

GIRLS' CRYSTAL ^{3^o}

AND "THE SCHOOLGIRL"

Week
Ending
April 28th,
1945.



JUNE GAYNOR and NOEL RAYMOND Are Featured In This Intriguing Story Of
Detective Adventure—By PETER LANGLEY

A CASE FOR JUNE

"I WONDER what Uncle Noel wants me for?" June Gaynor thought, with a little thrill. "Oh, supposing—supposing he's going to give me a case all to myself at last?"

June's eyes shone at the very thought. The taxi in which she was travelling to Noel Raymond's flat in the West End of London could hardly go fast enough. Many times June had helped the famous young detective, and it was her ambition to follow in her uncle's footsteps, to become a fully fledged detective one day herself.

She looked again at the telegram she had received from Uncle Noel that morning—the telegram which had sent her to catch the earliest train. It certainly sounded important.

"Have big job for you. Come to-day if possible."

No wonder June was excited as the taxi stopped and she hurriedly sprang out. With a laugh she handed a coin to the driver, and with an eager rush scampered up the stairs to the first floor. But before she had a chance to knock the door opened.

And there, his handsome face smiling, was Noel Raymond.

"Come along in, June," he said. "I rather expected you at this moment."

"At this moment," she echoed. "But how did you know what train I would catch?"

"Just knowledge of my niece's character," Noel smiled. "That—and a reference to the Bradshaw. I knew, you see, what time my telegram would arrive, and I knew that you would catch the first available train when you received it."

"But, uncle, what is it you want me to do?" June asked quickly.

"Something schoolgirlish," he said gravely. "Something I can't do myself, June. But take off your coat and come along to my study. Like something to eat and drink?"

June shook her head. She was too eager to hear why her uncle had sent for her to think of trifles like that.

She followed him into the comfortably furnished study, and sat down. Then she blinked as he put a fat envelope into her hand.

"What do you make of that, June?"

She looked at the envelope. It was square and bulky, addressed to her uncle in firm, round writing, and bore the postmark Greentown, and on the back was embossed a small crest showing two high towers.

She opened it, then blinked as a shower of small pieces of paper fell out on to the desk.

"Clothing coupons!" she stuttered.

"Exactly!" Noel, taking the envelope from her, picked up a magnifying-glass. "Clothing coupons. They arrived exactly like that—with no letter. Nothing. Well, June, what conclusions have you formed?"

Instantly June's mind was alert. As Noel handed her the glass and the envelope she studied the envelope carefully.

"Greentown—that's where the High Turrets Girls' School is," she said. "This letter came from the school. The crest on the flap proves that."

"Indicates it, June." The detective smiled. "A clue isn't proof, you know. But go on. What else?"

"It was written by a girl," June went on. "The handwriting proves—or—indicates that. It was sent the day before yesterday, according to the

postmark. But why on earth any girl should send all these clothing coupons anonymously is a mystery.

"Is a bit of a mystery, eh?" Noel smiled again. "And quite intriguing, I think, when I tell you that I am already on another mystery concerning High Turrets School. Let's have a cup of tea while I tell you about it."

He touched a bell. At once a maid entered, tea was served, and Noel plunged into his account.

The mystery concerned a schoolgirl named Sheila Wainwright, he told June. Sheila, one night a little while ago, had failed to answer her name at roll-call. Nobody had worried a great deal then, because Sheila was due for leave at the week-end. It was only when the headmistress had rung up Sheila's home yesterday and found that the girl had not turned up that the mystery began to appear.

"Mind you," Noel said, "it might be just a storm in a tea-cup. This Sheila might have decided to break her journey in London. She might have dodged off to have a few days with a friend—anything. But there's another rather extraordinary link-up with High Turrets. That's the ghost."

"Ghost?" June repeated, sitting bolt upright. "The ghost—yes," Noel nodded. "Again this might have nothing whatever to do with Sheila or the clothing coupons—it might be just some schoolgirl lark. But the fact is, the night before Sheila disappeared she declares she saw a ghost—a white-hooded figure which is the school's pet phantom, known as the White Princess."

"Golly—" June breathed. Her eyes were shining now. Eagerly she listened as her uncle filled in the details he knew. Nobody except Sheila had seen the ghost. Sheila had seen it in a part of the school known as the Long Corridor, and had declared that the ghost had vanished through the solid wall when she had called after it. The following day she had disappeared. The next, Noel had anonymously received this batch of clothing coupons.

"And that," he concluded, "is the story so far, June. Miss Adamson, the headmistress, is a friend of mine, and I have promised her that I will look into the matter. Or rather," he added, studying her, "I've promised her that you'll look into the matter."

June jumped to her feet. "Oh, uncle, you don't mean—"

"I do." He nodded, smiling. "You've always wanted a case of your own, June. This is where you get it. Obviously this is a job for a girl. I can't go along to High Turrets without provoking discussions, but you—as a new girl—can. And so, if you're ready to take on the job—"

"Uncle!" June almost whooped, and threw herself at him and hugged him.

And so it happened that two hours later June Gaynor, the new girl of High Turrets, was speeding westwards in the Exeter-bound express, the one clue to her threefold mystery—the envelope containing the clothing coupons—tucked in her bag, and her brain ringing with her uncle's last instructions. She was also studying the map of the school and its precincts, which had been Noel's parting gift to her.

And she was studying particularly the position of Southwind Cottage on that map. For it was there, Noel Raymond had told her, that he quietly intended to take up his residence while the "case" was on, so she could report her progress step by step and call upon him if she needed help.

She was radiant with joy, excited at the prospect which lay before her when she at last stepped off the train and caught the station taxi at Greentown to the school.

She arrived at the school and clanged the porter's bell. From the lodge near by a grey-haired middle-aged man emerged, neatly dressed in a blue and red uniform, eyeing her with friendly interest through the bars of the gate.

"You'll be Miss Gaynor, miss?" he asked respectfully, smiling as he opened the gates. "I'm Griffiths, the porter. At least," he added with a wry grin, "I used to be the porter—"

"And now?" June asked.

"Now," he smiled, "I'm just everything, miss—including head of the domestic staff and tuckshop-keeper as well. We're so short staffed, you see. Let me carry your bag, miss. I'll take you along to Miss Adamson."

He took the bag. Followed by June, he led the way up the drive into the spacious old hall, and so to Miss Adamson's study.

Miss Adamson greeted June warmly. She was immensely relieved to see her, and talked to her a long time about the mystery. But she had little to add to what June had already learned from her uncle.

"I wish you luck," Miss Adamson said at last. "Of course, no one knows exactly why you are here. And naturally you are free to come and go where and when you will. Now I'll take you along to the Lower Fifth Common-room and introduce you to your Form-fellows."

She did. June liked her Form-mates at once. They were a jolly crowd—all except one—a dark-eyed, pouting-lipped girl named Myra Lee, who regarded June with hostility from the moment she saw her.

But June particularly liked Mavis Evans, the captain of the Form, and, incidentally, the games captain of the Middle School.

"And, of course," Mavis said eagerly, as soon as Miss Adamson had gone, "you play hockey, June? Please say that you do."

"Why, yes, of course. I love it," June said. "Oh, good!" Mavis looked enthusiastic. "What position? You see, we're just stumped now that Sheila's gone."

"Are we? What about me?" Myra scowled. "Oh, you're in the running, of course. But you know you're not up to Sheila's form," Mavis stated frankly. "June, what about a try-out to-morrow morning after lessons?"

"Suits me," June agreed. "But who's—who's Sheila? Why can't she play?"

They told her about the missing Sheila then, while Myra Lee drew aside, scowling and petulant. June gathered that though Sheila had made such an unexpected disappearance, nobody was really alarmed. Sheila was such a rascal that there was no telling what she might do.

But there was no doubt that Sheila had been a tower of strength in the hockey team, and no doubt that when the High Turrets Middle School came to play against Littlevale on Saturday she was going to be sadly missed.

"And if you—you're good enough to take her place," Mavis said eagerly, "it will be wizard. But, of course, we'll have to see what you can do first. If you'll play half-back for 'A' side, we'll make Myra your opposite number on 'B' side and decide which of you we'll play. Is that O.K.?"

It was, June assured them, and her eyes sparkled at the prospect, for June loved hockey. But at this moment she was far more anxious to get to grips with her case.

"And what's this I've heard about—about a ghost?" she asked. "Miss Adamson was saying—"

"Oh, that's all rot!" Myra said sharply. "Just one of Sheila's make-ups. Nobody else has seen it."

"But is there supposed to be a ghost here?" June asked Mavis.

"Well, yes," Mavis laughed. "It was just a legend though, until Sheila said she'd met it. But I shouldn't let that keep you awake. Now—" she turned as a figure hovered at her elbow. "What is it, Gilda?"

The newcomer was one of the school servants—young, pretty, but a white-faced and rather thin girl who had quietly entered after a knock which nobody had heard. Her large, dark eyes fastened on June.

"Please, Miss Mavis, Miss Adamson has sent me along to show Miss June her cubicle," she replied.

"Oh, never mind that now——" Mavis said impatiently.

But June had suddenly come to a decision. She hardly knew why, but she was interested in the maid. There was tragedy in that expression of hers, a secret in those dark, uneasy eyes. Apart from that, June was anxious to have a look at the Long Corridor.

"I think I'll go," she said. "There are one or two things I want from my luggage—I suppose it's in the cubicle, isn't it? Won't be long!" she called gaily, and waving a hand to the girls, followed the maid out. Light-heartedly June chattered, noticing however that she did not smile ever crossed Gilda Jones' lips. When they reached the cubicle and Gilda turned to go away, June impulsively touched her shoulder.

"Gilda, what's wrong?" she asked softly. "You're worried about something, aren't you?"

A look of confused alarm sprang into the maid's eyes.

"Oh, miss, why—why do you ask that?"

"Because I can see it," June replied gently. "Can't I help you in any way?"

The girl's lips trembled a little. Then she shook her head.

"No, no, miss. There—there's nothing the matter—not really," she said. "He——" and then suddenly she gulped. Suddenly, as if some memory overwhelmed her, she snatched out a handkerchief and put it to her eyes.

"It's—It's kind of you, miss. But——" the next word was lost in a stifled sob. And then, as though afraid of herself, she turned swiftly and went hurrying out of the dormitory.

June stared after her, puzzled. She felt sorry, and for some reason, not altogether easy in her mind. Gilda had some secret on her mind—could it be connected in any way with the mystery she herself was investigating?

She shook her head. It was a silly thought, she told herself, with not an atom of reason for its existence. And then turning towards her cubicle, she suddenly stopped. Suddenly, with wide unbelieving eyes, she stooped and picked up three small slips of paper from the floor.

"Clothing coupons!" she breathed. Her eyes travelled again down the corridor.

"Clothing coupons—and I found them on the very spot where Gilda Jones had been standing. Could she—could she, I wonder, have accidentally dragged these out of her pocket with her handkerchief?"

THE WHITE PRINCESS



JUNE'S first impulsive thought was that Gilda had dropped them.

But she was swiftly remembering Uncle Noel's advice never to jump to conclusions.

There was no proof, she told herself, that those coupons had been in Gilda's possession. And somehow she did not want to believe that Gilda Jones had done anything for which she would be ashamed. June had formed a spontaneous liking for the girl.

Carefully June locked the clothing coupons away in the little dressing chest in her cubicle, then, having helped herself to the few necessities she required from her suitcase, she stepped outside again.

"Now for a look at the Long Corridor where Sheila says she saw the ghost," she murmured.

After studying that map of the school and its environs, in the train, June had no difficulty whatever in finding her way about the school.

The Long Corridor was in the west wing of the old building which now formed the Junior school. It lay well away from class-rooms and dormitories. Not a soul had June met, as at last, descending a shallow flight of stairs, she found herself standing on its broad cold flagstones.

It was dim and eerie in the gathering gloom. Buttressed stone walls and vaulted archways met her gaze, but there was no sign of a door—no sign of an opening of any description in its bleak bare walls. At long intervals, electric globes had been placed in the roof, but as there was also no sign of a switch, June had no opportunity of illuminating the place.

"Anyway, I'll explore," she muttered.

She shivered a little as she stepped forward. Definitely she did not like the atmosphere, but the thought of the task she had shouldered, drove her on. Clean and well swept was the floor, smooth and undecorated the walls. She wondered, as she gazed along the corridor, at which spot Sheila had seen the ghost disappear.

It was her own instinct which warned her, before she heard or saw anything that someone was approaching from behind her, and her heart fluttered in alarm. Without thinking, she stepped quickly back into the shadow of one of the buttresses, and blessing the almost complete darkness, stood holding her breath.

From near at hand came a soft swishing sound.

June pressed back against the wall. She dared not move. Now she caught the quick pad of agitated feet coming nearer, and suddenly, so near that she could have lifted a leg and touched it—a white-robed figure came fluttering by in the darkness.

"The White Princess!" was the thought that went through June's mind.

She thrilled as she realised that she was seeing that same ghost which Sheila had seen. She stood rigid as it passed. The figure was all in white, but there was nothing to identify it as a princess—nothing to identify it as anything but a human form dressed in a long shapeless robe, the hood of which completely obliterated the face.

It was just slightly taller than June herself, but whether girl, woman or man, June could not have said. In a moment it had sped by her, was hurrying away, a grey blur in the darkness.

June relaxed. She was about to tiptoe after the weird figure when suddenly it turned in mid-corridor, and to her amazement, walked towards the wall. For a second it stopped there—and it seemed to flutter. Then—June rubbed her eyes.

For the figure had disappeared! And if her eyes had not deceived her, it had disappeared through the solid wall itself!

"Which, of course, is all nonsense," June told herself shakily. "But it certainly bears out Sheila's story."

She was tingling now. With her eyes still focused upon the spot at which the figure had vanished, she sped lightly down the dark corridor. To her joy she spotted an electric switch in the wall, and with a gasp of relief switched it on. But when she reached the spot—

Blankly she stared.

For the wall here was as blank as the rest! The solution which immediately leapt to June's mind was that of a secret panel. Eagerly she began to scan the brickwork for the tell-tale clue which would reveal one, when she saw a glimmering white something lying on the floor in the dark shadow of the buttress, a foot or two away.

At once she pounced upon it; with quick excitement saw that it was another of the High Turrets square envelopes, bulging like the envelope which Noel Raymond had handed to her.

She felt that she knew what it contained before she opened it.

And when she did open it, she was right. For the envelope was stuffed full with——

Clothing coupons! June ramed them into her pocket, feeling now that she really was making progress. Again she looked for the clue which would give her the secret of opening the wall. Every crevice she touched and jabbed, every unevenness in the stone, but nothing happened.

And not until at last a bell clanged somewhere in the school did she desist.

"I'll have another look here later on!"

Up to the school hall she raced, taking her place with the others. All through call-over she kept her hand fastened on the packet of clothing coupons in her pocket.

Who had dropped that? Only the ghost, of course! But—who had been the ghost?

Call-over was finished, the school dismissed. At once June raced up to her own study—a study which Miss Adamson had given to her for her sole use in case she should require to work secretly. There, locking the door, she drew out the envelope again.

And now she stared, as she saw pencilled writing on the front of the envelope. Then she gave a gasp as she saw to whom the envelope was addressed.

Noel Raymond!

"Goodness!" June muttered.

She felt momentarily all at sea. What did this mean? There had been no question in her mind until now that it was the "ghost" who had dropped this package—but was she mistaken? Quickly she produced the original packet which her uncle had handed over to her. Cautiously she compared the two side by side. Yes, the handwriting was the same in both cases. Then—

June shook her head. Who would put two lots of clothing coupons in separate envelopes? Whose hand had addressed them to the famous detective? And why?

"The mystery thickens," murmured June, and knew a sense of pleasant excitement at the thought. "Now what would Uncle Noel do next? Obviously—or so it seems—those envelopes were addressed by someone in the school. My job now is to find out who? And the only way to do that is to get samples of handwriting."

She thought a moment more, then, making up her mind, quitted the study and went to see Miss Adamson. The headmistress looked up hopefully as she entered.

"June, have you discovered something?"

"Nothing definite, Miss Adamson—not yet," June answered cautiously. "But I believe I have a clue, and I'd like your help. Could I borrow the school register for a little while?"

Very willingly Miss Adamson agreed to that. With the register under her arm June hurried back to the study again, and with a sense of hopeful expectation she began to plod through it.

Every girl and every mistress in the school had, at the beginning of terms, signed their names and written their addresses in that book. But nowhere did June find writing which corresponded to that on the two mystery envelopes.

Her sense of mystification deepened. If it was not one of the pupils, and not one of the mistresses, who could it be? Perhaps then, one of the servants?

She took the register back. The dormitory bell was clanging then, but she took no notice. Miss Adamson, only too anxious to see her progressing with the mystery, did not comment on the bell, as June carefully inquired about a servants' register. There was no servants' register, the headmistress assured her, but if she required specimens of the servants' handwriting, she had their signed insurance cards. She handed them to June, who looked rapidly through them, then her brows furrowed.

"Are—are they all here, Miss Adamson?" she asked.

"All—oh, no," the headmistress smiled. "There is no specimen of the porter's, nor of the housekeeper's. Nor of our latest domestic help"—she frowned a little—"Gilda Jones. If you would like me—"

"Thank you," June said quickly.

For she had a better idea than that all at once. The mention of Gilda suddenly set her thoughts off at a tangent. The porter obviously was not the writer of those envelopes. Neither was Mrs. Cartwright, the faded old housekeeper

whom she had already met. If one of those three had addressed those envelopes it could only be Gilda.

But—June hoped not. She didn't want it to be Gilda, somehow.

Next morning she purposely stayed late in her cubicle until Gilda, feeling she had gone down to breakfast with the rest, came in to clear up.

"Oh, Gilda, I'm sorry. Won't be long," June said. "I seem all behind this morning, don't I? Do you happen to know the address of a good hairdresser in Greentown?"

"Why, yes, miss—"

"Be a pet and jot it down on that pad there then, will you?" June urged, busy combing her hair.

The pad and the pencil were on the bed. Gilda looked doubtful just for a moment, but obviously anxious to please, took it up and carefully wrote for a couple of minutes. June smiled.

"Thanks, Gilda. Golly, I am going to be late!"

She snatched up the pad without looking at it. With a flashing smile at the servant, rushed from the room. Downstairs in the dining-room she was met with amazed and wondering looks from the girls, who obviously expected her to receive a ticking-off. But to their amazement, Miss Adamson, presiding at the mistresses' table, just smiled and nodded.

"I say," Mavis Evans breathed wonderingly, when at last, with the meal finished, they were in the corridor again. "What sort of magic spell have you thrown over the Head, June? She'd have gaped us for that!"

"Yes, rather. And did you hear her come up to bed last night? Myra Lee cried, 'Ten minutes' after everybody else—ten minutes, mind you! It's just—just beastly favouritism! Who are you to be treated differently from anybody else?"

"Aha!" June said tantalisingly.

That was all the satisfaction she would give them then. But she was conscious, as she hurried off to her study, that she left a discontented buzz of chatter behind her. Once alone, however, with the door locked behind her, she forgot that and whipped out the pad again.

And then a startled look crossed her face.

For the first glance proved that Gilda's writing was identical with the writing on the two envelopes which had contained the clothing coupons!

ONLY NOEL COULD HELP!



JUNE felt a little shocked. More baffled than ever she was becoming then.

"I've got to find out more—heaps more," she told herself. "And the only way to do that is to have a quiet look round Gilda's room."

That was her obvious course—if only to clear her mind of these doubts of Gilda. Thoughtfully June quitted the study.

With the intention of finding Gilda she went along to the servants' quarters. And there in the passage she stopped as she saw a notice, signed by the porter, setting out the domestic staff's outdoor duties for the day. She noted that Gilda was free from duty from midday till six.

"That's luck," she breathed. "It's her afternoon off. Now if I can really make sure that she goes out of the school—"

Off she went in search of Gilda, whose worried face brightened as she came along. Was she going into the town at twelve o'clock, June asked her, and to her secret satisfaction discovered that Gilda was. Then, June asked, would she mind making an appointment for her on Saturday at the hairdresser's?

Gladly Gilda agreed. Satisfied that she had done all she could for the moment, June obeyed

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The MYSTERY of the Clothing Coupons

(Continued

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the bell which was then ringing and went into class.

Immediately lessons were over she was tackled by Mavis.

"June, don't forget the practice in half an hour's time."

June smiled a promise, though, to be sure, her mind was far away from the hockey practice at that moment. She went again to her study, there to find a letter on the table, which had obviously been left for her during lessons.

It was from Uncle Noel, informing her that he had now taken up his residence in Southwind Cottage, and if she wanted his help or advice she was to go and see him.

"Thank you, uncle, I will—if I can't see this through on my own," June said.

Meantime, there was Gilda's room. She looked at her watch. Ten past twelve—the girl would have gone by now. June had the number of the room—a separate notice on the notice board in the servants' quarters had given her that, and briskly she started for it.

But as she was about to enter the corridor where the room was situated, she pulled up abruptly as she came face to face with the porter, now dressed in an apron.

He looked at her inquiringly.

"Anything you want miss?"

"No, thank you," June summoned her sweetest smile. "Just looking round," she answered off-handedly. "I'm still new enough here to be interested in everything, you know."

He nodded understandingly.

"Then perhaps, when you've finished looking round here you'd like to see the tuckshop," he said. "That's where I'm bound for now. I look after it during the school hours, you see."

"Thank you, I'll remember that," June promised, and watched him as he ambled off. He seemed to be a very affable fellow, she thought.

She waited until his footsteps had died away, then stealthily she crept towards Gilda's room. As she half-expected, the door was locked, but June was not a budding detective for nothing, so, producing her small master key, she let herself in, quickly locking the door behind her. And then, without advancing, she stood, taking in every detail before her.

But the room exhibited nothing out of the ordinary. Nothing which one would not have expected at first glance.

She tiptoed to the dressing-table, and carefully scanned the contents. One by one she opened the drawers, peering carefully into every corner. And not until she had examined the third was her diligence rewarded.

For there she found a slip of paper which contained a hastily pencilled note. June's heart beat more quickly as she read it.

"Will see you in Long Corridor after lessons on Tuesday."

Tuesday! It was a Tuesday on which Sheila had disappeared.

June placed the note back. She opened the next drawer and then caught her breath in a swift hiss. For there was another note, pencilled this time in Gilda's own hand. And it said:

"Long Corridor leads to Chapel Ruins."

"Phe-ew!" breathed June.

Her eyes gleamed with excitement. For this, unless she was a complete numbskull, was one of the vital clues for which she had been searching—the Long Corridor gave access to the Chapel Ruins!

Vividly she recalled her map.

Swiftly June continued her search, but there was nothing else to excite her. Once again she took a final look round. And it was then that she noticed that the carpet was ruffled just beneath the wardrobe, and from it projected what looked like a frayed strand of the carpet itself.

But a second, closer scrutiny showed that it was the limp end of a piece of dusty string.

At once June stooped, caught the string and dragged into light a dusty parcel, tied up in brown paper. Holding her breath, she unwrapped it, and then gasped at the sight which met her eyes.

For the parcel was full of clothing coupons!

"Golly me!" she breathed.

What should she do? Her brain was spinning now. These, here—in Gilda's possession! She was shocked—but still she felt a strange reluctance to believe the evidence she had discovered against the girl.

The question was—what should she do now?

"Explore that tunnel, I think," June said, and then was pulled up by another thought.

She had promised Noel, among other things, before setting out on this great adventure, that she would run no foolhardy risks without first informing him.

June pulled a face. But Noel's cottage was not far. So—

"I'll just go and see him about it—now," she told herself.

But first she must not let Gilda suspect that she had been here, and, hesitating just for a moment, she thrust the packet of coupons back where she had found them, then quitted the room.

Twenty minutes later, with a breathless sense of anticipation, she was knocking on the ivy-framed door of Southwind Cottage.

There was no answer. June knocked again—once, twice, three times. Then a little frown came to her brow.

"Of all the bad luck! Uncle's out."

She thought a moment. Then she drew out her pad. Quickly she scribbled a note.

"Uncle—must see you—urgently. Will you meet me outside the ruins of the Old Chapel about five o'clock?" June.

That would be the best plan, she thought, since obviously Noel Raymond would not want to advertise his presence by appearing at High Turrets School.

Absorbed in her thoughts, she hurried back to school, entering the gate just as the dinner bell rang. And then she started, falling back with a little gasp of dismay as she saw an angry crowd of young hockey players swarming off the field, and remembered too late, the match in which she was to have had her trial.

"Oh, crumbs!" she thought in dismay.

The next minute she was spotted and surrounded.

"I say, June," Mavis said reproachfully. "I thought you promised—"

"Mavis, I'm frightfully sorry," June began contritely.

"Where've you been?" Myra Lee demanded.

"That is my business," June returned steadily.

"And it's your business, I suppose, to let the Form down?" Myra scowled. "It's your business to ignore us after all arrangements were made?"

It's your business, I suppose, to do exactly as you like in this school—and I, for one, am getting fed up. Mavis, don't put up with her. You can see she doesn't care a fig for any of us. Leave her out of the team!"

"Just a tick, Myra," Mavis broke in. "June, we're having another practice this evening—at five o'clock! See that you turn up to that—"

"Cert—" began June, and then abruptly checked herself. Five o'clock!

"Mavis, I'm sorry. I can't manage that."

"Why not?"

"Because—because—well, I've got an appointment," June said.

"An appointment, indeed!" Myra scoffed. "What a mystery you are, June Gaynor. If you ask me there's something fishy about you—I'm bothered if—"

"Please," Mavis said, her face troubled. "June, if I make bully off at six, will you come then?"

"With pleasure," June answered readily.

For if she met Uncle Noel at five, she was bound to be back in time for the practice at six, she told herself.

"And if she doesn't turn up?" another girl asked.

"Then she's out of the team for good," Myra sneered.

The nods which accompanied that statement showed that Myra had support, and June had to admit it was fair enough.

During the afternoon Miss Adamson sent for her and to June's delight informed her that Noel Raymond had phoned with a message for his niece. The message simply was: "Tell June I'll be there."

June's heart rejoiced at that. Now there would be no hitch, she told herself. And at five o'clock she was standing outside the chapel ruins. She was standing there with a rather blank face. For of Noel Raymond, usually so punctual, there was no sign.

She gazed around her. Low, broken walls and dust-laden debris met her eyes but there was certainly no trace of her uncle. What had happened? He had certainly received her message, otherwise he would never have phoned a reply to it. But where was he?

"Oh, he'll be along any second," June thought. "I expect he has a good reason for not keeping his appointment on time."

Meantime, she thought, as she was here, why not have a look round? With a glance to right and left she stepped into the ruins, threading her way among its dusty aisles of debris. If the ghost or Gilda—or both—used these ruins, they certainly didn't reach them by an over-ground route, she told herself, for there was not, anywhere, the faintest trace of a footprint.

And then, peering towards a rather sinister looking hole in a structure which had once been a thick dividing wall, she halted.

What was that?

A dull, muffled thud fell upon her ear. It was accompanied, she fancied, by a muffled squeak. With heart suddenly drumming, she crept towards the hole and bent, intently listening.

For a few minutes she stood listening, but the sound was not repeated.

She shook her head. Impulsively she took out the pocket pencil torch she always carried and flashed it into the hole. There seemed to be some sort of a shaft there but as the beam of light was so restricted she could not see more than a few yards.

All the same, she had heard something. She must tell Uncle Noel about this.

Satisfied at last that she could find out no more now, she glanced at her watch. Great golly! It was half past five and Uncle Noel had not turned up yet.

She retraced her steps; but still there was no sign of the detective. She thought, with dismay, of the hockey practice. Should she go back?

But no! Apart from the fact she felt a strange reluctance to desert the ruins after

hearing that mysterious sound, she felt that duty held her there.

She waited. Still no Noel. Slowly she retraced her steps to the hole, and then again she jerked upright with a thrill as she heard the sound repeated. What was it?

Bending double she flashed her torch and ventured into the hole. A steeply sloping tunnel running into the darkness beyond revealed itself in the torchlight's beam.

But again, though she stopped and listened intently, she could see—nor hear—nothing.

She worked her way out again and again consulted her watch. Ten to six! Still no sign of Noel.

Ten more minutes and still Noel did not appear. Goodness knows what Mavis & Co. were saying! But suddenly her eyes flashed.

"Well, Uncle Noel can't blame me if I take the law into my own hands for once," she argued. "And I shall go pop if I don't find out what's happening down there."

And with that she plunged into the hole again. Now, careful to make no sound, she slipped and slithered downwards, warily dodging blocks of masonry that had fallen from roof and walls. Down, down, down she went, darkness hemming her in, dust and damp coming up to choke her nostrils, yet with that fierce sense of excitement mounting with every step. And suddenly her feet touched firm, level ground.

She flashed her torch. A stone walled, heavily-buttressed cellar met her eyes. But there was no door. No sound. The unearthly stillness and the darkness caused a shiver to pass through her.

And then suddenly she froze. What was that?

Instinctively she switched off the torch, and stiffened. From somewhere came a grinding, whirring sound. Now she saw a beam of light spreading on the floor. The beam grew larger, brighter, and now June saw that a section of the apparently solid wall was sliding back.

She stood still, not daring to move.

Then she almost cried out. For a figure carrying a basket was stepping through the hole in the wall—a figure dressed from head to foot in white.

The White Princess!

THE AMAZING TRUTH



STILL as a statue June stood, knowing that the slightest movement, the slightest sound would give her away.

The figure moved forward. It stopped as it placed the basket on the ground and stamped quickly three times upon the flagstone on which it stood. In

doing that the hem of the hood flapped upwards for a moment, revealing a leg. And at sight of it June's eyes suddenly gleamed.

The solid wall, responding to the pressure on the flagstone, slid home again. Silently the ghost picked up the basket, and to June's relief, began to move across the apartment.

June's brain was racing. A wave of excitement had swept away her fear. She felt that at last she was at grips with her mystery—that she had, in fact, practically solved one part of it with that unexpected glimpse of the ghost's leg.

The ghost, of course, had entered from the Long Corridor in the school. As that note in Gilda's room had intimated, the secret tunnel leading from the corridor linked with this chamber in the Chapel Ruins. But why had the ghost come here? Why that basket?

She watched the figure as it again paused in front of the opposite wall. Again it danced that queer little three-stepped jig on a flagstone, then abruptly a section of the wall slid backwards. The figure disappeared and the wall closed.

"Oh, golly, if only Uncle Noel were here," she breathed. "Now what do I do?"

But she knew, even as she asked herself the question. She would watch and wait.

Presently there came that familiar whirr. The ghost, returning the same way as it had come, slowly crossed the floor. Again it danced on the flagstone in front of the wall opposite June and again it disappeared. Still for a minute or two she waited. Then—

"Righto," she thought grimly. "This is where investigations begin!"

She switched on her torch. Swiftly she crossed towards the flagstone in front of the farther wall. Her eyes were bright with excitement as she noted the tell-tale footprints around the slab—revealing the pattern of a star-patterned rubber sole.

Briskly June whipped out her note-pad, a pencil and a small tape-measure. Carefully she measured the most promising footprint, made a sketch of it and its pattern on her pad and straightened up. Now, with her eye on the wall, she stepped towards the slab.

And holding her breath, she danced three quick steps upon it. The result was magical.

She thrilled as she heard the whirr, as she saw the wall in front of her opening. At the same moment she jumped.

"Help!" a voice called—a girl's voice.

It came from beyond the opening in the wall. It was accompanied by a thump. June's eyes blazed now as there suddenly dawned upon her the reason for the noises she had heard above. Without thinking she plunged through the opening, playing her feeble light this way and that, finding herself in a narrowish oblong chamber, in each side wall of which was a solid door, and from behind the door she was facing came the voice again.

"Help!"

"Just a minute," June called. Quickly she drew out her master key, and after a few deft turns she threw open the door. Then she stared.

A white faced girl in the uniform of High Turrets confronted her. An oil lamp burned on a table on which stood the basket the ghost had brought and which, June saw now, contained food. But it was the girl herself who attracted her attention, whose identity she immediately guessed.

"Thank goodness!" the other cried. "Oh, gosh, I was wondering if help would ever come. Who are you?"

"I'm June Gaynor," that girl answered. "You are—Sheila Wainwright?"

The girl nodded.

"And you were kidnapped? By the ghost?"

"Yes, that's right. Oh, please, let's get out of here," she added quickly.

"Just a minute," June said. She was quivering now. "Who is the ghost?"

"He other stared blankly and shuddered. "I don't know. I—I've never seen its face, and—and it's never spoken a word. It just comes here every morning and evening—to bring food and—and some nights to work in the room opposite this—"

"Work?"

"Yes!" Gulping, Sheila nodded. "I don't know what at, but some nights there's a clanking noise like machinery—"

June jumped.

"Gosh, so that's it!" she breathed. She turned briskly to the girl. "I suppose," she asked, hating to put the question, "that—that Gilda Jones has nothing to do with this?"

Sheila's eyes opened wide.

"Gilda—goodness, no! Why do you connect her—"

June hesitated a moment.

"Because," she said. "I happen to know that Gilda Jones possesses clothing coupons by the score, and if I'm not an absolute duffer, these clothing coupons are being forged down here."

Sheila stared at her for a moment. Then she laughed a little.

"And you think that Gilda—Gilda of all people—she shook her head. "If you do think that, June Gaynor, you're a duffer, because Gilda Jones is one of the straightest

girls in High Turrets. She and I—" And then her eyes suddenly widened. "Look! Look!" she screamed. "The floor, the floor—"

But June, swaying on her feet by the same strange motion which had disturbed her companion, now felt her face blank.

The floor, unlike that of the passage, was made of stout smooth timber and now the floor was moving bodily!

Already there was a crack between the wall and the door. Like a flat escalator the floor was slowly moving towards them, leaving a gaping cavity.

"June," Sheila panted. "June—look at it! Watch it! It's moving! It's coming towards us! Oh, great Scott, don't you see? This is the moving floor—we've heard about it in the school but nobody has ever seen it. This is a trap—a trap. In a few moments—"

June's eyes dilated. Her cheeks were paper-white now. She saw the hideous fate that threatened. With no floor beneath their feet what could they do but fall into the black pit now rapidly growing between themselves and the wall!

Then—then she had not been so clever after all, she thought. The ghost must have seen her.

The gap was three feet wide now. Desperately June started forward. But she checked. If she jumped, there was nothing there to stand on. She shrank back as with a reverberating crash the table and its contents catapulted into the pit. With eyes widening in horror, she saw the floor relentlessly rolling on.

"June, what can we do? What—" Sheila cried.

June licked her dry lips. She shut her eyes. Another two minutes and—

"June!" choked Sheila as the chair slid into the hole. "June, we're done—"

"Take it easy there, girls," a re-assuring voice said, and suddenly the floor jerked to a stop, seemed to shudder and then began to move backwards again.

At the same moment the door opened and there—the most welcome sight on earth to the two terrified and quaking girls—stood Noel Raymond!

"YOU see, June, what comes of not taking your uncle's advice," Noel Raymond said seriously.

"Uncle, I'm sorry," June said contritely. "But—oh, I can never tell you how thankful we both are. That awful floor—"

She shuddered as she, her uncle and the still shivering Sheila once more stood in the sunshine among the ruins—safe at last from the hideous menace below. "But uncle, why didn't you come at five? And how did you find us?"

"I was held up," Noel said. "As a matter of fact, another case has cropped up since I've been here—a case on which Inspector Carter of Scotland Yard is working. It was he who called for me this morning and so made me absent from the cottage when you first called. Then, this afternoon, when I got your message, I phoned through—"

"Yes?" June said.

"Unfortunately Carter called me again. And I had to go off once more. But before going I phoned the school again. One of the servants answered. She assured me she would give you my message. I can only conclude," he added, "that as all this happened while you were in class, the servant forgot to pass the message on."

"But in that message I left word to say that I would meet you at the arranged spot at half-past six. I came. I knew at once you had been here when I saw your footprints, and when I trailed them I guessed your game. I came down here. I saw the tracks leading to the flagstone, and saw also that other prints on the flagstone were more blurred than the rest, so I jumped on it, as I imagined others had jumped on it—and, hey presto, the wall opened."

"And then?"

"Then," Noel smilingly explained, "I heard Sheila's cry. I realised at once that something dreadful was happening, and when I saw the lever jutting out of the wall just inside the entrance, I guessed it had something to do with that, and I pushed it back. And that," he smiled, "is the story of your escape. Now, tell me, June, exactly how your case is progressing."

They talked then—a long time—with Sheila now filling up the blanks. Sheila, it appeared, was a friend of Gilda's. The girl's mother lived in her own village—and was in very poor circumstances.

Sheila went on, to describe how by accident she had seen the ghost in the Long Corridor and how she had resolved next day to solve the secret of the corridor's secret passage herself. She had solved it and had told Gilda about it. And then Gilda, looking rather worried, had told Sheila her secret.

That very morning, apparently, Gilda had discovered a packet of clothing coupons placed on top of the rubbish in the dustbin just before it was due to be collected. She was rather scared at the idea of her find.

"Of course," Sheila said, "I couldn't think of anything but the ghost. One mysterious thing linked itself with another in my mind, and I thought, here's a chance for some detecting. So I told Gilda to send the coupons to you, Mr. Raymond, intending to write and tell you all about my ghost mystery by the next post."

And then she went on to relate how Gilda, after sending those coupons to Noel Raymond, had found another packet in the same place in the evening.

Sheila had advised her to send those too, but to wait this time until she had written the letter. But before that plan could be carried out, she had to explore the secret passage, had come face to face with the ghost and had been kidnapped.

"And that," she said, "is all. I don't know anything more."

"Very interesting," Noel said thoughtfully. "Now, June, what are your conclusions?"

June was instantly alert. "The forger of the dustman, or the ghost that the ghost is the forger of the clothing coupons. Second, that the clothing coupons, by always being placed in the dustbin just before the bin was due to be emptied, must have been intended by the forger to be collected from the bin—a neat way of getting rid of them. That, of course, makes the dustman the forger's accomplice."

"Quite!" Noel nodded his approval. "But the dustman, being the receiver, is not the big fish in this case, June. Your big fish is the ghost. Now who is the ghost?"

"Do you know, uncle?"

"Not an earthly idea," Noel confessed frankly. "As I've said, this is your case, June. I'm leaving it all to you."

"Then supposing," June asked cheerfully, "I point the ghost out to you at the school? Wait a minute, though, Sheila, don't you come along yet. Turn up in ten minutes' time, will you? Uncle, will you come with me?"

"With pleasure," Noel said.

And so, leaving a rather dubious-looking Sheila to follow later, they went, June inwardly seething with excitement—but an excitement tempered with a little anxiety. And no sooner had they reached the school than a crowd pooled on them.

"Here she is!"

"June, you wash-out—"

"You've let us down again! What about the hockey?"

"Yes, why weren't you there?" Myra Lee flashed.

"Because," June said, and laughed, "I had other things to do. Let me introduce you to my uncle, girls—Noel Raymond, the detective." And then, as they all goggled at the thrill of finding themselves in the famous young detec-

tive's presence, June laughed again. "Supposing," she said, "I do the explaining in the tucks—stand—treat at the same time? It is open, I suppose?"

"That's a good idea," Mavis enthused. "Lead the way!"

June led the way, her heart thumping now. She felt her reputation would be made or smashed in the next few moments.

Griffiths the porter, in his apron, was behind the counter. He stared in surprise at the sudden invasion.

"Treat all round, Griffiths—on me," June said merrily. "This is in honour of my uncle, Mr. Raymond—"

The porter, too, jumped as he heard that name.

He bustled round while a crowd of girls surrounded June and her famous uncle. A chatter broke out until suddenly Griffiths stepped from behind the counter, a tray in his hands. He placed it on the table in front of Noel.

"Thank you, Griffiths," June said. "Oh, by the way—"

"Yes, miss?"

"Er—just a matter of curiosity, but can I just have a look at those turn-ups of yours?" June asked.

"Why, miss—" Griffiths looked embarrassed. "Certainly. I'm afraid the turn-up material doesn't exactly match the rest of the trousers, but in these days when coupons are so scarce—"

"Exactly!" smiled June. "That's why people who can get hold of plenty of coupons make a lot of money out of them. And what a shame," she added, "you haven't changed your trousers since you played ghost in the old chapel an hour ago. I spotted those turn-ups then, Griffiths—"

"You what?"

"And," June went on, "I also took the size and shape of those rubber shoes you're wearing. You are the ghost! You're the man who forges clothing coupons in the chapel ruins—and you're the kidnapper of Sheila Wainwright! Uncle, watch him!" she cried next moment.

But Noel Raymond was watching. For as Griffiths, his usually genial face scowling and contorted, stepped backwards, his hand flying to his pocket, Noel had gripped him, and with a wrench of his wrist jerked the porter's hand from his hip pocket. It came out, dragging with it a revolver—and a packet of newly printed clothing coupons which fell on the floor.

"Well, my hat!" cried Mavis. "Then this means—but where's Sheila?"

"Here!" a voice said, and Sheila entered, arm in arm with Gilda Jones. Gilda, her face radiant now.

"Miss Gaynor!" she cried. "Miss Gaynor, Sheila has—has told me all about it. And—oh, how can I thank you? That man—he guessed I knew something about those coupons. He bullied me and reported me and tried to make out that I was stealing them. He threatened to get me dismissed from my job, which is why—why I couldn't tell you anything when you asked me if I was worried. And now—"

"Now," Noel said briskly, "we leave him—and his dust-collecting friend—to the police. And June—" He smiled. "I'm sorry, girls, but she won't be playing in your hockey match after all. But you won't mind that now, seeing that you've got your Sheila back, will you? But I tell you what," he added, "We'll both come down to watch, if we may?"

Such a chorus of enthusiasm went up then that June was almost sorry she would not be staying at High Turrets.

Almost, but not quite. She'd sooner be a detective!

THE END.

THE CLUE OF THE WHISPERING STATUE— that is the title of next Friday's grand double-length complete story.