocked into you. Melita was in the crowd. She saw the wig move. They aren't sure, or they'd have unmasked you yourselves right away. That's why Melita's gone to see if you're still at the castle—"

Florinda, patting Natasha's cheek, suddenly became fiercely resolute.

"Then she shall find me at the castle!" she snapped. "But not in the way she expects. Bernhard—where's that short cut?"

But even as they turned to move off through the trees, the pompous little mayor approached.

"Miss Pepperjohn," he exclaimed, "we are about to begin the feast. If you would be so gracious as to allow me to conduct you to the place of honour—"

And he held out a podgy arm. Florinda, eyes filling with dismay, looked at Bernhard. The feast—the prize-giving—the very climax of her plan, where she was to reveal who she

(Please turn to the back page.)

IF YOU WENT TO CLIFF HOUSE SCHOOL



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The SPECTRE OF THE GLEN



THE VANISHING PIPER

"**Y**E'LL no go by the Glenelgin Pass! Remember what I say, for your own sakes. If ye hear the sound of the pipes, it will mean danger."

The words, spoken in a girl's husky tones, reached Noel Raymond's ears as he climbed the steep path that led from the Highland village.

The young detective halted instinctively, a gleam of interest flashing into his eyes as he glanced towards the open door of a picturesque cottage by the roadside.

A board above the door indicated that refreshments were on sale there. He could hear voices raised in argument and a ripple of girlish laughter.

"Oh, we're not scared of an old legend! It sounds rather thrilling. Come on, Lily—let's go!"

Two girls emerged from the cottage, arm-in-arm; their trim, khaki shorts and blouses marked them out as youthful hikers.

One of them carried a camera, and the other had a satchel slung on her shoulders.

"Do you—do you suppose there could be anything in the story, Beryl?" whispered the fair-haired girl with the satchel, a trifle nervously.

Her attractive, auburn-haired companion laughed gaily.

"Of course not! These Highlanders are dreadfully superstitious. I promised myself that I'd get some snaps of the Glenelgin Pass—and I'm not going to be put off by a stupid old story. Let's hurry, before it gets too dark."

They glanced with friendly interest at the young detective as he approached, but the auburn-haired girl was obviously anxious to get away, and they did not stop to speak.

Noel hesitated; then, with sudden decision he turned into the little shop.

A tall, slender girl stood behind the counter, her attitude strangely motionless, her gaze turned towards the open window through which crept the last rays of the setting sun.

She seemed unaware of Noel's entrance.

Her pale face was unforgettable, framed in a cloud of raven hair; her fingers clutched nervously at her homespun shawl. She seemed to be listening.

Noel coughed slightly, and the girl

turned with a start; he would never forget the look in her dark eyes. It was a look of apprehension—almost of fear.

"Good-evening," remarked the young detective pleasantly. "You sell cigarettes?"

The girl nodded, a gleam of swift relief crossing her face. Her hand shook slightly as she pushed across a packet of cigarettes and gave Noel his change.

The young detective was watching her with concealed interest.

"I couldn't help overhearing what you said to those young hikers just now," he remarked. "I wasn't aware that there was a legend connected with the pass."

The girl stared at him sharply as she commenced to polish the glasses on the counter.

"It's no just a legend," she whispered. "I ken there have been those that have laughed at it before—but they haven't laughed for long. Those that meet Jock Macgregor, the spectral piper of Glenelgin, sometimes do not come back again—"

A tumbler slipped from her fingers, breaking in fragments on the floor. Her eyes were wide and startled.

"Hark!" she whispered. "You hear that?"

Noel felt an involuntary chill run down his spine. It was the tone of the girl's voice—the look in her eyes—that gave an uncanny significance to the distant sound; a sound not unfamiliar in the Highlands.

The mournful skirling of the bagpipes.

"I hear," he nodded. "But what of it?"

"What of it?" whispered the girl, her hand clutching suddenly at his arm. "I'm tellin' ye—Jock Macgregor, the laird's piper, who was killed a hundred years ago this very night, is abroad

The two girl hikers scoffed at the idea of the Spectre of the Glen. But Noel Raymond knew that for them to explore Glenelgin Pass alone—meant danger!

By PETER LANGLEY

again on his rounds! To meet him is to meet danger, and those girls, they would not listen—"

Noel crossed suddenly to the door and stared along the winding path that led to the hills; but the young hikers were no longer in sight.

He was conscious of a vague anxiety; though he could not credit the fantastic legend, the girl's tone and manner left an uneasy impression.

"I'm going that way myself, as it happens," he remarked, with a smile. "I'll keep an eye on the young ladies. Thanks for the warning—but I shouldn't worry!"

The girl made no reply. She stood by the cottage door, shading her eyes from the glare of the setting sun, as Noel made his way briskly up the steep path.

The scenery became wilder and more desolate; high banks reared themselves on either side. Noel instinctively quickened his pace, anxious to overtake the young hikers.

It was as he reached a bend in the path that he heard the skirl of the pipes more clearly, momentarily wafted on the breeze.

The sound was indescribably eerie—a wild, unearthly tune such as he had never heard before. But all at once it faded into stillness, and only the echoes remained, mingling with the plashing murmur of a near-by waterfall.

Noel paused in his climb, staring round him sharply. Could he have imagined that unearthly air—here one minute, and gone the next?

Then a girl's rippling laughter came to him—and another voice raised in entreaty. He broke into a run, to come across the two young hikers standing on a ledge at the mouth of the gorge.

They were arguing heatedly.

"Beryl—you mustn't go!"

"Of course I must, Lily—don't be stupid. Who's scared of an old legend?"

Noel approached, his footsteps almost noiseless on the soft grass.

Lily Dalston caught sight of his shadow on the ground, and gave a stifled shriek; Beryl Farr turned, and her blue eyes flashed indignantly.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "It's you! You made us jump."

"I'm dreadfully sorry," apologised Noel, with a disarming smile. "But I happened to be coming this way, for a stroll."

"Did you hear the pipes?" asked Beryl eagerly.

Noel nodded.

"I was going to mention them; you know the legend, of course?"

"It's a lot of rot!" declared Beryl scornfully.

Noel looked serious.

"It seems fairly current in the neighbourhood; I shouldn't be too ready to scoff at local legends. They frequently have some foundation."

"Nonsense!" laughed Beryl, her eyes challenging. "You don't believe all that stuff about the ghostly—"

"Beryl—please!" broke in her chum anxiously. "Don't make fun of it—here."

Noel smiled gravely, but his eyes were perplexed. There had been something unnatural about the sound of the bagpipes—and their sudden dying away; and he could not rid his mind of the look of dread in the Highland girl's eyes.

"Any objections to my coming with you?" he asked pleasantly.

Beryl tossed her head.

"You may—if you wish; but I assure you we don't need any protection."

"I'm sure of that," replied Noel, smiling faintly as he took the lead.

The Highland glen lay out before them in all its wild and picturesque grandeur; the crimson sun had tipped the mountain-tops, throwing dark shadows across the valley.

Gradually the rocks rose more steeply, cutting out the view; they were entering the gorge—the ill-omened pass.

Lily shivered, drawing more closely to her chum. Noel was staring round him with keen interest. His sharp eyes detected something glittering on the narrow path. He bent swiftly to retrieve it.

It was a scrap of broken glass with a streak of dull red across one side.

"What's that?" asked Beryl, glancing curiously over his shoulder.

"I was wondering," replied Noel, a thoughtful gleam in his eyes.

"Just a piece of broken hand-mirror," remarked Beryl impatiently, as she moved away.

"An unusual place to find it," commented Noel.

He slipped the scrap of broken glass into his pocket and stared up at the cliff.

Lily glanced at him anxiously.

"Do you really think there's anything in that legend?" she breathed.

"I shouldn't be surprised," replied Noel quietly. "The more I think about it the less I like it. If I had my way you girls would go back to the village and—"

He broke off as Lily Dalston caught at his arm.

"Where—where's Beryl?" she gasped.

Noel turned sharply, and an anxious frown crossed his face. While he had been examining the fragment of glass the more daring of the two girls had slipped away.

"Come on!" he said tersely. "She must have followed the path round the bend."

He quickened his pace, the fair-haired girl clinging to his arm.

Then abruptly through the still air came the harsh skirling of the pipes—closer this time—followed by a girl's terrified scream.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Noel.

He broke into a run, Lily racing at his heels. As he reached the bend in the narrow path he pulled up sharply, a stifled, incredulous ejaculation escaping his lips.

Directly in front of him the path had broken away, leaving a dangerous gap.

Beyond the gap, standing motionless in a hollow in the cliff, was a strange, incredible figure—the figure of a Highland piper in full uniform—appearing almost unearthly in the setting sun.

Even as the young detective sprang forward the amazing apparition vanished, seeming to dissolve into the solid rock. But of the reckless young hiker there was no sign.

THE PHOTOGRAPHIC CLUE

A TERRIFIED sob from the other girl brought Noel back to earth. He caught her reassuringly by the arm as she clung to him. His eyes were very grim.

"Don't worry," he said tersely. "It's a trick—a dastardly trick! Your friend can't be far away. Stand back from the edge—"

Even as he spoke a stifled moan reached his ears; it came from near the brink of the cliff.

In a moment Noel was on his knees, peering over the edge of the chasm. A sigh of relief escaped his lips as he caught sight of the girl.

She had fallen, but not far; a grassy ledge covered with stunted shrubs had broken her descent. She was lying huddled on the grass.

Noel's face was rather pale as he motioned to her chum to stand by.

"I'll have her up in a jiffy," he said. "Don't move from here."

He swung himself down to the ledge and raised the fallen girl in his arms. Her face was deathly pale, and there was a bruise on her forehead, but she opened her eyes dazedly as Noel lifted her from the ground.

"Oh," she gasped, "what—what happened?"

"Better not talk," said Noel in kindly tones. "You're quite safe."

"And Lily—"

"She's waiting for us."

Beryl sighed, closing her eyes. Noel, carrying his light burden, scrambled back on to the path.

Lily dropped to her knees by her chum's side, chafing her hands.

"Beryl," she whispered brokenly—"Beryl dear, are you hurt?"

"No bones broken, I fancy," said Noel cheerfully, as he applied a powerful restorative that he invariably carried. "Ah, that's better! How are you feeling, young lady?"

Beryl managed to sit up, supported by her chum; she shook her auburn head impatiently.

"I'm—I'm all right," she declared. "Wasn't it stupid of me, falling like that?"

"Enough to make anyone fall, I should imagine," remarked Noel dryly. "It was a diabolical trick—and I mean to unearth the trickster!"

"What do you mean?" asked Beryl, staring. "I just slipped over the edge, didn't I? The rock was crumbly and gave way."

Noel regarded her strangely.

"You didn't see anything?" he asked.

"What should I have seen?" Beryl laughed unsteadily. "Why are you both staring at me? What's the matter?"

"The piper—the spectre of the glen," whispered Lily, her voice shaking. Beryl sat bolt upright.

"I say, are you pulling my leg?" she asked, frowning slightly.

Noel glanced warningly at her chum. It was plain to him that Beryl had not seen the apparition; best not to excite her in her present state.

"Lily and I imagined we saw something," he remarked carelessly. "Perhaps it was a trick of the sunlight."

"Of course it was!" laughed Beryl, who was now more herself. "You've both got that ghostly piper on your minds. I say, let's go on; I feel well enough. And I haven't got my snaps." She clapped her hand to her satchel, and a look of dismay crossed her face. "My camera!" she exclaimed. "I remember I was just taking a picture of the ravine when the path gave way."

Noel rose suddenly and crossed to the edge. He could see the camera lodged in a crevice in the rock, close to the spot where the spectral piper had appeared.

"I'll get it for you," he declared; "though I'm afraid it may be damaged. You'd better take things easy for a bit."

He climbed cautiously across the gap in the path and retrieved the camera. It did not seem to be damaged.

As he rose to his feet he stared hard at the fissure in the rock where he had imagined he had seen the spectral figure.

It was barely wide enough to have admitted a man, and there was no trace of an outlet, or any means by which the trickster could have escaped.

Below the crevice the cliff dropped sheerly to the jagged rocks far below.

The young detective, for once in his life, was utterly baffled.

He had more than a suspicion that the collapse of the path had been less accidental than Beryl supposed; but who, or what, could have contrived so villainous a plot?

Noel's eyes were unusually stern as he rejoined the girls.

"It was lucky that the bushes broke your fall, young lady," remarked Noel as he handed Beryl her camera.

Beryl was looking rather puzzled.

"I can't understand it," she said. "It seemed as though someone pulled me back; but I suppose that was just an impression. I know I flung out my hand and caught at something."

She threw out her hand to explain her action.

"Just a minute!" said Noel.

He gripped her by the hand, staring at the small ornamental ring that she wore.

Caught up in the claw was a tiny scrap of material—a few threads from some rough, home-spun material.

The young detective drew in his breath sharply. In a flash, he remembered where he had recently seen material of that weave and shade.

The home-spun shawl worn by the girl in the little shop—the Highland lass who had warned him of the legend!

IN spite of Beryl's objections, Noel insisted on escorting the two hikers back to their hotel.

"But I haven't got my snaps," protested Beryl. "And we've got to go back to Glasgow to-morrow evening. I think it's stupid to be put off just because of a silly accident—an accident that might have happened to anyone."

Noel looked at her seriously. They were standing in the lobby of the hotel, and Beryl's attractive face was flushed a trifle defiantly.

"Anyone would think we were children, the way you're treating us," she said.

"Oh, Beryl!" whispered Lily rather

reproachfully. "If it hadn't been for Mr. Raymond you might still have been lying on that dreadful ledge. I couldn't possibly have rescued you, even if—"

She shivered, obviously thinking of the apparition.

By tacit consent, neither she nor Noel had made any further mention of it to Beryl.

Beryl had the grace to blush. "I'm sorry," she said frankly. "I'm an ungrateful pig."

Noel laughed as she took his hand. "I quite understand your disappointment," he said, "but, honestly, I think it best for you to keep away from the hills for the time being. I'll make a bargain with you. If you'll promise to stay in your hotel till I return I'll take you to see the view of Loch Elsnore by moonlight. I understand it's worth a visit."

Beryl's face lit up. "I say, that'll be fun! When can we discuss plans?"

"I'll call round later this evening," promised Noel. "Say, about nine. There'll be a full moon to-night. Meanwhile, if you'll excuse me, I've got some rather urgent business to see to."

Leaving the two young hikers happily discussing the promised outing, Noel departed, making his way quickly towards the mountain path.

His objective was the little shop on the outskirts of the village.

His mind was working swiftly, attempting to piece together the odd fragments of the baffling mystery.

The ghostly piper! He no longer felt inclined to smile at the Highland girl's story. He had seen the apparition with his own eyes, and it more than confirmed all the rumours that were current in the village.

He could find no logical explanation for the spectre—but of one thing he was convinced—its activities were not confined to haunting, or to playing the ghostly pipes.

There was a menacing purpose behind its appearances in the lonely glen, and it possessed no scruples where human life was concerned.

It was a terror that must be unearthed—and unmasked!

The young detective had set himself that none too envious task.

So far, he possessed two clues—a piece of broken glass and a scrap of homespun cloth.

Not much to work on; but Noel had solved many baffling mysteries with the aid of clues even more slender.

The little cottage refreshment-room appeared dark and deserted when he reached it.

The evening shadows were swiftly gathering over the hills, and not a glimmer of light showed at any of the windows.

He knocked on the door, but there was no reply. With a thoughtful frown Noel walked round the cottage.

He found a side door standing ajar, and pushed it open boldly.

"Anyone at home?" he called.

Still there was no reply. A deathly silence brooded over the cottage and its wild surroundings.

With sudden determination, the young detective stepped through the doorway, pulling out his torch.

He found himself in a spotlessly clean and tidy little kitchen. A fire smouldered behind the bars of the grate, reflecting on the white walls. Another door opened into a daintily furnished little parlour.

The young detective was conscious that he was a trespasser—but the

deserted cottage made him more than ever determined to prove the mystery.

Where was its dark-haired owner? How came it that a scrap from her shawl had been caught in the ring worn by the young hiker?

Had she been in the Glenelgin Pass at the time of Beryl's accident? Had she followed them there?

Noel pulled aside a screen, revealing another door in the corner of the room. It was unlocked, and as Noel opened it a surprised ejaculation escaped his lips.

The gleam from his torch disclosed dust and cobwebs clinging to the walls, and to a few old pieces of furniture.

One object alone seemed to have escaped the dust. The young detective drew in his breath sharply as he bent over it.

An instrument of numerous pipes and faded tartan—a set of Highland bagpipes!

Even as he picked up the instrument he heard a soft footstep in the room behind him, and from the open doorway came a startled cry.

unscrupulous trickster; no one dares to go near the pass after sunset. You are a comparative newcomer here, and it is since your arrival in the village that the terror started."

The girl shrank from him, a hunted look in her eyes.

"I dinna ken what ye mean—" In her agitation the Gaelic accent was unmistakable. "Will ye no explain?"

"You were in the pass this evening," said Noel sharply, "when the apparition appeared—when a young hiker nearly fell to her death!"

A broken sob escaped the girl's lips. "That is no true!"

"Then how comes it that a scrap of your plaid shawl was caught up in my young friend's ring?" demanded Noel, lifting the girl's shawl and pointing to a tear in the corner.

The girl shook her head, her lips tightening.

"And whose instrument is this?" persisted Noel, stooping swiftly to pick up the bagpipes.

A startling change came into the



Noel turned sharply as the door opened. It was Jean Douglas who entered. "You!" she exclaimed brokenly. "What do you want here?"

Noel turned sharply on his heel, to encounter the dark, accusing eyes of the Highland girl—the owner of the little shop.

She stood in the doorway, the plain shawl drawn closely round her shoulders.

"You!" she whispered brokenly. "What—what do you want here?"

Noel encountered her gaze steadily, hands in pockets.

"Can't you guess?" he asked. "I've just returned from the Glenelgin Pass, where a young friend of mine escaped death by a seeming miracle."

"What has that to do with me?" countered the girl, shrinking from his gaze.

Noel shrugged, and glanced down at the bagpipes.

"I think," he rejoined dryly, "that you are in a better position to answer that question, Jean Douglas."

"You know my name?" whispered the girl.

"I inquired in the village."

The girl's eyes flashed bitterly. "Why are you spying on me? What do you want?"

"The truth!" snapped Noel, as his hand fell unexpectedly on her shoulder.

"This village is being terrorised by an

girl's manner. Till now she had been unresponsive, tearful; but now she flared up angrily, snatching the bagpipes from Noel's hand with a gesture that was almost fiercely protective.

"Ye'll no touch them!" she gasped. "They belong to someone who is very dear to me—"

Her voice broke as she pointed towards the door. "Go!" she ordered.

Noel bowed slightly. He realised that he had no right to stay against the girl's wishes.

"Perhaps," he said quietly, "we shall meet again in the near future, Jean Douglas."

The girl made no reply as she held open the door.

Her dark eyes followed him as he stepped out into the misty dusk; the door slammed behind him, and there came the rattling of a bolt and chain.

Noel smiled grimly. His visit to the lonely cottage had not been wasted; his suspicions were more than confirmed.

In some way the Highland girl was connected with the spectre of the glen, but the exact nature of that connection Noel had as yet to discover.

As there was still some time before his appointment with the young hikers,

Noel decided to follow a certain line of inquiry.

Collecting his car from the garage where he had left it he drove to the neighbouring town.

His first visit was to a chemist's shop. The owner was on the point of closing for the night, but when Noel produced his card he found the chemist only too willing to help him.

"I want a roll of films developed—quickly," explained the young detective. "Could you do it within an hour?"

"I can promise that, sir."

Noel produced the roll of films. He had extracted them unobtrusively from Beryl's camera, replacing them with a new roll of his own.

He hoped that the young hiker would forgive him for the little deception, but he had been particularly anxious not to disclose his suspicions until they were more fully confirmed.

Beryl had taken one snap before she met with her accident, and Noel believed that the picture might prove to be of value!

His next visit was to the local police station, where he remained for some time with the superintendent.

No mention was made of the Highland lass, Jean Douglas. Noel confined his inquiries to certain strange activities known to have taken place in the neighbourhood of Glenelgin over the past year.

There was a curious glint in his eyes as he left the station and drove back to the chemist's shop.

The film was ready for him, and Noel returned to his car to examine the negatives by torchlight.

A soft, bewildered whistle escaped his lips.

The vital snapshot was badly blurred, as he had anticipated; but unmistakably it gave an impression of a spectral figure, in Highland costume!

That in itself was sufficient proof that his eyes had not deceived him; but it was something else that riveted Noel's attention.

Around the figure, almost like a veil, was an impression of falling water!

Yet there was no waterfall on that side of the gorge. The famous Elsnore Fall had been within view—but on the other side of the glen!

What strange trick of the light could have transferred it to the picture?

The camera could not lie.

Even as Noel grappled with the problem a glimmer of a solution dawned on him—a strange, almost incredible solution, that sent his pulses racing.

He must put it to the test, without loss of time!

DANGER BY THE WATERFALL

THE young detective glanced at his watch, and a whistle of dismay escaped his lips. In pursuing his inquiries he had forgotten the time. Now it was close on nine o'clock, and he had promised to collect the girl hikers for their moonlight outing!

Noel drove all out on his way back to the village; he was afraid that he would have to disappoint the two girls, but he'd find some way of making it up to them.

It was nearly half-past nine when he pulled up outside their hotel and hurried into the lobby.

The clerk at the reception desk glanced up inquiringly as Noel approached.

"I should like to speak to Miss Beryl Farr," said Noel.

The clerk looked up at the rows of keys on the wall.

"I'm sorry, sir; Miss Farr and her friend went out about twenty minutes ago. She left a message to say that they were going to visit the Elsnore Falls."

Noel caught in his breath sharply, his face paling.

"Is that all?" he demanded. "Was there no other message?"

The clerk hesitated.

"Not exactly, sir; but Miss Farr's friend seemed—seemed nervous, sir. She was trying to dissuade her. Miss Farr laughed, and refused to listen."

Noel raced back to his car like a madman. There was still time to overtake the two girls, if he was quick—and overtake them he must.

He rammed his foot on the self-starter, and the car swung out of the village street, heading for the steep road that led to the pass.

The brilliant headlights of the car revealed the gaunt cliffs towering on either side. To Noel's ears came the distant thunder of falling water.

And still he saw no signs of the young hikers.

And then, unexpectedly, came disaster. With an ominous rumble, a huge boulder crashed down from the cliff into the middle of the narrow road.

There was a screaming of brakes as Noel strove vainly to stop the car in time. He swerved frantically, dragging at the wheel. The big car lurched with a crash into a yawning crevice at the side of the road.

Noel, his face cut and bruised, scrambled out, as a girl's pitiful scream came faintly to his ears.

"BERYL, what—what was that?"

Her face pale as death, Lily Dalston clung to her chum's arm.

"I told you not to come," she whispered brokenly. "You wouldn't believe that there was danger—"

Beryl Farr forced a quick, defiant laugh as she tossed her auburn hair back from her forehead.

"It was nothing," she declared.

"The cry of an owl. I'm not going to turn back now. Why, we're nearly in sight of the falls."

"You're just a bundle of nerves," added Beryl; but her voice sounded a trifle uneasy, in spite of herself.

In the moonlight the gorge looked eerie and impressive; the thunder of the falls came plainly to their ears.

"Come on!" urged Beryl. "I'll just take a few snaps, and then go back to the village."

Keeping close together, the two young hikers approached the falls.

The great cascade flashed and sparkled in the moonlight as it thundered on its way down the cliff, into the foaming rapids below.

And just then Lily gave a piercing cry, her eyes wide with horror. Beryl, following the direction of her chum's gaze, felt her heart turn cold.

On the other side of the gorge—like some fantastic illusion conjured from the moonlight and shadows—had appeared two dim shapes—the figure of a girl, struggling in the grasp of a gigantic Highlander.

Horrified, Beryl took a step forward, and a moment later she might have plunged to her death, dragging her chum with her, if a powerful hand had not caught her by the arm, jerking her back in the nick of time.

Noel Raymond stood on the ledge beside them, his boyish face white.

"Stand back!" he breathed huskily, his gaze fixed on the apparition across the gorge.

He raised his hand, and a revolver glinted in the moonlight.

"Don't—don't shoot!" choked Beryl.

There came a deafening report as Noel fired—a distant crash, and a tinkle of falling glass.

The apparition vanished!

"I thought as much," said Noel.

He turned suddenly, leaping for the waterfall behind them, scrambling over slippery rocks and boulders.

The amazed girl hikers saw him disappear into the spray.

Drenched, holding his breath, Noel plunged under the cascade, as a pitiful cry for help reached his ears.

A figure loomed in front of him, barring his way. Noel ducked, lunging out with his hand. There was a stifled grunt as his fist contacted with his assailant's chin, sending the man sprawling.

A big, brutal-looking man, wearing a faded Highland costume, he lay stretched on the rock.

Crouched against the cliff behind him, at the entrance of a cave, was a girl's slender figure.

"All right, Miss Douglas!" panted Noel, as he raised the girl in his arms.

She was almost in a state of collapse.

"Alec!" she breathed. "They've got him here—"

Noel nodded, and assisted the girl out of the falls. The two young hikers clustered round, with cries of sympathy and bewilderment.

"Who—who is it?" gasped Beryl.

"Why, it's the girl from the shop—the girl who warned us!"

"And the young lady who saved your life," put in Noel gravely. "The spectre of the glen was merely a reflection in a mirror, cunningly placed in a crevice in the cliff across the gorge to scare visitors who might come this way."

"The man himself stood in a niche above the falls, just here, where no one would think of looking for him. He is a member of a gang of jewel thieves who have been operating over a wide neighbourhood for the past year."

"I fancy they used one of the caves near here as their 'factory' for melting down the gold. Jean Douglas' brother tumbled to their secret, and was kidnapped. But the scoundrels' game is up! I've arranged for the police to surround the gorge. Ah, here they are!"

An inspector appeared at that moment, and Noel left Jean in the care of the two young hikers as he directed the search.

Four members of the gang were rounded up, and Alec Douglas was found in a cave in a state of exhaustion.

It was the next morning when Noel and the two girl hikers paid a visit to the little cottage. Jean and Alec Douglas welcomed them as old friends, and the whole strange adventure was related again.

"Why did you mistrust me, in the first place, Jean?" asked Noel.

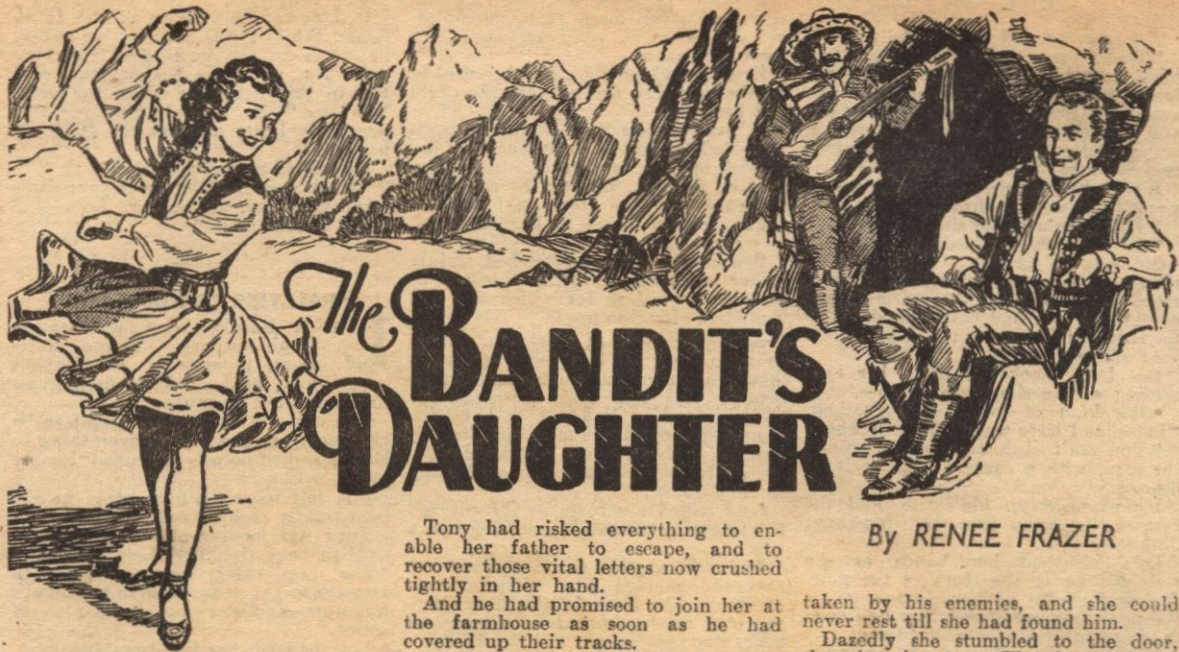
"There had been rumours that Alec was connected with the gang," she whispered, "and I was afraid you were from the police. I knew he was innocent, but I hadn't any proof. I was trying to find him for myself, and learn the truth."

Noel took her hand, smiling.

"I ken you're a brave lass, Jean Douglas," he remarked gravely.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

"THE FRIGHTENED SPEED GIRL." Don't miss this grand long mystery story, featuring Noel Raymond, next Friday.



The BANDIT'S DAUGHTER

By RENEE FRAZER

THE EMPTY HOUSE

LOLA SHARMAN was eager to win fame as a dancer in Mexico. But she also meant to clear her outlawed father's name, for he was now a bandit, known as the Grey Shadow.

Ramon Garcia, her father's enemy, captured the Grey Shadow; but Lola, helped by a young Englishman named Tony Creswick, rescued him. Seriously wounded, he was hidden in a deserted farmhouse, to be cared for by Pedro, his faithful lieutenant.

At Garcia's house, Lola and Tony found letters which would prove her father's innocence. Alone, Lola returned to the farm, carrying the letters.

But she found the house empty. Pedro and her father had vanished!

"FATHER! Pedro!"

Lola's voice rose sharply, brokenly as she raced from one deserted room into another. Only the mocking echoes replied—the hollow sound of her own footsteps on the boards; the faint moan of the wind as it swept through the broken casements.

Sobbing for breath, she halted, staring round her in the swift-gathering shadows.

"Father!" she whispered, a cold dread at her heart.

What had happened in her absence? What could have happened? While she had been dancing at the theatre, what grim, lurking peril had stolen on the wounded outlaw, and his faithful companion?

What was the meaning of the overturned furniture—the signs of a struggle?

In vain, she tried to find some other explanation; the dreadful conviction hammered in her mind.

She had recovered the proof of her father's innocence—too late. His enemies had struck first!

With an effort she pulled herself together, taking a firmer grip on her racing thoughts. It was useless to give way to panic. She must try to think clearly—to form some plan of action.

Involuntarily her thoughts flashed to Tony—the boy to whose unexpected aid she owed so much.

Tony had risked everything to enable her father to escape, and to recover those vital letters now crushed tightly in her hand.

And he had promised to join her at the farmhouse as soon as he had covered up their tracks.

Tony would know what to do. He had never failed her, even when she had doubted his friendship, and she was certain he would not fail her now.

With this conviction, Lola fought back her fears, preparing to wait till Tony arrived.

But the time dragged past; minutes lengthened into hours. And still Tony did not come.

White-faced, Lola crouched by the window, peering out into the darkness, her ears strained for the sound of footsteps, or Tony's cheery whistle.

But she heard nothing, except the moan of the rising wind, the tapping of the trailing creeper against the window.

Why didn't Tony come? Something must have happened to delay him. He couldn't have forgotten.

Lola felt that her nerves would snap if she waited any longer.

She must put an end to this suspense. If Tony failed to come, she would set out on her own, in search of her father. Precious time had been lost. Her father was ill—perhaps dying.

With a stifled sob, Lola groped her way across the room, and dropped to her knees beside the rough couch of straw on which the wounded bandit had lain.

"Dad," she breathed, "I'll find you, whatever has happened! Wherever you are!"

Outside, the wind was rising swiftly, foretelling a storm—one of those devastating hurricanes that sweep at times across the arid plains of Mexico, carrying all before them.

But Lola gave no thought to the danger of the elements. Somewhere, out in the night, her father had been

taken by his enemies, and she could never rest till she had found him.

Dazedly she stumbled to the door, throwing it open. The force of the gale almost swept her off her feet, and a spatter of rain stung her face.

For a moment she clung to the door, staring out into the night.

Which way should she go? A mile to her right lay the town of San Paseo, its scattered lights winking beyond the trees. But she had only recently come from the town, and she doubted if the enemy could have passed without her seeing them.

The only other road led to the distant hills.

The hills!
Lola's pulses quickened instinctively, and she drew a sharp breath as a glimmer of lightning cut through the lowering clouds, revealing the snow-capped peaks standing out like grim sentinels against the sky.

She felt a sudden, strange conviction that her bandit-father was hidden somewhere out among the hills. The enemy had taken him there to question him—in an attempt to force him to reveal his secret.

A desperate gleam flashed into Lola's eyes as the wind swept her dark hair across her face, and the door of the old farmhouse slammed heavily behind her.

Blindly she stumbled out into the gale, making for the winding road.

A rattle of wheels sounded above the moan of the wind. A ramshackle cart lurched into view, coming from the direction of the hills.

Its driver, a travelling pedlar, was whipping up his horse furiously, obviously anxious to reach the town before the full force of the gale burst upon him.

Lola waved her scarf anxiously, and the man drew rein, peering at her with undisguised suspicion.

"What do you want?" he shouted. "A lift?"

Lola shook her head as she stumbled forward.

"Have you passed anyone going towards the hills?" she gasped. "A party of horsemen, or—"

"A carriage passed me—not half a mile down the road," rejoined the man, in surly tones. "It was driven like fury—a pest on the driver! Nearly had me over the edge of the ravine."

"Did you—you didn't see who was

How happy Tony's words made Lola! For the boy who had once been so determined to capture her bandit father was now one of his most loyal followers!

inside?" faltered Lola, her heart sinking.

The man nodded unexpectedly.

"There was a grand senior, and two other men with him; the carriage was forced to pull up, because my cart was across the road. The senior sprang out and shouted at me as though I were a mongrel dog. One of his companions seemed to be ill—or wounded—"

A stifled cry escaped Lola's lips as her worst fears were confirmed.

"Which—which way did they go?"

"To the right—towards Santa Crede—but why do you ask? I am wasting time, answering your questions. I must reach the town before this storm breaks overhead. You had better climb on to the cart and come with me, if you value your safety."

But Lola shook her head, her eyes shining with a desperate purpose.

"It's kind of you," she breathed, "but—but I have to go the other way."

"You are foolish, *senorita*," rejoined the man, with a shrug. "But it is no concern of mine."

He whipped up his horse, and the cart rattled away into the wind-swept darkness.

Lola clenched her hands as she stumbled on in the teeth of the gale. Her last doubts had been banished by the pedlar's story; her father had been taken prisoner—for a second time!

But this time it was not an open arrest; it was a furtive and dastardly kidnapping. Lola could guess what had prompted Ramon Garcia to make this move. He must have discovered the trick that Tony had played on him—and returned to find that the vital letters—the proof of the Grey Shadow's innocence—had been removed from his safe!

Once their contents were deciphered, he realised that all his schemes would be ruined. And he had acted with characteristic swiftness—though Lola could not imagine how he had discovered her father's hiding-place.

Not that it mattered now; nothing mattered excepting the dreadful fact that the Grey Shadow was in the hands of his arch-enemy—a man who did not know the meaning of the word "mercy"; who would stop at nothing in order to gain his ends!

Lola shuddered convulsively as she groped her way through the rain-swept night.

She had no plan—no idea what she could do unaided, even if she traced her father.

And how could she hope to trace him? She knew nothing beyond what the pedlar had told her—that the carriage had taken the lonely road that forked to the right beyond the ravine.

But that road led to Santa Crede—ten miles away; and between lay a wild and hilly tract of country, broken here and there by a lonely hacienda or tumble-down peasant's cottage.

To attempt the journey on foot seemed a forlorn and hopeless quest; but Lola was resolved not to turn back.

One faint glimmer of hope alone prevented her giving way to despair.

Pedro, her father's loyal lieutenant, would never have deserted his chief. If he had escaped capture, Lola believed that he would make his way to the bandits' erstwhile stronghold—in an attempt to rally the scattered band of outlaws!

It was only recently that he had spoken to her of his plan; but then neither of them had dreamed how swiftly the enemy would strike.

Clinging to this hope, Lola determined to make her way to the secret stronghold. It was a frail chance—but it was something to cling to, to buoy up her sinking spirits.

Luckily, she knew the road; she had traversed it on more than one unforgettable occasion, when setting out to meet her father.

Even though on foot, and hemmed in by the darkness, she believed she could find her way.

A brilliant flash of lightning split the clouds at that moment, enabling her to pick out her landmarks. She struggled on pluckily, buffeted by the wind, drenched by the torrential rain—a slight, forlorn figure in her colourful, bedraggled attire.

Beneath her shawl, clutched tightly in her hand, was the precious bundle of letters—the letters for which she and Tony had risked so much.

All the Powers of Darkness seemed to have been let loose that night—as though summoned up at Ramon Garcia's behest. The very trees bordering the road seemed to lash out at her with their wind-tossed branches, howling in mockery at her efforts; a flight of bats, driven from the cliffs, flapped blindly in her face.

Lola stifled a scream as she covered her face with her hands, breaking into a run.

And now another sound reached her ears—the muffled roar of a near-by cataract. She knew by the sound that she was approaching the ravine—and every step was fraught with peril.

But the danger came from a direction she least expected.

High above her, on the precipitous face of the cliff, a withered tree was dislodged by the fury of the gale, bringing away with it a mass of loosened rocks and stones.

Lola heard the ominous crack—and a vivid glare of lightning revealed her deadly peril.

Momentarily paralysed, she stood there, not knowing which way to run.

She heard a shout—and turned, as a tall figure sprang from a ledge of rock and caught her in his arms, dragging her aside.

Only within a split fraction of time! With a sickening crash, the tree fell across the road, followed by a hail of stones and loose rubble.

Faint, half-sobbing, Lola clung to her rescuer as another vivid flash lit up his face.

"Tony!" she choked.

Pale, dishevelled, his face and clothes streaming with water, a deep gash on his forehead, Tony held her tightly by the shoulders.

"Lola—thank Heaven!" he muttered.

Then, ere she could find words, the lightning again revealed his face. And now he was smiling—the old whimsical smile she knew so well.

"You'd just left when I reached the farmhouse!" he panted. "I met a pedlar chap along the road—he told me he'd seen you. I took a short cut—but, gosh, it was a near shave!"

He caught her by the hands, holding them tightly.

Lola stared up at him tearfully, with a gratitude for which she could not find words.

But there was something she had to tell him—something that would not brook delay.

"Tony—my father—" she whispered.

"I know!" said Tony; his voice was suddenly grim. "I was too late to prevent it—to warn you. Garcia caught me searching through the papers. He realised that the game was up. There was a fight"—he laughed shortly—"and Garcia got the worst of it. But the police arrived, and I only escaped by the skin of my teeth."

"Then—then—" faltered Lola.

"The blighter must have found a

paper I dropped in the scuffle. I'd jotted down the address of the farmhouse. While I was dodging the police, he drove to the house and got your dad. But we're not beaten yet, Lola! I'm in this with you up to the neck. You see"—he smiled grimly—"I've burnt my boats and cut the jolly old hawser!"

He smiled at her whimsically.

"From now on I'm one of your dad's loyal followers—an outlaw, Lola—and yours to command!"

RALLYING THE OUTLAWS

LOLA hardly knew whether to laugh or cry. Tony's statement, in spite of its flippant tone, held a ring of earnestness that could not be mistaken.

The boy she had once thought to be her enemy had sacrificed everything to help her—had become an outlaw for her sake!

She felt too choked to reply as she held tightly to his hand.

Tony was looking at her seriously.

"I've been thinking, Lola," he said. "The best thing we can do is to attempt to get in touch with your dad's followers—and draw up some plan of action."

Lola nodded, her lips trembling.

"I'd thought of that," she admitted. "But I'm glad you're with me, Tony. It isn't so easy for a girl to take command—in her father's place. It was different with Pedro; but the others might resent my giving orders—or make fun of me—"

"I'd like to see any of 'em try—while I'm around!" commented Tony gruffly. "But we're wasting time, and you'll catch your death of cold if you stand here. I think we might make a dash for it. Hang on to my arm and we'll make for the bridge."

Together they raced across the road, escaping another fall of cliff by a sheer miracle. It was as they reached the ravine that a glare of lightning revealed to Lola something lying in the middle of the road.

It was a broad-brimmed felt hat, muddy and badly crushed as though by the wheels of a carriage; but Lola recognised it at once.

"Tony—look!" she gasped. "That's Pedro's hat."

Tony whistled softly as he pounced on it. They examined it together in the shelter of the rocks.

And it was Lola who discovered a scrap of paper thrust under the torn lining.

"It's a message," she whispered, "from Pedro. Quick, Tony—a light!"

Tony struck a match, shielding it with his hands. Lola's fingers trembled as she smoothed out the paper.

The faint, pencilled message had obviously been scribbled under difficulties, and was barely decipherable:

"... finder ... this ... theatre San Paseo ... prisoners ... Barranca ... desperate ..."

"What does it mean?" gasped Lola.

"Clear as daylight!" snapped Tony.

"Listen: 'Will finder take this note to the theatre at San Paseo. Inform La Bella Lola that we are prisoners at the Hacienda Barranca. Position desperate.' That's what it looks like to me."

Lola nodded, her face pale, but her eyes alight with excitement.

"You're right, Tony! The Hacienda Barranca—that's Senor Garcia's

country house, where you once took me. Pedro must have overheard their plans and contrived to throw his hat from the window of the carriage."

They stared at each other in the darkness; Tony's hand tightened reassuringly over hers.

"Don't worry!" he breathed. "We'll find a way of outwitting the blighters yet—but we'll need help. Somehow we must get in touch with your father's band of outlaws! Any chance of finding them here?"

He stared round at the wild, forlorn vista of hills, dark against the lowering sky.

"There may be a chance," whispered Lola. "Father told me once that many of his followers were men who had been ruined by Garcia; they have no other homes. They are probably hiding out here, awaiting their leader's return."

"We'll risk it, anyway!" muttered Tony. "Hang on to me, Lola; we've got to get across that bridge."

The narrow footbridge across the rapids was a treacherous path at the best of times. To-night, in the fury of the storm, the crossing was even more hazardous.

Lola doubted if she could have faced it on her own; but Tony's strong arm lent her courage.

The water hissed and foamed beneath their feet as they made their way across the slippery bridge. Once Lola stumbled and might have fallen headlong into the torrent if Tony had not dragged her from the brink.

They were both pale and shaken when they reached the far side and stepped into the shelter of the gorge.

"What now?" panted Tony.

"The signal," whispered Lola. "In a minute—I'll try."

Waiting till she had recovered her breath, she gave the bandits' signal—the weird cry of a coyote. Twice she repeated the call, and she and Tony listened—straining their ears for a reply.

But they could hear nothing above the howl of the wind and the roar of the falling water.

Lola's heart sank. She realised that they were banking on a frail chance. It was more than probable that her father's loyal followers had disbanded and were scattered far and wide among the hills.

Yet without their aid, what could she and Tony hope to do, pitted against an enemy as cunning and powerful as Ramon Garcia—a man who had a force of paid ruffians at his command?

Despairingly she repeated the signal in a momentary lull in the wind; then her heart gave an incredulous bound as she heard what seemed to be an echo. Or was it a reply?

Her doubts banished the next minute as a light flashed overhead.

"Who goes there?" came a husky shout.

"Lola, the bandit's daughter," replied Lola swiftly, "and a friend!"

"What is the password?"

"Justice!" called Lola.

There was an immediate response. A stealthy figure emerged from a cave in the cliff, followed quickly by others.

In a moment Lola and Tony were surrounded by the bedraggled, picturesque members of her father's late band, led by a burly ranchero, one Manuel Gonzala.

"Senorita," exclaimed Manuel, as he started forward, hat in hand, "it is good to see you! But your father—the Grey Shadow—we have heard no news since his escape."

Tears started into Lola's eyes.

"Alas! Manuel, he has been recap-

itured, and Pedro, too! They have been taken prisoners to Ramon Garcia's house!"

A low murmur arose from the outlaws. Many of them looked scowling, despondent.

Manuel's swarthy face fell. He glanced sharply at Tony.

"And he—Who, then, is the young senor?" he demanded suspiciously.

Lola smiled tremulously as she drew Tony forward.

"This is Senor Tony Creswick, my loyal friend. It was he who assisted my father to escape from prison, and he is now an outlaw like ourselves."

"Glad to meet you fellows!" said Tony, holding out his hand frankly to Manuel.

The burly ranchero shook hands warmly, but the others hung back, obviously distrusting the well-spoken young stranger in their midst.

Manuel beckoned Lola and Tony aside. There was a worried look on his face.

"Senorita," he confided, "things have

"You bet I will!" rejoined the boy tersely.

—Lola, accompanied by Tony and Manuel, approached the mouth of the cave. The outlaws had gathered sullenly round a glowing fire, and were muttering in undertones. Snatches of their conversation reached Lola's ears.

"We can't go on with it, comrades!"

"It's a fool's game, with no reward! The Grey Shadow has been captured. Who knows which of us'll be the next?"

"To take orders from a girl! Bah, it is madness!"

Lola bit her lip, but her step did not falter as she approached. The murmurs died down promptly, and there was an awkward silence.

She stood in the glow of the firelight, a slight, appealing figure in her bedraggled finery. Her gaze swept the scowling group, seeking in vain for a friendly glance.

"Fellow outlaws—" she began breathlessly.

A sullen murmur was her only reply.

Tears started into Lola's eyes, but she fought them back pluckily.



"Lola, what do you mean?" asked Tony sharply. "If anyone is to take a risk for my father's sake, then it must be me," Lola answered simply. "My mind is made up!"

changed since you were last with us. Without your father's influence, the men are becoming unruly, dissatisfied. They are tired of waiting. Many of them are for abandoning the quest, and taking to plunder and robbery in your father's name."

"Manuel," cried Lola, her face paling, "that mustn't be! We must persuade them to stand by us till my father has been rescued. I have the proof that will expose Garcia for the villain that he is, and will redeem all our fortunes; but only my father can decipher it. They must stand by us."

Manuel shrugged despondently.

"If only you could persuade them, senorita! I have tried, and failed. The men are disgruntled, on the verge of mutiny."

Lola glanced quickly at Tony as he laid a restraining hand on her arm.

"Careful, Lola!" he breathed huskily. "Better let me handle this."

But Lola shook her head quickly. Her face was pale, but there was an indomitable gleam in her eyes.

"It's my job, Tony," she whispered. "But I'd like you to stand by me."

She realised that the crowd was against her—that nothing she could say at the moment would move them. If only she could strike some spark in their sullen indifference—

Lola drew in her breath sharply as her glance rested on something lying near the mouth of the cave—a mandolin!

Her heart beat quickly as her thoughts flashed back to a certain unforgettable night—the night when her father had first revealed the secret of his mountain lair; when, by the leaping fires, she had danced at his behest to the outlaw band assembled to greet her.

She had swayed them then, and she could sway them again! Where reason would fail, the appeal of music and dancing might perhaps soften their hearts.

Her hand tightened on Tony's arm, and she glanced at him in swift appeal.

"Play for me, Tony," she whispered. "It's our only chance!"

The boy seemed to grasp her meaning. He nodded, a gleam of admiration in his eyes as he picked up the

mandolin and ran his fingers over the strings.

The sullen murmurs died away. The outlaws stared, surprised at first, and then with interest, as Lola threw her tattered shawl back from her shoulders and commenced to dance.

She chose instinctively the gipsy dance that had first captivated her public—the dance that held so poignant an appeal.

She forgot the sullen, suspicious faces of her onlookers. Once again she was back on the stage, holding captivated a vast audience; once again she was Marquita, the Romany girl—sentenced to banishment from her tribe—dancing for their mercy!

The soft undercurrent of the music, mingled with the distant sound of the storm, made a strangely impressive accompaniment.

The outlaws watched her in silence, fascinated in spite of themselves. Their grim faces softened as they watched; sullen scowls gave place to uneasy, remorseful glances.

As Lola concluded her dance, sinking to the ground in a gesture of almost despairing appeal, a deep-throated murmur arose—a murmur that swelled into a shout of applause.

"Bravo, senorita!"

"Carramba! You have lost nothing of your skill."

Lola encountered Tony's smiling glance. Her own eyes were shining through her tears.

She rose to her feet, holding out her hands.

"Fellow outlaws!"

The applause died down; there was silence as Lola faltered out her improvised speech.

"Fellow outlaws, your leader, the Grey Shadow, has been taken prisoner—fighting for his honour and for yours! Are you going to leave him to his fate? Are you cowards who would desert the man who has been your friend for so long?"

There was a restless, uneasy silence as Lola stared round her.

Her face was pale. Her eyes were flashing now with mingled scorn and challenge.

She was using every ounce of her feminine wiles to lash them into action. But it was not merely acting. Lola's words rang with a desperate sincerity that came from her aching heart.

"If one of you were a captive, badly wounded, do you think he would have left you to die? I'm appealing to you for my father's life! Ramon Garcia knows no mercy. Unless we act swiftly—her voice choked—"my father may never be seen again—"

Lola broke down, clinging to Tony's arm.

A shout went up from the outlaw band—a shout that could not be mistaken. They surrounded her in a shamed, eager group.

"We are for you, senorita—every man of us!" declared their spokesman huskily.

"Good for you!" exclaimed Tony. "Lola, nothing will stop us now!"

Lola, tears in her eyes, stared round the group. She had won them to her side, and now—now for a plan—a plan to rescue her father!

It was Tony who made the suggestion:

"We can't just raid the house without making certain that our information is correct. We don't know where your father is hidden, or what force Garcia has at his disposal. If only we had a spy inside the house—someone we could trust—"

"Carramba, that is bad luck!" exclaimed one of the men, a youth named

Jose. "My cousin was employed at the house as a serving-maid, but she was treated so badly by Garcia's daughter that she gave up the job."

Lola caught in her breath sharply, a reckless gleam flashing into her eyes. "You don't know—you haven't heard if they have found a girl to take her place?"

Jose shrugged, glancing at her curiously.

"I think not, senorita. It was only a day or two ago that she left, and servants are not easy to obtain out in the hills."

Lola clenched her hands, staring at Tony.

"Then—then there's a chance!" she whispered. "A wandering gipsy girl might offer her services, and they might take her on temporarily, if only to work in the kitchen. But she would be able to use her eyes—and her ears."

"Lola!" exclaimed Tony sharply. "Lola, what do you mean?"

She met his anxious gaze steadily.

"If anyone is to take a risk for my father's sake, then I must be that one," she breathed. "Tony, please don't try to dissuade me; my mind is made up."

IN THE HOUSE OF HER ENEMY

TONY remonstrated, urging that some safer way could be found; but no other suggestion equalled Lola's daring plan.

As she pointed out, she would actually be inside the house where her father was imprisoned, and able to communicate with the rest of the band.

She might even contrive to see her father—to speak to him. Her pulses quickened at the thought.

"You must help me to go through with it, Tony," she breathed. "You must!"

At length reluctantly Tony gave way. It was arranged that he should accompany Lola to the hacienda early the next morning, and wait in the vicinity until he received her signal.

Acting on her information, he would lay his plans, after consulting with the other outlaws.

Lola could not sleep that night, though a couch had been made up for her in one of the caves.

She lay wide awake, her thoughts racing, her plans for the morrow coupled with fleeting wistful memories.

She thought of her dancing career—the career that she would have to sacrifice on the very brink of new triumphs. To-morrow night her audience would await her appearance in vain.

Mr. Sanders had spoken of a world tour—a trip to England—an appearance in London itself.

But that was all over now. Lola bit her lip hard, staring up into the darkness. This was no time for vain regrets. Nothing mattered now, excepting her father's safety—nothing!

Towards the morning Lola dropped into a fitful, dream-haunted sleep, to awake with a start as the first grey light of the dawn crept into the cave.

She set out with Tony on horseback as the rising sun sent shafts of dazzling light across the snow-clad peaks.

They rode in silence for a time, occupied with their own thoughts.

Once or twice Lola stole a glance at her companion's handsome, boyish face. Tony looked pale and unusually grave.

He encountered her glance and smiled quizzically, the stern lines of his features relaxing.

"We'll soon be in sight of the hacienda, Lola," he said. "You still mean to go through with this plan of yours?"

"Of course!" replied Lola quickly, stifling the momentary fears that gripped her heart.

There was admiration in Tony's eyes as he drew rein.

"We'd better dismount here," he breathed. "You'll have to alter your appearance first."

Lola nodded as Tony assisted her to the ground. She bit her lip to hide its momentary tremor.

"I've got the stain that Manuel gave me, and I'll arrange my hair in a different fashion," she whispered. "It won't take long."

In the shelter of a clump of trees Lola set to work to alter her appearance, while Tony kept watch.

When she rejoined him, at length, an involuntary ejaculation of surprise escaped the boy's lips.

"Great Scott, Lola, I'd hardly have recognised you!" he declared admiringly. "You're a Romany to the life! Dash it! I don't like the idea of your putting your head in the lion's den, so to speak; but I'm not going to try to dissuade you if you're set on it. Don't forget, I'll be waiting around if you need me!"

He gripped her hand tightly as they parted. Unable to trust herself to speak, Lola broke away from him and hurried through the trees towards the house, fearful lest her courage should desert her.

At the servants' entrance she was confronted by a sour-faced woman, presumably the housekeeper.

"What do you require, girl?" demanded the woman, regarding Lola suspiciously.

With a timidity that was partly assumed and partly genuine, Lola blurted out the story she had already planned.

She had tramped many miles in search of work. If the senora would be kind enough to give her a job—no matter how menial—she would gladly carry out her duties for food and lodgings alone.

The woman hesitated, a calculating gleam in her eyes. No doubt she saw a way of making profit out of this simple gipsy girl, who would work for nothing while the other pocketed her wages.

"Very well," she said briefly. "Come in!"

Lola's heart gave a bound as she stepped into the darkened kitchen.

The woman pointed to a pile of greasy dishes, ordering her to wash them; after a moment she departed, leaving Lola to her task.

Her heart beating wildly, Lola stared round her. Now was her chance!

There was a door on the far side of the kitchen, and she opened it cautiously, staring along a dimly lit passage.

Her pulses racing, she slipped through the doorway, recklessly determined to explore.

But her hopes were doomed to be shattered. As she reached a bend in the passage someone appeared suddenly round the corner—a tall girl, carrying a tray.

Lola's heart gave a violent jump as she drew back—but too late.

The girl gave a startled ejaculation, and her hand fell on Lola's shoulder.

Lola found herself staring into the dark, angry eyes of her old enemy, Maria Garcia!

Maria looked furious—almost scared. "Who are you?" she gasped. "What are you doing here? I believe I have seen you before!"

Make certain of reading next Friday's enthralling long chapters of this grand story. Order your **GIRLS' CRYSTAL to-day!**

DAPHNE'S FEUD with the PHANTOM FOUR



THE PHANTOM FOUR'S PLOT

DAPHNE MORETON was made sports leader on her very first day at Seacliffe College. Her uncle was delighted, and hinted that her new position might mean more to her than she dreamed.

Then Daphne discovered that there was a mysterious secret society, called the Phantom Four, who were plotting against her and trying to prevent sporting rivalry between Seacliffe and St. Chad's School. Thanks to them, there was soon bad feeling between the two Fourth Forms. But no one knew to which school the Phantom Four belonged.

Daphne discovered that they had planned to steal the gold cup which was to be presented at the forthcoming swimming gala, in which the rival schools were taking part.

"OH, I can't believe it, Daphne—I can't believe that the Phantom Four really mean to steal the gold cup!"

Her eyes wide with horror, Betty gazed at her chum.

"It does seem impossible," admitted Daphne, "but we've got to face facts—and this news about the gold cup being on show at the gala to-morrow changes the whole situation, you know."

"But why should they want the cup?" asked the Form captain. "They'd never dare try to steal it. It would be useless to them."

Daphne frowned. She was as amazed and as perplexed as her chum. Though the coveted trophy was called a gold cup, it wasn't really made of gold, and its value was comparatively small. Besides, as Betty had said, the Phantom Four could never hope to dispose of it. Then what could their object be?

"It's a real puzzle," Daphne declared. "I wish Miss Bebb hadn't gone away. She'd advise us what to do."

"What about old Waggy?" suggested Betty. "Couldn't we consult her?"

Daphne laughed; there was something grimly amusing in the thought that they should tell their vinegary Form-mistress of their suspicions.

"You know she'd never believe us," she commented.

Betty nodded reluctant agreement, then she frowned. What, then, were they to do? They must take some step to frustrate the secret society's audacious plans.

"There's only one thing for it," declared Daphne. "We must warn Rosalie—try to get her to persuade her headmistress of what's afoot."

By GAIL WESTERN

started to make their way across the river.

As the opposite bank was neared, however, Daphne shipped her oar. Her keen ears had caught the sound of voices coming from the near-by back-water.

"That'll be Rosalie & Co.," she said. "Come on—there's no need to go all the way up to the school."

Betty hesitated. The backwater had been put out of bounds to all Seacliffe Fourth Formers. Still, under the circumstances, she decided, there couldn't be any objection to going there.

"O.K.," she said, and they rowed for the side stream.

As they entered it they saw that practically the whole of the rival Fourth Form was on the water. Crowded into five ordinary rowing boats, they were holding an impromptu race, but as the Seacliffe skiff was seen, the St. Chad's girls came to an abrupt halt. Rosalie, standing, their rather haughty leader, stared in angry surprise, then gave a shout:

"Well, of all the cheek! What do you two want? After all that's happened I shouldn't have thought you'd have dared show your faces!"

Her words made Betty's cheeks glow, but Daphne gave her a nudge. The last thing she wanted now was a quarrel.

"Sorry to butt in, Rosalie," she said quietly, "but we've come on important business."

Rosalie gave a derisive laugh. "Nonsense! There's no important business for us to discuss. You can't deceive us. You've come here on another of your underhand stunts. I know what you Seacliffe girls are."

Daphne went as red as her chum, but with an effort she kept her temper.

"Please be serious, Rosalie," she urged. "When you've heard what I've got to say—"

"Thanks, but I don't want to hear it," cut in Rosalie, with a toss of her head. "So you can clear off as fast as you came."

"But—"
Daphne was not allowed to get any further, for from the rest of the St. Chad's girls came an irate chorus:

"Do as you're told! We don't want you here!"

And determined to see their order carried out, the Fourth Formers came rowing down-stream towards the skiff. Betty, furious at the hostile way they had been received, turned and glowered at her chum.

"Rosalie!" Betty looked doubtful, for she knew that the captain of the Fourth Form at the rival school would be as difficult to convince as Miss Wagstaffe. "She'd only laugh at us," she objected.

"We'll have to chance that," said Daphne. "We can't sit back and do nothing. Come on, let's slip across to St. Chad's right away. There's just time before roll-call, if we hurry."

Knowing that there would be trouble if they were late back, they dashed out of the school and went racing across the quad to the steep flight of steps that led down to the landing-stage.

In their hurry they did not notice the tall, angular figure that was taking a stroll along the cliff edge.

Mis Wagstaffe!
At sight of the two Fourth Formers, the mistress halted, her eyes narrowing suspiciously.

Where were these two girls going at this time of the evening? And why were they looking so excited?

Miss Wagstaffe was not feeling at all friendly towards Daphne and Betty. She held them responsible for the wave of sporting enthusiasm that had swept over the Form—and she strongly disapproved of all forms of sport. She regarded it as a waste of time; thought it interfered with lessons.

Now, where were these two girls off to in such a hurry—just before roll-call, too?

Miss Wagstaffe pursed her thin lips. Daphne and Betty had gone too far for her to call them back and question them. So she moved behind a tree, and from there she kept watch.

Daphne and Betty, ignorant of the mistress' movements, unmoored one of the school's light racing skiffs and

Daphne and Betty were the two hopes of the Seacliffe swimming team. How dismayed the Fourth Formers were when they learned that their leaders had been forbidden to attend the gala!

"Come on, don't argue with them," she snapped. "Here we come to do them a good turn and all the thanks we get is—here, steady on there!"

She finished with a startled cry, for one of the rowers had lunged out with her oar. The broad blade struck the light skiff on the bows, rocking it dangerously.

Desperately Betty tried to steady it, while Daphne looked appealingly across at Rosalie.

"Please listen to me," she cried. "It's about the Phantom Four we want to talk about. They're planning—"

But another impatient medley of shouts drowned her voice:

"Clear off, or you'll both get a ducking!"

"That's the idea!"

"Come on, show them we mean business!"

And like a miniature armada, the St. Chad's boats swarmed around the rocking, lurching skiff. Another oar lunged out, and Betty gasped as it struck her a glancing blow on the shoulder.

"Why, you bully!" she cried, and, clutching at the oar, she gave a hefty pull.

Its owner, taken by surprise, was pulled bodily out of her seat, and, losing her balance, she toppled head-first into the water.

"Oh, sorry!" gasped Betty, for she had not meant her impulsive action to have such a drastic sequel as this.

"So you ought to be!" snapped Rosalie. "But we'll get our own back. Come on, girls!"

In a moment they were all surging around the chums, grabbing and tugging at them. In the excitement none of them saw the ferry-boat that had come swinging round into the backwater. As well as the man in charge, it contained a tall, angular figure sitting stiffly upright.

Miss Wagstaffe!

Having seen Daphne and Betty depart in the skiff, she had hired a boat and quickly followed—arriving just in time to see Betty pull one of the rival Fourth Formers into the water.

In scandalised horror the Form-mistress watched the noisy struggle. She did not blame the St. Chad's girls. All her disapproval was reserved for Daphne and Betty. She believed that they had come here for the express purpose of picking a row with their rivals.

"After this, perhaps Miss Bebb will realise how right I was," she told herself. "But for her absurd leniency—"

Breaking off, she brandished her sunshade and made her presence known. The scuffling ceased like magic, and all the girls looked round in consternation. Sternly Miss Wagstaffe regarded them.

"And pray what does this scandalous scene mean?" she asked coldly. Rosalie opened her mouth to speak, but the Form-mistress held up her hand.

"Thank you, Rosalie, but I don't require any explanation from you. My words were addressed to these two girls." And with the point of her sunshade, she indicated Daphne and Betty.

The two chums sat there in dismay. Obvious it was that they could expect no sympathy from Miss Wagstaffe. She had already made up her mind they were the ones at fault.

"Well," she snapped, "I am waiting. Why did you deliberately pick a quarrel with these girls?"

Daphne flushed.

"But we didn't, Miss Wagstaffe!" she protested.

"It was they who started it!" added Betty hotly.

Miss Wagstaffe gave a derisive sniff.

"Nonsense. I saw the whole dis-

graceful scene with my own eyes. It was you, Betty Carr, who started the quarrel!"

"But she didn't!" protested Daphne again. "We both came here to—"

Again the Form-mistress silenced her.

"I am not interested in what brought you here. The fact that this backwater is out of bounds is sufficient to condemn you."

"But—"

"Silence! Not another word. You will return to school at once. I will deal with you in my study."

Ruefully Daphne and Betty rowed out of the backwater, but as Miss Wagstaffe prepared to follow, the St. Chad's girls exchanged sheepish glances, for they knew that the chums had not really been to blame.

"It's a bit thick letting them bear the brunt of it!" muttered Clara Grange.

Rosalie flushed.

"They're not going to do anything of the sort!" she said shortly. "St. Chad's always does the decent thing." And, standing up in the boat, she held up her hand. "Miss Wagstaffe!" she called.

"Yes, what is it?" asked the Form-mistress.

"It's about Daphne and Betty," began Rosalie, rather awkwardly, but Miss Wagstaffe refused to listen.

"It is very commendable of you to try to make excuses for them," she said, "but I am afraid I can listen to no pleas for leniency."

"But—"

"No, Rosalie, I cannot listen. This hooliganism must be stopped. Those girls must be dealt with severely!"

And, ignoring the further cry of protest that Rosalie made, she sat back in the stern, and signalled the ferryman to take her back across the river.

When she returned to her study she found Daphne and Betty awaiting her. The Form captain looked hot and resentful, but there was a glint of desperate entreaty in Daphne's grey eyes.

"Miss Wagstaffe," she gasped, "you simply must listen to what we have to say. We didn't go to St. Chad's to pick up a row. We went about the gold cup!"

"The gold cup?"

"Yes; you see, the Phantom Four are out to steal it!"

"What?"

"It's true—honestly it is, Miss Wagstaffe. And that's why we went to St. Chad's. We went to warn Rosalie, but she wouldn't listen, so—" Daphne broke off and flung out her hands appealingly. "Oh, something must be done to stop the Phantom Four!" she cried. "Won't you telephone Miss Flint?"

Miss Wagstaffe gave a harsh laugh. "I certainly will not, and let me inform you, Daphne Moreton, that you are not dealing with Miss Bebb now. Whatever effect your preposterous story might have on her, it certainly doesn't impress me!"

"It isn't preposterous!" flashed Betty, unable to keep quiet any longer. "It's the truth, and if you'd only be reasonable—"

"How dare you!" Miss Wagstaffe fairly quivered with anger. "Really, it's time you two girls were taken in hand. If this insolence is allowed to continue—" She paused and ominously she regarded them. "You will both stay in to-morrow afternoon!" she snapped.

"S-s-stay in?"

In consternation the chums stood there.

"But the swimming gala's to-morrow!" gasped Daphne.

Miss Wagstaffe nodded, her eyes glinting with satisfaction.

"I am perfectly aware of that, Daphne," she said coldly. "That is why I intend to keep you both in detention. If you are debarred from participating in this foolish sporting event, perhaps it will teach you a lesson."

"But—"

"That will do. Not another word, or I shall make your punishment even more severe."

And, with a stern wave of the hand, she dismissed them.

THE DAY OF THE GALA

"O H crumbs!"

"What are we to do now?"

"We were relying on you, Daphne, and on you, too, Betty." "If you both have to scratch, we—" Jean Hunter finished with a groan of despair. "We won't stand an earthly," she declared. "We're as good as beaten before we start."

That is what the rest of the Fourth thought. The chums had just broken the news, and in the junior Common-room the whole Form was discussing it.

It was amazing the change that had come over the Fourth Formers. Before Daphne and Betty had entered they had been in the highest of spirits, for they had had high hopes for to-morrow, not only of beating St. Chad's, but of earning valuable points that would put them well on the way to winning the coveted gold cup.

But now—

Glumly they stared at each other. It was not only that Daphne was their best swimmer, Betty their best diver—it was the fact that suddenly they felt leaderless.

All their enthusiasm, and all their inspiration they had derived from Daphne, and to-morrow, when they needed her most, she would not be with them.

Suddenly one of the girls swung round, her eyes ablaze, her cheeks flushed.

"It's a shame!" she burst out. "Old Waggy's no right to act like this. It's not as if Daphne and Betty have really done anything wrong."

"Hear, hear!"

There came a chorus of agreement, and Amy Tucker looked savagely up from the bar of chocolate she was nibbling.

"Miss Bebb wouldn't approve," she asserted. "She's keen on us winning to-morrow."

The others nodded, but their wry looks remained, for there was no chance of appealing to their head-mistress. She was away, and was not expected to return until after the gala.

Then what was the Fourth Form to do?

"What about all of us going to see Waggy together?" suggested Jean Hunter.

"That's the idea!"

The suggestion was taken up excitedly, for they felt their Form-mistress had been guilty of injustice.

"Come on, then!" said Jean, and indignantly she led the way to the door.

The rest of the girls surged after her, but Daphne, her face white with alarm, sprang forward and barred the way.

"Don't be a lot of chumps!" she gasped. "You'll only make matters worse. D'you want the whole team to be gated? That's what Miss Wagstaffe may do, you know. And, after

all, Betty and I aren't so important as that."

"Of course we aren't," agreed Betty. "Cool down, for goodness' sake, you hot-heads, and try to show what you really can do!"

"Yes, never say die!" urged Daphne. "If you all pull up your socks, there's no reason why you shouldn't win tomorrow, despite what's happened."

Desperately she tried to reason with them—tried to bring back to them all their old enthusiasm. She succeeded in stemming the headlong rush to Miss Wagstaffe's study; but for all her forced optimism, the Fourth Formers knew they stood but little chance at the gala.

So it was glumly that they went to answer roll-call—glumly that they retired to bed. And next morning it was as if a black cloud had settled over the Fourth Form class-room.

Miss Wagstaffe must have guessed the reason for their singular lack of attention, but she showed little sympathy. Indeed, she handed out lines at the slightest provocation.

Curiously enough, it was Daphne who escaped her scathing tongue. But that was not because she was concentrating on her lessons. Though her gaze seemed centred on her open history-book, her thoughts were far away.

At the moment she was not speculating on her team's chances. She was thinking of something even more serious—the gold cup! Did the Phantom Four really intend stealing it?

"If only Rosalie had listened to my warning!" she told herself. "If only Betty and I could be there to keep an eye on things!"

She sighed wistfully, for that seemed impossible now. When the bell rang, it was with sighs of relief the girls put away their books and prepared to depart, but Miss Wagstaffe called Daphne and Betty back.

"You will return here immediately after dinner," she said, "and you will remain here until tea, studying the next two chapters in your history-books."

"Very well, Miss Wagstaffe."

Glumly they nodded, and an hour later found them back at their desks. As they got out their books, the Form-mistress poked her head round the door.

"I am glad to see you're so obedient—for once," she said. "I trust you will not idle your time away. Unfortunately, I have an appointment, so will not be able to watch over you. However, when I return for tea, I shall expect you to have thoroughly mastered your subject."

As she spoke she took the key out of the door, and inserted it in the outside of the lock. She was taking no risks.

"The suspicious old cat!" muttered Betty, as Miss Wagstaffe withdrew, and there came a telltale click. "For two pins—"

Leaving the sentence unfinished, she flung down her book and crossed to the window, staring rebelliously out. The river was on the other side of the school, but though she could not see the gay, lighthearted crowd that had gathered there, she could hear their shouts.

Daphne, joining her, put a reckless hand on her shoulder.

"Shall we chance it?" she whispered. Betty gave a startled gasp.

"You mean—"

Daphne nodded.

"Yes; dodge out as soon as she's buzzed off! We can easily climb down the ivy. I know it's a risk,

but—" Daphne's face suddenly became grim and desperate. "It's not only the gala I'm thinking about," she declared. "It's the gold cup."

Betty did not hesitate. The glint in her eyes was as reckless as that which gleamed in Daphne's.

"I'm game if you are," she asserted. "After all, we've done nothing really wrong. If Miss Bebb was here—"

"But she isn't," Daphne pointed out. "And if old Waggy finds we've done a bunk—well, there'll be an awful row, you know."

"Bother old Waggy! Hang everything!" burst out Betty. "You can do as you like, but I'm going to chance it. I'm going to take part in the gala."

Daphne gave an approving nod.

"Same here," she said.

Their minds once made up, they refused to think of the consequences, but anxiously stood there, waiting for their Form-mistress to depart. Until she had left they dared not put their plan into action.

the locked-in chums, and on tenter-hooks of anxiety they waited for her to depart.

Already the Phantom Four might have carried out their ruthless scheme. Already the gold cup might have been stolen. And just as disturbing was the possibility that already the Seacliffe swimmers, discouraged by the absence of their two leaders, might have lost many valuable points.

"Oh, why doesn't she get a move on?" groaned Betty. "Why doesn't she go!"

And in an agony of suspense she crouched there.

THE Seacliffe Swimming Gala was one of the most popular events of the summer season. Not only teams from the two local boarding schools, but many others as well, competed in it, and people came from far and wide to enjoy the fun.

The grassy banks were lined with excitedly shouting spectators. The



In amazed delight the Fourth Formers stared at the chums. "Daphne and Betty!" "How did you get here?" they cried, for they knew their chums were supposed to be "gated," and had been forbidden to take part in the gala.

But the minutes passed, and still there was no sign of Miss Wagstaffe. In alarm Daphne looked at her wrist-watch.

"It's half-past two," she announced. "The gala will have begun. Listen! That sounded like the crack of a pistol. One of the events has just started."

Careless of being seen, they hung out of the window, straining their ears. From the other side of the school grounds came a medley of shouts, but it was impossible to tell what was happening.

"Who's winning, I wonder?" muttered Betty. "I hope Jean and the rest are keeping their end up. Oh, blow old Waggy! Why doesn't she go and keep her appointment? Why—"

She broke off, for suddenly Daphne had clutched at her arm.

"Look out!" came in a warning hiss.

Down they both ducked, for down in the quad below had appeared a tall, unmistakable figure—Miss Wagstaffe. But instead of making straight for the gate she stopped to talk to the school porter. Plainly their voices reached

fields beyond were covered with picnicking holiday-makers. The near-by fun fair was doing a roaring trade, and there was a constant stream of interested visitors through the big marquee that housed the collection of trophies and ancient relics lent by St Chad's.

Everyone was enjoying themselves—except the girls from Seacliffe College. Competitors and supporters alike were standing round the changing cabins, moodily watching the final of the inter-school relay race.

Jean Hunter and Norah Wills, the Seacliffe entrants, had been knocked out in the first heat. The Seacliffe team had also lost the obstacle race and the quarter-mile. In fact, as yet they had only managed to secure one third place.

"One miserable point," declared Jean savagely. "Oh, it's hopeless! Without Daphne to lead us—"

A wild, tumultuous roar drowned her voice. It announced that St. Chad's had gained yet another victory. Already they were twelve points to the good.

"Get ready for the hundred yards, please!"

The announcement came through the loudspeakers, and Jean gave another groan.

"I've a good mind to scratch!" she muttered. "None of us stand a chance against Rosalie. We might as well pack up!"

"Up, Seacliffe!"

The shout came from along the tow-path, and as the Seacliffe girls swung round in surprise, another indignant voice rang out:

"For goodness' sake cheer up, you girls! How do you expect to win if you give up easily like this!"

In amazed delight, the Fourth Formers stared at the two breathless figures that came running towards them—then a yell went up:

"Daphne and Betty!"

"Golly, but how did you get here?"

"Don't say old Waggy relented!"

Wonderingly they all stood there, and the chums shook their heads.

"Not likely!" said Betty.

"We've done a bunk!" added Daphne.

"Done a bunk! You mean—"

Jean Hunter drew in a horrified breath.

"But suppose old Waggy hears about it?" she gasped. "Suppose—"

"We'll suppose nothing of the sort!" cut in Daphne. "Stop groaning and get ready for the race. It's the hundred yards next, isn't it?" Jean nodded and Daphne made a dive for the nearest cabin. "Crumbs, then I'd better buck up and get changed!" she declared.

Betty was not a competitor—diving was her speciality—so she stayed outside and did her best to pump some optimism into the glum-faced Seacliffe girls. It was an easy task—now. Amazing was the difference that had come over them. Daphne was their leader, and now that she was here—

"We'll do it yet!" declared Jean Hunter, her eyes sparkling with new hope. "Just let St. Chad's wait! We'll show them!"

Inside the cabin, tearing off her clothes, Daphne chuckled as she heard their excited voices, then, as her gaze strayed to the window, she suddenly became grim.

For there, not fifty feet away, was the exhibition marquee that, amongst other trophies, housed the gold cup. Had the Phantom Four made their raid yet?

Daphne stared anxiously, then she cheered up as she saw the burly figure in blue that was on guard at the canvas door. A policeman!

"They'd never dare risk it, with him about," she told herself. "But blow the gold cup! The hundred yards is all that matters now. The first place is worth six points, if I could win—"

From outside the loudspeakers boomed again:

"Take up your positions, please! All ready for the hundred yards race!"

With desperate fingers Daphne donned her cheery green bathing costume. Everything depended on the next race. If she won it, then her team would be re-inspired, but if St. Chad's gained yet another victory—

"But they shan't—I won't let them!" she vowed fiercely, and off she rushed to the starting pontoon.

THE PHANTOM FOUR STRIKE AGAIN

"GOOD old Daphne!"

"You'll do the trick—we know you will!"

Enthusiastically the shouts rang out. Two other Seacliffe girls had entered for the race, besides Daphne,

but no one paid any attention to them. It was on their sports leader that all the Fourth Formers' hopes rested; it was her name they shouted.

Crack!

Abruptly the tumult ceased. The starting pistol had sounded, and a mighty splash announced that the ten competitors had dived into the water.

For a moment nothing could be seen save the rising spray, then a delighted yell of relief came from the Seacliffe girls.

"There she is—in front! Oh, stick it, Daphne! Stick it!"

Like a torpedo Daphne's lithe body was cleaving the water. Arm over arm, she struck out for the distant finishing tape. Faster and faster! Her speed left the spectators breathless with admiration, but suddenly there came a counter yell from the St. Chad's supporters.

"She's not won yet!"

"Here comes Rosalie! Look, she's nearly level! Oh, well done, Rosalie—well done!"

Daphne set her teeth as she heard the shouts. She dared not waste time by looking round, but she sensed a scarlet-clad form on her right, and desperately she lunged out with legs and arms.

On the bank the watchers held their breath. The excitement was too great for shouting. Dead level, the rival sports leaders kept. The other competitors were far behind. Either Daphne or Rosalie must win.

"Up, Seacliffe—up!" came a sudden despairing roar.

"Don't forget, we're relying on you, Daphne!" came another frantic shout.

Daphne needed no telling. She was exerting every ounce of power, every ounce of skill. Beside her she heard a gasp. Rosalie was finding the strain beyond her. Daphne's own limbs were aching. She could not keep up this gruelling speed, either. But she must—she must! Six valuable points were at stake!

On she forged—on and on, now gaining a little, now falling back a bit. The white tape that stretched across the water was very near now. Only another twenty yards! Only fifteen—

She struck out desperately. She must capture those points. She daren't let St. Chad's draw farther ahead!

There came another breathless gasp from the right. Rosalie was in sore straits. The knowledge brought new hope to Daphne, and valiantly she kept up that gruelling speed.

Only ten yards to go—five! And then what a roar went up! What excitement in the Seacliffe camp! For suddenly that scarlet clad figure seemed to become motionless. Suddenly that other figure in green seemed to shoot through the water as if shot from a gun.

Daphne had taken the lead. Her hand was stretched out for the tape. She was almost there. One last frantic stroke and—

"She's won! She's won!"

"Oh, hurrah for our champion!"

The Seacliffe girls were dancing with delight; they were hugging each other. The sports leader they all admired had not let them down!

"One and six is seven!" announced Betty Carr, with a chuckle. "Not so bad! If only—look! Jean's just managed to scrape in third! That's another point!"

"But Rosalie gets three for second place," pointed out one of the girls. "That gives St. Chad's fifteen to our eight."

Betty laughed.

"Pooh! What's seven points?" she retorted. "We'll soon wipe those off!"

At that moment Daphne, still panting from her exertions, came striding back. Instantly she was surrounded, and another chorus of cheers arose.

Smilingly she raised her hand.

"Thanks, girls, but not so much din. We don't want old Waggy to hear."

For a second or two the Fourth Formers forgot their excitement. They looked fearfully around, as if half-expecting their vinegary Form-mistress was really in earshot.

"Oh golly!" said Amy Tucker, with a gulp. "I hope she doesn't find out."

Secretly the chums themselves were a little uneasy, but for the sake of the rest of the team they said nothing of their fears, and encouragingly Daphne looked around.

"Come on, the half-milers!" she said. "There's a champion team from Hailsea competing, I hear, but if you pull up your socks you can beat 'em. Only seven points to wipe off, you know."

Eagerly the three girls who had entered for the long-distance race followed Daphne back along the path. Their leader's win had inspired them. They felt capable of even tackling the redoubtable Hailseaites.

Daphne had entered herself, but she knew that after her gruelling hundred yards she would stand no chance. It was Norah Tomkins they must rely on, and Norah astonished even herself. She did not win—that was too much to hope for—but she came in second, and Daphne, despite her tiredness, managed to snatch the third position from one of the St. Chad's team.

Another four points earned. They were only three behind the rival school, and the high diving contest had still to come.

The Seacliffe girls were bubbling over with confidence now. Even Daphne forgot her troubles. She forgot that she had broken detention; she forgot her suspicions about the Phantom Four. She only realised that even now they might finish up the winners.

"Come on, Betty," she said, slipping an encouraging arm around her chum's shoulders. "It's up to you now—you and Amy." She flashed the fat girl a smile. "I'll stand you the biggest cake in the tuckshop if you get a place," she promised.

Amy's eyes goggled with excitement. "What, one of Mother Dimple's specials?" she gasped.

Solemnly Daphne nodded, and the fat girl licked her lips in anticipation.

"Then I'll do it, even if I bust in the attempt," she vowed, and off she waddled, along with the Form captain.

Eagerly a move was made for vantage points around the high diving platform, but Daphne, about to follow, suddenly stopped. She had suddenly remembered the gold cup. Anxiously she looked across at the marquee.

"I suppose it's all right," she murmured. "Oh, it must be! They'd never dare try to steal it while—"

She broke off, and her heart missed a beat, for no longer was that blue-clad figure standing beside the doorway. The policeman had gone!

In alarm she stood there, all her fears returning, then she shook herself. She was being silly. Having been left in charge, the constable wouldn't go away and leave the tent unguarded. He must be inside—perhaps having his tea.

Nevertheless, she felt she must make sure, and, passing only to slip a wrap over her bathing suit, she approached a man with an ice-cream barrow, standing by, and questioned him.

"The bobby, miss?" he said. "Oh, he was called away!"

"Called away?"
Daphne looked startled. He nodded.
"Yes, one of you schoolgirls came and fetched him not a minute ago. Said your headmistress wanted to see him urgent."

"A—schoolgirl! Do you mean a girl from Seacliffe?"
"Dunno about that, miss. She was wearing a green blazer."

"A green blazer! Oh golly!"
Daphne gave a horrified gasp, for if what the ice-cream vendor said was true, then the policeman had been lured away from his post. Miss Bebb was not at the gala, so she couldn't have sent for him. The messenger must have been one of the Phantom Four. Even more startling, if that green blazer really belonged to her, then she must be a Seacliffe girl.

That, as much as anything, came as a shock to Daphne. She and Betty—and, indeed, all their fellow Fourth Formers—had always assumed that the four mysterious plotters were all members of the rival St. Chad's School. It had seemed to them impossible that their enemies could come from their own school.

But now here was this ice-cream man, who had actually seen one of the Phantom Four at work, telling her that the girl had been wearing a green blazer. And Seacliffe College girls wore green blazers!

The blood drained from Daphne's face. Was it possible that the Secret Society did not come from St. Chad's, after all? Were its mysterious members girls of her own school?

"Oh, I can't believe it!" she gasped.
The ice-cream man stared at her curiously, puzzled by her agitation.

"What's the matter, miss?" he asked. "Feeling faint?"

But Daphne did not answer. She was already tearing towards the marquee, her heart thudding wildly.

From the direction of the diving platform came a burst of cheering. The competition had begun, but Daphne had no mind for that now. All her thoughts were concentrated on the gold cup.

Would she be in time to save it?
Reaching the tent, she wrenched aside the canvas curtain and peered in. The exhibits were arranged around the walls on wooden tables. There were wonderful specimens of needlework, ancient pictures, pieces of medieval pottery, and a glittering array of silverware, all dating from the time when St. Chad's school was a nunnery. But it was the gold cup Daphne's worried eyes sought. There was no sign of it, nor did she see any sign of the Phantom Four. Except for herself the big marquee was empty.

"It's gone!" she gulped.
Then she saw another doorway on the right, and realised that it must lead to an annexe. Perhaps the coveted trophy was in there.

Her heart thudding, she stole forward, and then she stopped, for suddenly she had heard the sound of stealthy movement. Someone was in the annexe!

Hardly daring to breathe, she tiptoed to the entrance, to gasp again as she peered in. For there, on a pedestal at the far end, was the glass case containing the gold cup, and bending over it, in the very act of opening it, was the shadowy grey-clad figure of a girl.
One of the Phantom Four!

Will Daphne be able to catch this girl red-handed, and so learn the identity of at least one of the Phantom Four? Don't miss a word of next Friday's grand chapters of this intriguing serial. Order your **GIRLS' CRYSTAL** in advance.



FROM ONE GIRL TO ANOTHER

Cheery Chatter and Helpful Hints by Penelope

Everyone is having a "dirndl" this year, whether it's a dress or just a skirt.

The skirts are certainly a bright idea. To begin with, they can be made in a twinkling. Even a school-girl who hates darning her stockings could make herself one of these.

You would require a yard and a half, or two yards, of very gay, printed material—as cheap and as colourful as you like.

This is joined together and gathered into a band that fits snugly around your waist, with an opening to get in and out of, of course. A hem around the bottom,

HALLO, EVERYBODY!—Here is your Penelope again—with lots to chatter about, as usual!

I don't know if you've been getting hiccups (pardon, it should be hiccoughs, really, shouldn't it?) lately. I have. Cucumber always makes me give little hics, I'm afraid.

So, of course, I've been particularly interested in new "cures" for this very annoying—and embarrassing—complaint.

The latest one I've heard sounds fun. I'm going to try it the very next time hiccups comes my way.

You get an ordinary paper bag and place it over your mouth and nose; then you breathe in and out three or four times.

That's all. The hiccups should have vanished—and you'll probably be feeling so pleased with yourself that you'll pop the paper bag in sheer high spirits.

CAN IT BE TRUE?

If you're like me, you enjoy eating those delicious potato crisps. At a party I went to a little while ago COLOURED ones were being served.

They certainly looked very exciting, but I must confess they didn't taste any different from the ordinary ones.

And now, believe me, it is possible to obtain coloured potatoes for the table.

These have been on show in America—russet red, pale blue, pink, green—in fact, a host of dainty shades.

Can you imagine mother sending you out one of these days in the future and saying: "Buy some blue potatoes, dear, as we have guests coming—and I want them (the potatoes, not the guests!) to match the wallpaper!"

Well, it certainly does sound odd. But you never know!

A USEFUL SKIRT

Haven't you been admiring the full, swing skirts that are to be seen in the shops these days?

Very short, very roomy—and very dainty, they are! Also, very flattering to young, girlish figures like yours!

Those very full ones gathered on to tight waist-bands are the famous dirndl skirts, you know—something like the peasant style of skirts of the Continent.



and the ideal summer skirt is complete—ready to be worn with summery blouses and jumpers.

You'll see tons of them at the sea this year—just look. For they're the ideal knock-about garment for carefree days.

SO FRESH-LOOKING

And now I must tell you the latest idea for making your hair look pretty.

As you know, we have all been wearing a "little girl" bow in our hair (fastened on to a hair-grip) when we've wanted to look particularly winsome.

Well, now, instead of making the bow of ribbon, you make it of white lace insertion. That's the embroidery material that has come back into fashion again with the return of the frilly, swirling petticoats showing below dresses.

Do try it—a length of lace insertion, instead of ribbon. It looks so fresh, young, and summery! And a yard will make enough bows to keep you for the summer!

Bye-bye now until next week, all!
Your own.

PENELOPE

P.S.—Just a note to dog-lovers. The experts say that dogs' drinking water should be changed four or five times a day during very hot weather. Don't forget, will you? The poor pets do feel the heat so!



JUDY- the Beauty Specialist

By ELIZABETH CHESTER

SHE WANTED TO BE A MANNEQUIN

WHO couldn't be a mannequin, eh, girls? Easy! Watch this for a mannequin glide!

Judy Jordan, amidst laughter from her fellow work girls at Messrs. Dorchall & Son, the London costumiers, walked across the Common-room of the hostel where they lived, a curtain wrapped round her, and a flower-pot balanced on her head.

Judy was mimicking a mannequin's glide to a T. She swayed forward, brought up the rear foot, hesitated, then went on. Her left hand was on her hip, her right was coyly toying with the curtain rings at her neck. The haughty expression on her face was so comical that it brought a peal of merry laughter.

"Judy you'll kill me with laughing!" giggled Jill Wren.

"Laughing?" asked Judy, pretending to be shocked. "This isn't funny. This is the real McCoy. Ask Phyllis Styles. Where is she, by the way?"

Judy looked about her for Phyllis, who had been given a try-out as a mannequin only that afternoon. She had received special tuition in walking from an instructress, for which her aunt was paying. At the moment Phyllis was in the work-room side of the large costumier's, and more than one girl envied her proposed step up. For to be a mannequin one day was the ambition of most of them.

Judy failed to see Phyllis, and she failed to keep the flower-pot balanced. It tottered, and in trying to catch it, she released the curtain, and tripped over it.

Crash! went the flower-pot on the floor, shooting plant and earth all over the carpet.

At once there were gasps, more laughter, and some dismay.

"Bother!" said Judy, in dismay. "That's the worst of those new style hats, you know. Rally round, girls! I'll have to get a new flower-pot from the sixpenny store when it opens."

The mess was soon cleared up, and then Judy turned to the door, still thinking of Phyllis.

"Just going to find her. She might have heard the verdict by now," Judy said. "Let's hope it's good."

And off she hurried to the upper floor where the girls' dormitories were. Humming a gay dance tune, Judy walked past her own dormitory to the end one, where Phyllis and five others slept. It was the most likely place for the girl to be, Judy thought.

Still humming, Judy paused at the door. Then her musical effort waned. The smile died from her eyes.

"My golly—tears! Someone crying," she murmured, and, tapping gently on the door, opened it.

Judy stood in the doorway, silent and concerned. On the bed nearest the door a girl lay sobbing as though her heart would break.

"Phyllis!" cried Judy, running to her. "What on earth's the matter, dear? What ever is it?"

She dropped to her knees, and her arms went about the sob-shaken shoulders of the girl. But the only reply was incoherent words, interrupted by uncontrollable sobs.

"No luck!" said Judy, in tender tone. "You poor thing! But why?"

She was silent for a moment or two, and then, crossing to the wash-basin, she ran the tap, and dipped the corner of a towel into the cold water. Returning to the bed, she forcibly turned Phyllis so that her face showed.

"Here, come on! Crying never got anyone anywhere," said Judy briskly. "Let me mop your eyes. You don't want the others to know you've taken it badly. There are some who'll tease you. Poor old thing!"

A "beauty treatment" was the only thing Phyllis Styles needed to make her an attractive mannequin. So Judy resolved to help—with results that were certainly not what she expected!

Judy fought back Phyllis' attempt to brush her away, and gently applied the wet towel to her eyes.

"Now you cool your eyes. They're red and swollen. Take six deep breaths, and let them out in little gasps. Go on! Consider I'm your doctor."

Phyllis found herself dabbing her eyes, and doing as she was told, and presently only an occasional shuddering sigh ran through her, and she was able to talk.

"I—I've failed," she said miserably. Judy sat down beside her on the bed.

"Bless me! And only one attempt. Did you ever hear of a Johnny called Robert Bruce? He watched a spider, and—"

Phyllis pulled something from beside her on the bed, and held it out to Judy. It was a slip of paper, screwed up, and Judy unfolded it, frowning.

The slip of paper was a typewritten form, and at the top appeared the words: "Strictly confidential." There were typewritten headings; one said "Walk," another "Poise," a third "Figure," a fourth, "Facial Appearance," a fifth, "Charm."

Someone in ink had written under the headings, and it was obvious to Judy that this was a report on Phyllis' worth as a mannequin.

"H'm! 'Walk, excellent; Poise, admirable; Figure, suitable—'" She looked up. "Are you crying with joy or grief?" she asked.

Phyllis pointed to the paper. "R-read on," she faltered.

Judy read on, and her brows contracted. She did not read aloud, for what was written there was hurtful. Phyllis' face was described as being plain and unattractive, and the report stated that she lacked charm, and commented on her frumpy appearance. At the bottom were two letters, "N. G." They stood for no good.

Judy folded the paper, and looked at Phyllis' face. She looked at first gravely, and then, seeing the girl's tragic expression, and her quivering

lip, she forced a smile. She did not want the girl to break down again.

"What's wrong with the old face?" she wondered. "And what happened to your charm?"

But Judy saw at a glance that there was something wrong with Phyllis' face. She was a rather heavy-looking girl with thick eyebrows, a country-type skin, and a mouth that was not definite in shape. Also, her hair lacked lustre, and was badly arranged.

In short, Phyllis did not look like a mannequin. She might walk like one, have the poise of one, but no one looking at her face would have guessed she was a mannequin.

"You—you see?" asked Phyllis in despair. "It's no good! I can't alter my face."

"At the moment, dear, according to this slip of paper," said Judy, "your face isn't your fortune. But—golly, thank goodness it isn't your figure! Here, come on, stand up—"

She pulled the other girl to her feet, and then pulled her to the mirror on the large dressing-table.

"Forget about the red eyes," said Judy. "Look at those eyebrows. They want thinning. Look at that mouth. It wants touching up. Look at your cheeks. Too much of the ruddy glow. But these days you can buy pretty faces in pots. You can't buy figures in pots or tin cans. You're lucky. Do you know what we're going to do?"

Phyllis shook her head. Under the influence of Judy's forceful manner she was already smiling, but as she looked up she heard footsteps in the corridor, and turned.

Judy ran to the door and locked it. "Here!" came a voice. "It's me! Let me in, Phyllis!"

"Oh, Betty Jones!" murmured Judy recognising the voice. "Do you want to see her, Phyllis?"

"No, no." "Can't come in!" called Judy. "Why not?" challenged the girl outside.

"Door's locked." "Well, unlock it, then, I want a word with Phyllis. I want that paper back."

Judy gave a questioning look at Phyllis.

"Can she have it? Does she mean this?" she asked, holding out the "Report."

"Yes; she got it for me. I'm not supposed to know the result yet. She sneaked it from Miss Snyder's room," whispered Phyllis.

Judy took the paper to the door and pushed it underneath, at the same time telling Betty that it was there.

"Better get an iron and smooth it out," she advised. "And buck up about it, too, because I think Miss Snyder's coming back."

Betty Jones, on the far side of the door, made a few angry remarks about the screwed-up state of the paper, and the trouble she would get into; but Judy could not better her advice to iron it out, so said no more. And Betty walked away.

"Fancy Betty getting that paper for you!" said Judy as she smoothed Phyllis' hair and experimentally tried it in a new way, judging the effect in the mirror.

"Yes, I hadn't the nerve. And she was just as keen as I was to see the result, because she's having a try at it, too."

"Is she? Well, now, young Phyllis," said Judy, in a firm tone, "we've got to get really busy. We're going to give you a mannequin face and charm. I'm going to turn this into a beauty parlour. Jill's pretty good at hair-

dressing; she started to take a course. Lydia can do your nails, and I'll do the eyebrow plucking."

Phyllis stiffened and gave a sharp cry.

"No, no; you can't." "Can't?" asked Judy. "Why ever not?"

"You can't, because," Phyllis gasped, "my aunt won't allow it. She has forbidden me to pluck my eyebrows or use powder."

Judy stared at her round-eyed in wonder. She had never heard of anything more ridiculous in her life! A mannequin without make-up!

"Wha-a-t? And she wants you to be a mannequin? Is she crazy? Of course you've got to be made up!"

"No, no!" protested Phyllis. Judy wagged a forefinger, and her brows narrowed.

"Now look here, Phyllis," she said seriously. "You want to be a mannequin; your aunt wants you to be a mannequin. The firm wants mannequins to have charm. All right, then! You've got to have it, aunt or no aunt. Your aunt isn't here to see you, but the head of the mannequin department is, the buyer is. All right then. I'm getting busy—"

Impressed by what Judy said, Phyllis gave a doubtful nod of assent, so Judy went to the door and unlocked it.

"Jill—Lydia—Bernice!" she called.

PHYLIS' HAIR CHANGES COLOUR!

"SHAMPOO, of course!"

"Rather!" "That's the first job, and then her hair wants setting."

"I can do her nails at the same time."

Judy rubbed her hands with glee as her friends rallied round Phyllis. She had told them what had to be done, and they were only too eager to help. Phyllis, though grateful, was still feeling a little doubtful, and she was scared of what her aunt might say. However, she allowed herself to be seated before a basin and let herself be draped with towels.

Judy supervised the arrangements, then went into the next dormitory to look for the hair dryer. She had just found it when Betty Jones appeared at the doorway.

"What do you think you're doing to Phyllis?" she asked.

"Turning her into a prize-winning mannequin," Judy replied, with a smile. "We're shampooing her hair, plucking her eyebrows, and giving her a general beauty treatment."

"Oh!" Judy saw the other girl frown and noted the shade that crossed her brow.

"My golly! You're not jealous, Betty?" she asked sharply. "You don't begrudge another girl having a fair chance, do you?"

"Of course I'm not jealous," flashed Betty. "Do what you like to her dull, heavy face. But if her aunt comes up here and finds her make-up—"

"She won't." "She might. I know where she lives. Only about twenty minutes away."

Before Judy could reply, Lydia looked in.

"I say—where's the shampoo stuff that was in the bath-room?" she asked.

"Isn't it there?" said Judy. "I know where it is," cut in Betty quickly. "I'll get it."

Pushing past Judy and Lydia, she ran on ahead of them; they followed, but did not find her in either of the bath-rooms. A minute later, however, she came into view, holding out a bottle.

"Is this the stuff?" she asked, a little breathlessly. "It's for dark hair."

"Yes, that's it," said Judy. She took the shampoo to Jill, who had her sleeves rolled up, wore an apron, and looked most professional.

Leaving Lydia doing the manicuring and Phyllis the shampooing, Judy went in search of eyebrow tweezers. One of the mannequins lent her a pair, and she returned to the dormitory.

On the threshold she paused, staring. Phyllis' eyes were closed; for lather was slipping down her face, and if she opened them the stuff got into her eyes and made them smart.

But all the other girls could see; and they stood staring, silent, dismayed.

Judy became dismayed, too. For the lather, which had been white at first, had turned pink.

"My golly!" she murmured. "You



"Out!" hissed Judy quickly. "Run upstairs and tell the girls that supper has been put back half-an-hour." At all costs Judy must keep the visitor from seeing her niece—yet!

don't mean—" Then she lowered her voice to a whisper. "Is it all right?"

Lydia bit her lip, shaking her head. Bernice stood with worried frown, while Jill, shaking lather from her hands, was studying them. They were reddening.

"That's ordinary shampoo, isn't it?" asked Judy worriedly.

Phyllis stirred.

"What's the matter?" she asked.

"Nun-nothing," said Judy. "Keep your eyes closed."

Then she frowned at Jill, hissing under her breath:

"For mercy's sake, wash it off—quickly." Aloud, she added: "Get ready for rinsing, Phyllis. Move to the right—head forward—"

Judy took charge. But as she rinsed off the lather, she saw that Phyllis' brown hair was becoming streaked with red. But not completely red. It was only red here and there!

Judy rinsed and rinsed, telling Phyllis to keep her eyes fast closed. Jill, bewildered and shocked, was studying the bottle of shampoo. She had used the stuff before, and it had never had this effect. On the other hand there was a sediment at the bottom she had not noticed before.

"This has been tampered with!" she exclaimed. She passed the bottle to Judy, and at that moment Phyllis lifted her head.

"What's the matter?" she asked.

Judy flicked water desperately in her face.

"Keep your head down. We must get the lather off."

Judy rubbed and ground at Phyllis' hair, but the only effect of her efforts seemed to be that the dye was well driven in. The hair remained red in streaks.

Judy's face was worried and anxious; for Phyllis could not be kept permanently in the dark regarding her hair. Sooner or later she must discover the awful truth! And no amount of scrubbing or rinsing had any useful effect.

"Quick, a towel," said Judy desperately.

She took a dry hand towel, and wrapped it round Phyllis' head like a turban, then made frantic signals for a pin.

Phyllis dried her eyes, and turning, looked at her reflection in the mirror.

"How does it look?" she asked.

"Grand," said Judy. "Keep this on for—twenty minutes."

"But can't I look at it?"

"Not yet, can she, Jill?" asked Judy.

"Goodness, no!"

"Certainly not!" said Lydia.

But Phyllis, looking at their reflected faces in the mirror, saw how worried and scared everyone was, and became infected with their fear.

"Something's wrong! What is it?" she cried. "What have you done to my hair? Tell me! Take this off—"

"It'll be all right—" Judy protested.

But Phyllis pushed them away, groped for the pin, and stood with her back to the dressing-table. Judy, knowing that further hope of keeping the truth from her was vain, stood back and thought quickly.

"It can be fixed all right at a hair-dresser's," she said. "Someone has obviously played a mean and horrible trick—"

A wild cry came from Phyllis as she dropped the towel. She stood speechless, her eyes round as she looked at her wet, red-streaked hair. Then she swung round in blazing anger.

"You interfering busybodies!" she cried, then covering her face with her hands, she broke down.

Judy looked at Jill.

"Quick. Get the hairdresser on the phone," she said. "Ask what we can do; if there's anything we can get. There must be something."

Phyllis gave an agitated gulp.

"If my aunt sees me like this she'll never forgive me," she faltered.

While Jill went to the phone Judy tried to console; but her face was grim as she again looked at the shampoo bottle.

"Someone's played a mean trick on us," she declared. "Look at the sediment in the bottle. It's not ordinary—" She broke off with a startled gasp. "Why, it must have been Betty Jones who did it. It was she who found the bottle, and she was jealous of Phyllis. Oh, just wait until I find her!"

And angrily leaving the dormitory, Judy went in search of the rival entrant for the mannequin job.

Half-way down the stairs she heard the door-bell ring, and as the maid was in the kitchen, Judy answered the summons herself.

On the doorstep stood a middle-aged woman with reddish-brown hair, a rather sharp expression, and horn-rimmed glasses.

She stepped past Judy into the hall. "I have come to see Miss Snyder," she said, "in response to a telephone-call. I am Miss Styles—aunt of one of the mannequins here, Phyllis Styles."

JUDY'S DARING RUSE

JUDY stood still. She could not speak. She just blinked at Phyllis' aunt, her heart sinking right down to her shoes in dismay.

What would Miss Styles say when she saw her niece's hair? She would be furious, and in her anger might take Phyllis away from the firm—robbing her of all chance of achieving her big ambition.

"Well, what are you staring at me for, girl?" asked the aunt sharply. "Am I a freak? Is there a smut on my nose, or what is it?"

Judy recovered. She pulled herself together; and to hide her alarm, she forced a smile.

"Well, there! Only a smut," she said, with a jerky laugh, and, reaching out her hand, she daringly flicked the end of the visitor's pointed nose, as though removing a smut, so that the aunt should think that it was that blemish which had caused Judy's stare.

While the astonished woman drew back, hand to nose, Judy wheeled.

"This way, ma'am," she said. "Follow me, please—"

But unless the aunt went at full gallop, she had no chance of catching up Judy, who went up the stairs like a greyhound. Once out of sight, she rushed to the dormitory.

"Lock this door on the inside!" gasped Judy, then out she ran, going to Miss Snyder's room. Miss Snyder was the ill-tempered manageress. Judy disliked her intensely, and was always glad she was out; but at the moment she was anything but glad when she found the manageress' door not only closed but locked. For now she had nowhere to take the visitor. There was the Common-room, but the strains of a gramophone and laughter told that there were girls there. Miss Styles would not want to be with them.

"Oh dear!" sighed Judy in despair;

for Miss Styles was even now mounting the stairs.

"Where are you? Really, you cannot expect me to run—" began the woman angrily, when Judy cut her short.

"Miss Snyder is out, I'm afraid."

"What—out? But she telephoned me!"

"She did? But I don't think she has been in all the evening!" exclaimed Judy, in surprise.

"Then she telephoned me from outside, that is all. At any rate, she asked me to come here to make final arrangements regarding Phyllis' appointment as a mannequin."

Judy regarded her in silent perplexity. For, in view of the form she had seen, it sounded highly improbable that any such appointment had been made. Yet Miss Styles did not look the sort of woman to make silly mistakes. She had an air of efficiency.

"Then there is probably something delaying Miss Snyder's return," said Judy smoothly, and, anxious only to gain time and prevent Miss Styles from seeing her niece, she forced a smile. "Would you like a cup of coffee?" she asked.

"I did not come here to have coffee," said Miss Styles sharply.

"Oh, but you must have a cup. This way to the dining-room, please."

And Judy bounded down the stairs and into the dining-room. Betty was there, just starting supper.

"Out!" said Judy crisply. "Phyllis' aunt is here. She may want to know who it was put that red dye into the shampoo."

Betty sprang up, dropping her fork, and her eyes were wide.

"I—I don't know what you mean. What—what dye?"

"Don't try to bluff!" said Judy contemptuously. "Run upstairs at once and tell the girls in the Common-room that supper has been put back half an hour."

Betty saw Miss Styles then, and moved aside, pale and anxious, her terror giving away the fact that Judy had guessed the culprit correctly. Betty had faked the shampoo!

But there was no time to argue about that now. The damage was done—the reckoning would come later. The important thing at the present moment was to keep Miss Styles out of the way while something was done about Phyllis' hair.

Judy pulled forward the armchair for Miss Styles, found an evening paper and handed it to her. Then, leaving the visitor somewhat puzzled and breathless, Judy ran to the kitchen and ordered coffee.

"It's a friend of Miss Snyder's," she said, "so do what you can to please her. Ask her if she'd like some cold chicken—"

"Cold chicken!" exclaimed the cook, as Judy's gaze wandered to a dish. "That's for Miss Snyder's supper."

"Never mind. She won't begrudge her visitor if it she wants it. Treat her well. Tell Lizzie to put on a clean cap."

Leaving the kitchen in a bustle and flutter, having created the impression that someone not less than a duchess was in the dining-room, Judy went upstairs to the dormitory. She found that Jill had been in touch with the hair-dresser.

"What did she say?" asked Judy anxiously.

"Oh, Judy!" groaned Jill, her face drawn and pale. "There's only one thing for it—the hairdresser says she's got to have red hair."

Judy had been expecting it, so, painful news though it was, it did not come as a surprise.

"H'm! Like her aunt's, eh?" she asked.

Phyllis looked up with a surprised stare.

"How do you know my aunt's hair is red?" she asked.

"Well, isn't it?" countered Judy. "I sort of guessed it was."

"It is, yes—but it's natural," said Phyllis.

Judy looked down her nose. Only at this moment did she seriously think about the aunt's hair, but, remembering it, she gave a jump. That red hair was not natural—it most certainly was not. If the aunt accused Phyllis of dyeing her hair, had not then Phyllis an answer—if she dared give it?

Most certainly she had, but—

There was a serious "but" to it. There was a difference between the aunt dyeing her hair and Phyllis dyeing hers—all the difference in the world. And the first to see it would be Miss Styles.

Judy, deep in thought, walked out of the room. Then, as though coming from a trance, she rushed to find her handbag, took out two pennies, and ran down to the telephone in the hall.

WHEN, twenty minutes later, Miss Snyder returned to the hostel, Judy was in the hall waiting for her.

"A Miss Styles called to see you," she announced.

The manageress, who had with her the firm's buyer, frowned.

"Oh, dear, about Phyllis. I suppose she's come to know about—"

Breaking off, she turned to the man at her side.

"We agreed, didn't we, that Phyllis Styles will never make a mannequin," she said.

The man nodded, and Miss Snyder turned to Judy again.

"Where is she waiting?"

"Your room was locked, Miss Snyder," said Judy, "so I asked her to wait in the dining-room. The girls aren't down to supper yet. She's having some chicken."

"Chicken?"

"I thought it only right to ask her if she wanted supper. I happened to mention chicken, and she jumped at it," explained Judy. "It seems a nice cold chicken. And she's having coffee."

With difficulty she smothered a chuckle, for the manageress, guessing that it was her supper that was being eaten, looked furious.

Glaring, Miss Snyder swung to the dining-room, opened the door, and looked in. As she closed the door behind her, Judy fled upstairs to the dormitory, gave three sharp raps, and was admitted.

Phyllis sat before the mirror, while an expert hairdresser was busily engaged in putting the finishing touches to a most fascinating hair style. Phyllis' hair was red—but a lovely deep red, and beautifully done.

"My golly, thank goodness you could come at once when I telephoned," sighed Judy. "You are a pet!"

"There—how's that?" asked the girl.

"Wonderful—"

"How lovely—"

"Lucky you, Phyllis!"

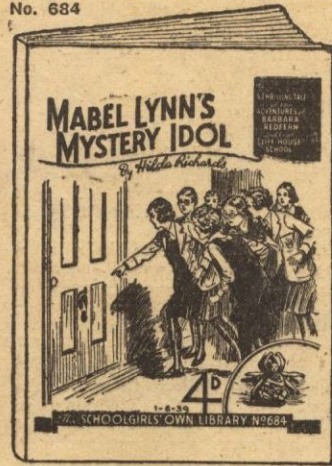
Phyllis turned from the mirror. It had been a case of being hanged for a sheep as for a lamb. Since she could not be rated more severely for having her eyebrows plucked than for having her hair dyed, they had been plucked.

Phyllis was a changed person. She

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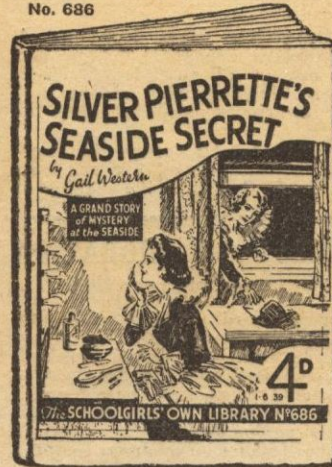
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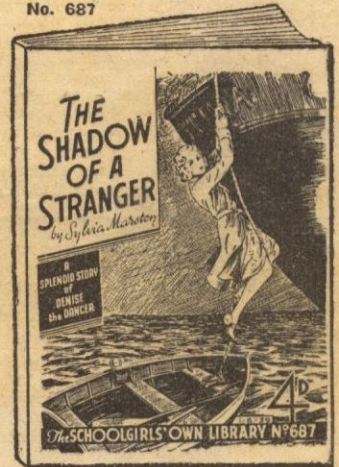
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was hardly recognisable even at a second glance. Her face was transformed. Her mouth, cleverly made up, was shapely; her eyebrows were trimmed; her cheeks toned; while that superb mass of red hair gave the finishing touch.

"I say, what a picture," cried Judy, her eyes sparkling. "What a face, Phyllis!"

"Yes, I—I can't believe it's mine," gasped Phyllis in breathless excitement. "I never realised I could look like this. Is it—is it me?" she added, amidst laughter.

Judy tugged open a wardrobe door. "Where's the model you had to show at the trial—ah here!" she exclaimed, taking down a delicate green evening frock. "So-ho! What a make-up. Green and red hair, eh!"

Judy, hearing a commotion outside at that moment, went to the door. She listened for a moment, then beckoned to Phyllis.

"Slip on that frock," she urged, and as Phyllis obeyed, Judy unlocked the door and crept out.

On the lower landing were Miss Snyder, the buyer, Mr. Simpkins, and Phyllis' aunt.

"Well, it's a disgraceful thing," Miss Styles was saying. "I have been brought here by a totally misleading message—a hoax!"

"I'm sorry—I really am sorry," said Miss Snyder.

"The practical joker shall be found and punished," said Mr. Simpkins. "This sort of thing is intolerable. Quite intolerable."

At that moment Judy appeared, breathing a little harder than usual.

"Oh, Miss Snyder. The French mannequin is here. Can you see her at once?"

Never had the manageress looked so startled.

"French mannequin? I didn't know one was expected. Do you know anything about this, Mr. Simpkins?"

"I? No—if one has arrived, then the directors must have sent for her without informing me," he declared.

"We've put her in the frock that Phyllis modelled," said Judy. "She's in a hurry to get back to Paris by air-line, I think."

Miss Snyder looked at the buyer. "We must see her," he said. "This surely cannot be a hoax, too. If a French mannequin has come all the way

from France—where is she? Ask her to come here at once."

Judy disappeared, and a few minutes later a graceful mannequin appeared at the end of the corridor.

"H'm—walk excellent," murmured Mr. Simpkins.

"Poise perfect," said Miss Snyder. "These French mannequins are superb!"

"Figure ideal," nodded Mr. Simpkins. "And what personality—what charm—what a striking face and hair-dressing!"

Little did they guess that the girl they were discussing was Phyllis. Even her own aunt did not recognise her!

Phyllis heard their praises, but she kept calm and elegantly continued to walk towards them. Suddenly Miss Styles spoke:

"Why, her hair is just the colour of mine," she murmured.

Judy advancing from where she had hovered in the background, smiled.

"Isn't she grand?" she said.

Mr. Simpkins smiled and rubbed his hands.

"Yes, yes, but I doubt if she would model at our fees; she obviously comes from a famous Paris house."

Now was the testing time. The pretence could be no longer maintained!

"My golly, Miss Styles," said Judy. "Wouldn't you be proud if Phyllis were as good a mannequin as that, eh?"

Miss Styles smiled sourly.

"It would be unreasonable to expect such style from a mere novice," she said. "Besides—Why, great goodness!" she gasped.

For Phyllis was now only a yard or two away. Her aunt gazed at her wide-eyed; Miss Snyder gaped. Only Mr.

Simpkins, who had only seen the girl once before, was baffled.

"You know her, Miss Snyder?" he asked. "This is splendid. Bring her to the office. We must get her signed up at once, at once!"

Together Miss Snyder, and Miss Styles spoke.

"It's Phyllis Styles!"

"It's my niece—with red hair!"

Judy heaved a sigh.

"Hair just the very exact shade of yours, Miss Styles. It must run in the family, I suppose."

Miss Styles could not speak; Phyllis dared not meet her eyes; but Mr. Simpkins, who even yet had not grasped the whole truth, almost clapped his hands.

"Yes, yes, clearly the hair is a pleasing family inheritance," he said. "Now, Miss Snyder—and 'er—Miss Styles, if this young lady is your niece—the contract please."

JUDY did not follow them to the office; nor did she go down to supper. She felt she could not rest until she had heard the worst, and with Jill, Lydia, and Bernice she waited on the landing.

"Oh golly!" she groaned. "The suspense is awful. Have they sacked her; has her aunt eaten her whole, or—"

At last! The office door opened. Mr. Simpkins appeared, to bow and stand aside. Miss Styles, smiling, followed, Phyllis looking radiant was next, with Miss Snyder bringing up the rear.

"Delighted? Of course I am," beamed Miss Styles. "The red hair was a shock; but it is the making of

her, undoubtedly. It shows that she has initiative to take such a daring step. Her daring is vindicated by success."

"Well, my dear, we shall be proud to have you in our show-room," said Mr. Simpkins to Phyllis.

Judy beamed at them, as they passed, and excitedly she shook hands with Jill. "Here's to initiative," she said, as Phyllis showed her aunt out and kissed her good-bye.

At that moment, Miss Snyder looked out of her doorway.

"Is Betty Jones there?" she asked sharply. "Oh, there you are," she added as she saw that pale, anxious girl. "You will not be needed for the mannequin trial parade; the position is filled. But kindly explain what your handkerchief is doing in my room. Come inside."

Judy joined Phyllis on the stairs.

"Oh, Judy, it's all thanks to you," the grateful girl burst out.

"Never mind thanking me—here's Betty—thank her," cried Judy. "She put the red dye in the shampoo—and I guess it was also she who phoned your aunt to come here."

But Betty gave them a look of bitter hatred, and having got nothing out of her cunning scheming but a severe lecture from Miss Snyder, for entering her room without permission, she departed.

Nor did she join in the celebration party which Judy organised in the dining-room—with Phyllis—red-haired Phyllis—as the guest of honour.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

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was and appeal to the peasants! She couldn't miss it; she dare not. And yet, if she stayed; if the baron stormed on to the scene before she managed to vindicate herself—

But he mustn't—he mustn't! Nor must the feast take place without her.

Quickly she turned to the mayor, forcing herself to seem quite calm and composed.

"Sure, that's swell—just what I've been waiting for," she drawled. "But do you mind holding up the show for a couple of shakes?" She smiled. "Guess I've something to see to right away, but it won't take me a jiffy, O.K.?"

Evidently it was perfectly O.K. with the mayor, for, bowing, he swaggered off. But Bernhard was frowning now.

"I say, you can't keep them waiting all that time, Florida," he demurred worriedly. "They'd never stand for it. It'll take you ages to get back—even if you put a stop to Melita's game!"

"They've got to be made to wait—somehow!" was Florida's fierce reply. "Couldn't you do anything to delay the feast? Look, Bernhard!" She gripped his arm. "Supposing you arranged something—something that would keep everyone interested! That'd give me a chance. Oh, Bernhard, couldn't you?"

There was desperate entreaty in her voice. Biting his lip, he pondered, plainly troubled and perplexed. Then all at once he gave a brisk nod.

"All right," he said, drawing in his breath: "I'll think up some stunt. But for goodness' sake, be as quick as you can. Whatever I do, I can't keep things waiting long. And I can't stop people wondering where their hostess has got to. I'll show you the short cut. Come on!"

PRINCESS ON PROBATION

(Continued from page 298.)

With a word to the distraught Natasha, who quaveringly wished her good luck, Florida followed Bernhard in a breathless rush for the wooded slope, above which the castle loomed, a grey silhouette of turrets and towers in the deepening dusk.

Bernhard indicated a narrow footpath through the undergrowth and whispered a few words of instruction. Then, clasping hands, they parted, he to play his part in this desperate gamble to save the day; she to struggle up the steep hillside. By the time she reached the castle wall she was exhausted. She paused to recover her breath, then hurried across to the wicket-gate a short distance away.

Pushing it open, she found herself at the side of the main courtyard. Anxiously she peered through the twilight towards the drawbridge. There were civic guards on sentry-go, brilliantly dressed men with rifles and swords. But if she were careful, and kept close to the wall, well in the shadow, she could reach the castle undetected.

Heart thumping, she crept along beside the wall.

"Oh, golly, if only Melita hasn't got here yet," Florida fervently hoped, as she neared an archway, beyond which were stone steps leading down to one of the cellars. "I know uncle. He'll be all right if I bring things off with the peasants. He'll be delighted enough to forgive everything. But if—"

And then, her eyes gleaming, she dodged to the shelter of the arch and peered out.

A figure had just come over the draw-

bridge; a figure whom the sentries saluted; a girlish figure, which immediately broke into a run, heading for the main entrance of the castle.

"Melita!" Florida breathed. "Her mind raced. Quickly she glanced behind her. The stone steps; that cellar door at the bottom of them, solid and sound-proof. If she could, only here Melita there and shut her in, the girl could shout and hammer in vain. No one would hear her; no one would come to release her until Florida herself chose to do so—after the feast.

Removing her hat and conspicuous glasses, Florida dropped them out of sight. Then she stepped out of the archway.

"Melita!" she hissed, in a disguised voice.

She saw Melita halt, peering towards her.

"Who's that? What do you want?"

"Come quickly! Oh, please—please!" Florida said huskily, and beckoned as though in urgent need of the girl's help.

For perhaps three seconds Melita did not move. Then her curiosity overcame her impatience to reach the baron.

"All right! But who are you?" she cried, and, bending forward to try to pierce the dusk, she hurriedly approached.

Florida, beckoning again, stepped into the archway. Then, every nerve tingling, her whole being consumed with suspense and excitement, she waited, listening to her enemy's footsteps as they drew nearer and nearer.

Will Florida's desperate plan succeed? See next Friday's exciting instalment of this glamorous story. Make certain of your GIRLS' CRYSTAL by ordering it now.