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GIRLS' CRYSTAL ^{3^D}

AND "THE SCHOOLGIRL"

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The SECRET OF THE WRECKER'S LANTERN

A Cheery Bunch Of Young Mystery-solvers Are Featured In This Grand Story Of
Adventure On The Cornish Coast—By ENID BOYTEN

RIVAL GHOST HUNTERS!

"I SAY! What a wizard picture!" exclaimed Joan Bryant. "It looks so—so lifelike!" "Smashing, isn't it!" agreed Peter Ross with a grin. "Looks as if the old wrecker might step down from the canvas at any moment. And there's a queer gleam in his eyes, as if he's not too pleased to have us all staring at him!"

A group of boys and girls stood in the picture gallery at Polmartin Towers, gazing at a large picture in the centre of the gallery, depicting an old-time fisherman waving a lantern towards a dark and stormy sea.

He was supposed to be a wrecker luring a ship on to the rocks so that he and his friends might plunder it.

Daphne Elliott's blue eyes sparkled happily. She was glad that her chums were impressed by the most remarkable picture in her uncle's collection.

Uncle John was away on the Continent just now, and at his suggestion Daphne was entertaining a house party of her boy and girl friends, who were all thrilled with their stay at the romantic old manor house on the Cornish cliffs.

"There's something you haven't noticed about the picture yet," Daphne smiled. "On the frame at the bottom there's a faded inscription. Read it out, Joan, will you?"

Dark-haired Joan was Daphne's special chum, and she now bent down and read aloud the faded words on the picture frame:

"The wrecker's lantern, be it night or day,
To Wreckers' Cave shall lead the secret way."

"Golly! How jolly mysterious!" exclaimed Molly Mathers, her plump face quite startled. "What does it mean?"

"Nobody knows," chuckled Daphne.

She pointed to a small table close by, where stood some old-time relics of the Cornish coast, one of which was a large iron lantern.

"That is supposed to be an actual lantern used by the wreckers," she went on. "And it's thought that the inscription may refer to it. But no one knows anything about a secret way to Wreckers' Cave."

"But there really is a cave, down by the cliffs somewhere?" inquired Peter.

Daphne nodded.

"Yes," she replied. "And there's a strange legend about it. It's said that from time to time the old wrecker steps out from the canvas of this picture and haunts the cave, waving his lantern just as he used to do in the old days, to lure ships on the rocks."

"Phew! How exciting!" cried Molly.

The door of the gallery opened at that moment. Standing there was Jan Riggs, the steward; a thin-faced, dark man who was in charge during Uncle John's absence. He was smiling pleasantly, but Daphne noted a hint of worry in his deep-set eyes.

"Sorry to interrupt you young folks," he said. "But I'd like to lock up the gallery now, if you've seen all you want to see. And, Miss Daphne, I'd like a word in private with you."

They trooped into the hall, and Mr. Riggs drew Daphne on one side.

"I didn't like disturbing your guests, Miss Daphne," he said in a low voice. "But—well, I'm a little worried about the safety of your uncle's pictures. I have reason to believe someone tried to break into the gallery last night."

"Goodness!" breathed Daphne, her eyes widening in dismay.

"Luckily I disturbed him before he could

effect an entry," the steward went on. "Who he was I don't know, but he left this behind him."

"So saying, Jan Riggs drew from his pocket a scrap of blue woolen material and held it out for Daphne's inspection.

"Looks like a scrap from a pullover or jersey," she suggested.

"A fisherman's jersey, I should say," agreed the steward. "Knowing how your uncle values his pictures, Miss Daphne, I'm going to take extra precautions."

"Quite right, Mr. Riggs," Daphne nodded. "It would be dreadful if uncle came back and found something had happened to his beloved pictures."

A little disturbed, Daphne hurried across the hall to join her guests, who were standing around a crackling log fire. As she approached she heard Molly's indignant voice:

"Well, I must say you boys have got a good opinion of yourselves!" Molly was exclaiming. "Considering we nearly beat you in that scratch game of hockey this morning—"

"Well, well! So you nearly beat us!" grinned Peter, winking at Jack Lindley. "I seem to remember that we scored four goals, while you only collected two!"

"Anyway, when it comes to a ghost hunt we're more than a match for you," declared Molly. "Aren't we, Daphne?"

"I should jolly well think we are!" Daphne laughed. "But what's it all about?"

"Peter was saying that we girls would be scared to explore the Wreckers' Cave on our own," Joan replied. "And we were just telling him not to talk through his hat!"

Peter grinned again. "We'll make a bargain, girls," he chuckled. "If you will explore the haunted cave in broad daylight, we'll explore it at the witching hour of midnight to-night. And we'll see which of us trails the phantom wrecker to his lair. What do you say to that?"

Daphne's eyes danced with fun. Here was a challenge that appealed to her adventurous spirit.

"O.K.! It's a bargain!" she agreed. "And as there's no time like the present, how about starting off right away, girls? Forward to Wreckers' Cave!"

There was an excited rush for coats and scarves.

Off they went, while the boys raised a cheer to speed them on their way down to the cliff path, along which they scampered, till, at a narrow bend, they halted abruptly.

Someone was ascending the path just below them—a broad-shouldered boy in the blue jersey and trousers of a fisherman, a net over his shoulder. Unsmilingly he gazed at them from dark, serious eyes in a sunburnt face, as he barred their way.

"It's Dave Costello!" breathed Daphne.

She knew Dave quite well. He lived alone in a tiny stone cottage along the cliffs. Several times he had helped her and Uncle John on fishing expeditions of various kinds.

"Sorry we can't stop, Dave," Daphne chuckled. "But we're going to explore Wreckers' Cave—and we just can't wait."

Still he barred their path.

"I would not go there to-day, Miss Daphne, if I were you," he said in his deep, husky voice. "There's strange tales told of Wreckers' Cave, and I don't like the sound of them. Stay away, Miss Daphne! Don't meddle with the cave to-day!"

For a moment there was a brief silence, while a gull screamed harshly overhead. Then Daphne laughed gaily.

"You're trying to scare us, Dave, just like the boys at home," she exclaimed. "But we don't intend to be scared, thank you. We are going right ahead with our plans."

"And I say go back!" Dave commanded, frowning.

Daphne stared. Was he really trying to give them orders?

Trying to spoil their fun in that slow, dominating way of his? Her eyes flashed.

"We're going right ahead, Dave," she retorted. "Stand aside, please!"

And determinedly she brushed past him, the others following. At the next bend she glanced back and saw Dave still standing there, a grim, intent look on his face as he gazed after them.

And in that brief backward glance Daphne noticed something else, too.

Dave's jersey was torn at one side. A small piece had been ripped out of the woolen material.

And in a flash she remembered that scrap of blue wool which Mr. Riggs, the steward, had shown her; the only clue, he held to the identity of last night's intruder at the picture gallery.

She felt a momentary pang of uneasiness. "But, of course, it wasn't Dave," she told herself quickly. "Anyone may tear their jersey. It doesn't prove a thing."

True, the fisher-boy had always been rather a puzzle. He was so aloof, at times so unapproachable. Yet she had always liked him, and instinctively trusted him. She would not believe he had been snooping around last night with designs on Uncle John's pictures.

And in her carefree way Daphne laughed aside these disturbing thoughts. Gaily she led the way to the beach, and to the cave entrance, dim and shadowy in the sunlit cliff.

"Gosh! It's rather weird, isn't it?" Molly faltered nervously.

"Of course it is! Haunted caves are always weird!" chuckled Daphne. "That's the thrill of them, Molly, old girl. Come on, Joan—you and I will lead the way with our torches. Forward!" And in they went.

The floor of the cave was of firm, hard sand. The torchlight revealed rocky walls and a vaulted roof. The sound of the sea came to them here like a hushed whisper.

"No ghosts, I'm afraid," Daphne laughed.

"It's weird, though," Joan said, eagerly gazing around. "Can't you imagine the old-time wreckers creeping out of here some dark night with their lanterns to lure a helpless ship on to the rocks, and—"

She broke off with a startled gasp, as they all shrank back against the rocky wall.

A loud, wailing sound had echoed eerily through the cave. It rose like a shrill scream, higher and higher, filling the cave with haunting echoes; then died away to silence.

And then, before the startled girls could move or speak, a figure took shape in the shadows at the far end of the cave. It was an exact counterpart of the figure in the picture—an old-time fisherman wearing a striped handkerchief around his head and slowly waving a lighted lantern to and fro.

For a few moments it remained there, then disappeared as suddenly as it had come, and once again the eerie wail echoed through the cave.

"Gosh! I can't stand this!" Molly panted.

She took to her heels. So did the rest of the girls. Only Daphne and Joan stood their ground, though their hearts were thudding.

"W-where did it go?" whispered Joan.

Slowly they advanced, shining their torches into the back of the cave, exploring every niche and cranny. The yellow light glowed on rock and sand, and that was all. Not a sign of the phantom wrecker!

And then suddenly Daphne laughed.

"What ninnies we are!" she burst out. "Don't you see what it is, Joan? This is a jape of Peter and the boys. I thought they had something up their sleeves, some special reason for egging us on to explore the cave!"

"You mean they staged the phantom figure just to scare us?" murmured Joan. "Yes, but how did they work it? Where did the figure vanish to?"

Daphne shook her head. "Haven't the foggiest," she said. "But you know how clever Peter is at working stunts of

that sort. Golly! We'll get our own back on them for this, Joan, see if we don't!"

They made a further search, but without result. Then they hurried outside to join the others.

"Th-thank goodness you've come out!" panted Molly. "We thought the ghost had got you. What does it mean, Daphne?"

"It means that we've had our legs pulled," Daphne replied calmly. "Joan and I are quite convinced that the boys cleverly staged the whole affair to give us a fright. But don't let them know that we're wise to their scheme. They've got to keep their side of the bargain and visit the cave at midnight—and that will give us our chance."

Daphne's cheery manner calmed their fears. Her explanation certainly seemed the most reasonable one, and as they made their way back to Polmartin Towers in the gathering shadows of evening they eagerly discussed ways and means of getting their own back on their boy rivals.

The moon had risen when they reached the manor. Crossing the hall a little behind the others, Daphne noticed that the door of the picture gallery was ajar.

"Hallo! I thought Mr. Riggs was going to lock it up," she murmured. "Let's have a peep inside, Joan, and see that everything is O.K."

She stepped across the threshold a little in advance of her chum. And as she did so a gasp of wonderment left her lips.

Before her was the long gallery with its rows of pictures on the walls. Most of it was in deep shadow, but through one window shone a ray of moonlight, gleaming on the old gilt frame of that large, arresting picture of the Cornish wrecker.

Daphne's pulses raced as she looked. For it seemed to her that the gilt frame was empty, that it enclosed nothing but a dark, empty square, as if the wrecker really had stepped from the canvas to haunt the cave below!

JOAN DISAPPEARS



A CLOUD passed across the moon, and the gallery was plunged into inky blackness. Frantically Daphne groped for the electric light switch, and switched it on. "Anything wrong?" queried Joan in the doorway.

Joan, from her position farther back, had seen nothing at all, but she was struck by Daphne's startled manner. And now Daphne turned to gaze at the mysterious picture again.

Then she drew a quick breath of relief. For, now that the light was on, she could see the oil painting of the wrecker in its frame just as usual.

"It was a trick of the moonlight," she told Joan. "It looked, for the moment, as if the frame was quite empty and the old wrecker really had stepped out of the picture. But, of course, it was there all the time."

The two chums moved closer to the lifelike painting with its mysterious inscription, and Joan peered intently at it.

"You know, my father is an art dealer," she said. "And he has taught me quite a bit about old paintings. I wonder—"

A gleam of excitement shone in her grey eyes.

"Daphne! I believe I may be able to solve the mystery of that inscription!" she exclaimed. "Perhaps I can even prove how the wrecker's lantern may show the secret way to the cave. But I won't say anything until I make quite sure that—"

She stopped, and both girls turned swiftly as a soft footfall sounded behind them.

It was Mr. Riggs, the steward, who had come quietly into the picture gallery behind them. For a moment his eyes rested on Joan, then he turned to Daphne.

"There's been another attempt at breaking

in here, Miss Daphne," he said, a note of anger in his voice. "In broad daylight, too—the impudence of it! And this time I caught a glimpse of the intruder's face, and so did young Irevanion, the gardener's boy."

Daphne's heart missed a beat.

"And—who was it?" she asked quickly.

"Dave Costello," Jan Riggs replied. "That ne'er-do-well fisher-boy who lives along the cliffs. I've been suspecting him for some time, and I'm only waiting for a little more proof before I set the police on him!"

Dave Costello! The name conjured up in Daphne's mind a picture of that broad-shouldered boy they had met on the cliffs, with his sunburnt face and steady eyes. Surely he couldn't be planning a robbery! It was incredible, and yet—

There was the fact of his torn jersey. The fact, too, that Mr. Riggs and the gardener's boy had actually seen him.

A little sigh escaped Daphne.

"You're quite right to take all possible precautions, Mr. Riggs," she agreed. "The gallery had better be kept locked and shuttered from now on. I—I just hate to think that anyone living around here would try to rob Uncle John."

"So do I," Jan Riggs said, and his face darkened. "And what's more, Miss Daphne, I'll see they don't."

The two girls went out into the hall.

"Mind if I go up to my room for a bit, Daphne?" queried Joan. "My brain's still buzzing with that discovery I've made, and I want to think about it before I try it out. See you later."

"Good old Joan!" thought Daphne, as her chum ran lightly upstairs. "If she's on the track of that mystery she'll ferret it out somehow."

She joined the rest of her chums in the lounge, where the boys were mercilessly teasing the girls.

"So you actually saw the phantom!" Peter Ross was saying. "Quite sure it wasn't a sea-gull in disguise, Molly?"

"Don't be silly, Peter!" retorted Molly. "I tell you we really saw the figure of the phantom wrecker at the back of the cave, just like he is in that picture. And we heard a weird wail, too—"

"Tell you what I think," Jack Lindley put in solemnly. "It was one of those big jelly-fish playing a joke. The little fellows are always up to pranks like that. Why, I remember a jelly-fish who—"

He broke off and dodged as Daphne flung a cushion at him.

"Well, we admit we didn't catch the ghost," she said cheerfully. "But we've still got to see whether you boys do any better. Don't forget you visit the cave at midnight, according to our bargain."

"Rely on us, fair lady!" Peter chuckled. "While you girls are snoozing in your beds we'll be after that phantom with battleaxes, butterfly nets, and anything else that comes handy. And to-morrow morning we'll have him all tied up ready for you to inspect."

Daphne turned away to hide a smile.

She was quite convinced that the boys were responsible for that phantom figure, and at midnight there would be a glorious chance to turn the tables on them.

After tea Daphne contrived to get all the girls together in one of the lumber-rooms—except Joan, who was still busy in her own room.

"I thought we'd make a dummy figure," Daphne suggested. "There are plenty of old fancy dresses here we can use. And we'll give it a hollow head, so that we can put an electric torch inside. It ought to look weird."

"Rather!" chuckled Molly. "I bet the boys run faster than I did, when they see it."

The girls set to work with a will, and the dummy was soon ready.

"We can leave it here for the time being," Daphne told them. "We'll pretend to go to

bed early, but instead of that we'll all meet at the old summer-house at eleven o'clock. That will give us plenty of time to get to the cave before the boys arrive."

So it was settled, amidst much laughter. And so at eleven o'clock, while the full moon shone down on the manor gardens, the girls stole to their rendezvous. They found Daphne waiting for them with the dummy.

"All here?" she smiled. "Good! Then let's get to the cave, girls, as quickly as we can. Peter & Co. haven't started yet."

They stole away, bubbling with fun, and as they went Daphne found a chance for a whispered word with Joan.

"How goes the mystery, Joan?" she breathed. "Do you really think you can solve that strange inscription?"

In the moonlight Joan's eyes were agleam with excitement.

"I really think so," she replied, "but I'll tell you to-morrow, Daphne, when I'm quite sure."

They clambered down the cliff path. And now, as they stood on the moonlit sands, the arched entrance of Wreckers' Cave loomed up, eerie and mysterious.

As usual, Daphne and Joan led the way, the others trooping in not far behind. Their torches gleamed on the rocky walls and roof of the cavern.

"We can hide behind those boulders over there," suggested Daphne. "And don't forget to give a really hair-raising shriek when the time comes to show our phantom."

They crept to the hiding-place. All was quiet, except for the faint murmur of the sea.

"I'm just wondering if we wouldn't be better placed a little farther back," Joan murmured. "Stay here, all of you, while I go and see if there would be room for us behind that big rock over there."

They watched Joan advance into the deeper shadows of the cave. For a moment there was silence, as Joan's figure vanished in the gloom.

And then came a cry, sudden and alarming, that echoed weirdly in the cave and sent a chill to all their hearts.

"Help! Help! Oh, Daphne—"

It was Joan's voice, and it had in it a note of fear, of panic. It ended in a muffled gasp, and then there was silence again in Wreckers' Cave.

Daphne sprang to her feet. "Joan! Where are you? What has happened?" she cried.

Mockingly the echoes flung back her voice from all the corners of the cave. Flashing her torch, she sprang across the sandy floor to the big rock where Joan had been lost in the shadows.

"Joan! Joan!"

Desperately her voice rang out, again and again, but there came no answering call from Joan. She flashed her torch into every nook and cranny around the big rock where Joan had last been seen, but there was no sign of her chum.

Molly and the others were crowding round, too, now, searching everywhere—only to be met with the blank walls of rock.

"Daphne! Wh-what does it mean?" faltered Molly, pale-faced. "I'm getting scared!"

Before Daphne could answer there came again that eerie wail they had heard on their previous visit. It rose up in a wild crescendo like a mocking shriek, filling the cave with ear-splitting echoes; and then died away on a low moan to silence.

And then, while they stood in an awestruck hush, there echoed faintly a new sound. Voices outside the cave.

They flew to the cave entrance, and saw coming along the beach Peter Ross, armed with a lantern, and behind him Jack and Michael and the other boys, all keen to start on their ghost hunt.

"Gosh! Look who's here!" exclaimed Peter in surprise. "We didn't expect to meet these fair mermaids on the beach—"

"Peter! Don't joke now—something serious has happened," Daphne broke in. "Just tell us this. Did you see Joan slip out from the cave mouth just now?"

The note of distress in Daphne's voice caused the smile to disappear from Peter's face. He shook his head gravely.

"We've had the cave in view for the last few minutes," he replied. "And none of us saw anybody come out, though, of course, we might have missed them in the moonlight."

Daphne's distress was growing. An inexplicable fear gripped her.

"And tell me this, Peter," she cried urgently. "Did one of you boys play the ghost this afternoon to scare us?"

Again Peter shook his head. "Honest Injun, we didn't," he replied seriously. "We were all up at the house playing table tennis while you were down here. To be quite frank, we thought you'd imagined the whole thing. But what's it all about, Daphne? Why are you girls here now?"

"We meant to scare you, to get our own back," Daphne confessed. "And while we were waiting in the cave Joan disappeared. She gave a cry for help and then—then just vanished."

"Vanished! Impossible, old girl!" exclaimed Peter.

"Perhaps she's having a joke on us all by hiding away," Jack suggested.

Daphne shook her head. She knew Joan better than any of them; and she knew her chum would never have spoilt their original plan by starting some private joke of her own.

However, they all dived into the cave again and made a thorough search. Before long even the boys were forced to admit that Joan was certainly not there.

"And just before she disappeared she called my name," thought Daphne, a lump in her throat. "She was relying on me to help her, and I can't do a thing. I'm helpless! Oh, Joan, where are you? Where are you?"

But only the mocking murmur of the sea answered her.

A PUZZLING CLUE



THE ghost hunt was forgotten.

The rival parties joined together with one aim in mind—to find Joan.

Having searched the cave, Peter suggested that they should scatter and start combing the cliffs. It was just possible, he thought, that Joan

might have climbed up in some way and got into difficulties.

Daphne had little faith in this new quest, however. She felt convinced that Joan had not left the Wreckers' Cave—by any ordinary means, at any rate.

Was her disappearance in any way connected with the phantom figure they had seen that afternoon? Was—

She paused, as a low call reached her ears. Swinging round, she glimpsed a figure standing in the shadows beneath a buttress of rock. Wonderingly she stepped towards it.

"Dave!" she breathed. "Dave Costello!"

"What has happened, Miss Daphne?" he asked in a low voice.

For a moment Daphne hesitated. There rushed into her mind the suspicions which Jan Riggs had voiced against the Cornish fisher-boy. And yet when she was face to face with Dave she always felt there was something so dependable, so trustworthy, about him.

Almost before she knew it she was confiding in him, seeking his help.

"My chum Joan has vanished in Wreckers' Cave," she told him. "She disappeared almost before our eyes, and—we can't find a trace of her. Can't you help us, Dave?"

Pleadingly Daphne's blue eyes gazed at him.

(Please turn to page 397.)



The Boy who Bossed the Castaways

By HAZEL ARMITAGE

THE FUGITIVE FROM THE STEAM YACHT

JULIE WALLACE was travelling to North-West Australia on the s.y. *Daffodil* with her chums, Elsie and Roly Maynard and Dick Mardle.

The yacht had been commissioned by the Maynards' uncle, who was an enthusiastic archaeologist, and also aboard was Larry Woodstock, a lawless boy, who had been placed in the charge of the skipper until Darwin was reached, when he would be handed over to the police. Despite Larry's record, Julie found it strangely difficult to dislike him.

Larry seemed very interested in a locket which Julie's father had given her just before he died. The locket contained a map of the Island of the Golden Palm, where Mr. Wallace had been marooned for two years, and also some indecipherable hieroglyphics.

At Julie's request it was agreed that the *Daffodil* should be put off its course and visit the Island of the Golden Palm, but before they reached it there was a startling happening aboard. Larry, who had been clapped in irons, managed to get free, and escaped in a fast motor-boat.

"LARRY," breathed Julie as she leaned over the rail of the yacht.

But Larry Woodstock, the reckless young outlaw, was now far away, amid the swirling waters of the night-bound ocean, and did not turn.

Julie hardly knew whether she was glad or sorry—glad because he had escaped from his imprisonment on the yacht, or sorry to know that he had gone and that she might never see him again.

Meanwhile, all around her was uproar.

Captain Stafford, bellowing like a bull, had ordered the *Daffodil* to lay to. Men were running hither and thither, lowering boats in the hope of catching the fugitive before he could entirely get away.

But the skipper himself knew that the effort was doomed. The boat Larry had taken was the yacht's biggest and fastest.

"He—he's gone," Elsie said. "They'll never catch him."

"Perhaps it isn't a bad idea at that," Professor Maynard frowned. "A boat is a cheap price to pay for being rid of such a pest. 'Pon my soul, I never felt safe while that vagabond was aboard. Personally I hope I never see him again."

That was the sentiment echoed by most of the passengers on the main deck.

But was it Julie's? She did not know. Certainly Larry Woodstock had never done anything to endear himself to her or anyone else, but there was that strange sympathy she had for him, that unaccountable admiration. Above all there was that extraordinary link connecting them both with the mysterious Island of the Golden Palm. Yet perhaps, as the professor said, it was all for the best.

For two hours the *Daffodil* rolled in the swell while its searchlights played and little boats chugged this way and that, and the stern-faced Captain Stafford stood on the bridge with his binoculars glued to his eyes. But when at last the boats were called in and the engines restarted, the searchers all had the same tale to tell.

Larry Woodstock had vanished, leaving no trace.

"But where can he be making for?" Neil Gilson, the professor's secretary, demanded.

"Where should he be making for?" the skipper growled. "And who cares, anyway? Apart from the loss of my best boat, I'm pleased to see the back of the nuisance, and that's a fact. I suppose the rascal had some spot in mind—everything points to the fact that he'd planned this—ay, even to having that boat ready for action at a second's notice. But he can't do much on a tankful of petrol, and the nearest island is a hundred miles away."

"Would that be the Island of the Golden Palm?" Julie asked.

"No," the skipper scowled; "it's one of the same group, but it's best part of fifty miles

from the Golden Palm. If he— What's that, Miss Henshaw?"

"I was just mentioning, sir, what an—er—unusual name for an island," Ada murmured. "A rather romantic place from the sound of it."

"Well, as to that, you'll soon know," the skipper grunted. "We're making for it as soon as I change course. But don't ask me about it," he added as Ada, obviously interested, opened her lips again. "Ask Miss Maynard there. She's responsible for the trip—"

"Julie is really," Elsie laughed. "Julie, tell Miss Henshaw all about it."

It was news to the assistant secretary. It was news even to Roly and Dick that the ship was changing course in order to visit the Island of the Golden Palm. At once Julie became the target of a thousand questions, and laughingly she answered them, telling the story of her dead father's locket and how, surprisingly, it had opened for the first time just half an hour ago.

Immediately a new wave of excitement was sweeping the ship. Immediately the Golden Palm became an island of legend, of promise. But again Julie did not mention Larry Woodstock's interest in the Golden Palm. For some reason she felt constrained to keep that as her own secret.

At least, for the time being.

And so, with the Daffodil ploughing through the starry night on its diverted course, life aboard the yacht was resumed. Everybody seemed to have swiftly forgotten the Australian boy who had so dramatically disappeared. And it was in a lighthearted mood that they retired that night.

Julie, happy and tired after all the excitements of the day, thought she would sleep at once, but actually it was some time before sleep finally touched her eyes. She was still thinking of Larry, the outlaw—that arrogant, insolent boy who seemed to despise everything that she and the rest of the guests stood for, who had been so agitated and strange at the sight of her locket. Where was he now?

Her heart ached for him somehow. Would she ever see him again?

When she awoke and had had her early morning shower the tropical sun was blazing high in a cloudless sky. She made her way to the upper deck to find Roly, Dick, and Elsie leaning over the rail. All three greeted her boisterously.

"We'll reach your Golden Palm island by this afternoon," Roly said. "The skipper says we ought to anchor about midday. We're just planning a picnic party—to have a bit of a celebration when we land. Isn't that a fizzing idea?"

"Isn't it!" Julie laughed, smiling at her plump chum. "I say, has anything been heard of Larry Woodstock?" she added.

"Not a murmur," Dick replied. "He's just vanished. The skipper's sent out wireless messages—there's a set on the boat he pinched, you know—but if Woodstock received them he hasn't bothered to reply. Anyway, who's going to worry about that lump? Let's concentrate on the jolly old island."

All talk then was of the Island of the Golden Palm. The professor, genially beaming at the prospect of being on land again, if only for a short time, was in great spirits, collecting maps and making plans. When, about eleven o'clock, there came a shout, "Land-ho!" from the watch, excitement knew no bounds. An eager rush was made for the rails.

"There it is!" cheered Roly.

Julie, shading her eyes, peered ahead. Rippling, gleaming, and glinting, the great ocean surrounded her. For a moment she could see nothing else, then miles away she spied the smudge that rose out of the sea and knew that they were indeed heading for the island which had played such a mysterious part in her father's life and was now such a source of excitement in her own dreams.

A moment later, when Dick handed her his binoculars, she saw it more clearly. The glasses, powerful and strong, seemed to make the island jump up out of the sea, holding her magnetised and fascinated.

Now she saw that it was a much bigger place than she had imagined from her father's tiny drawing in the locket. Here and there were stretches of golden beach, there a densely wooded slope, and high, rugged cliffs which gleamed red in the sunshine. The island's whole outline was that of a gently rising cone, and perched on top of the cone, like a sentinel, one solitary, umbrella-like palm seeming to dominate all the life around it with a golden radiance.

"Looks good, doesn't it?" Dick grinned.

Excitement mounted as they drew nearer. Two miles out from the island they saw a jagged coral reef which seemed to form a rampart around the land, the little yellow peaks jutting out from above the sea.

Nearer and nearer they approached, with the dominating palm above the island now glinting like a living thing of gold in the sun's bright rays. It fascinated Julie somehow, that palm.

Then all at once the yacht ceased to shiver under the vibration of its engine. Smoothly it approached the treacherous coral reef until with a slight shudder it came to a stop altogether. There was a great bawling of orders, a splash as the anchor flashed into the sea, and then a shout from the professor.

"This way, landing party, please!"

"Where's that picnic basket?" Roly chortled. "We're off, people!"

In a few minutes they were off—two boat-loads of them. The professor and his party went first in the small motor-boat containing the professor himself, Neil Gilson, Ada Henshaw, and the professor's touchy but good-natured middle-aged sister-in-law, Aunt Martha. Then came the longboat, containing Julie, Elsie, Dick and Roly, and two of the professor's friend, Mr. and Mrs. Fry, who had sunk money in this expedition. Captain Stafford, deeming it his duty to remain aboard his ship, did not come.

"If you have any orders for me, sir, transmit them from the motor-boat," he told the professor on leaving.

The professor promised, though he did not imagine having to do anything of the sort. With glee the party set out, Roly guarding the picnic basket. Dick and Julie were at the oars.

As they entered the shallow bay the water was so clear and crystal-like beneath the boat's keel that they could plainly see the sand on the sea-bottom, the darting fish which swam here and there, and the vividly coloured sea plants which clung to the small submerged rocks. Ahead there came a cheery shout from the professor as the motor-boat plunged into the sand of a golden shore, to be followed immediately by the professor's own gaunt form floundering on to dry land. A moment later their own boat touched the shore.

"We're here!" Dick announced. "Three cheers for the Golden Palm island! Come on, Roly, you lazy log! Lend a hand in making the boat fast!"

Willingly Roly lent a hand while Elsie and Julie carried the picnic basket ashore. Then followed a rapid conference.

"I'm going along the shore," the professor said. "I'd like to have a look at the red limestone cliffs along there. You'll come with me, of course, Gilson. But don't let me worry you other people," he added genially. "Do as you like."

"Thank you, sir," Roly said. "We'll get the picnic ready."

"You will, you mean," Dick said. "Julie and I are going to have a look at the golden palm. What about you, Elsie?"

"Coming with you," Elsie said promptly.

And so it was arranged. Roly didn't mind being left behind—not with the food. Off went the professor with Gilson. Roly began to un-

pack the basket, while Julie, Elsie, and Dick set about the long climb to the top of the hill.

It was hot, but they were too excited to notice. Already they had fallen in love with the island with its sweet smelling air, its soft green grass, dotted with tiny blue flowers.

Now and again they paused to look at the gigantic grove of coconut palms, the clustered clumps of vanillas, the tall, heaven-ascending plantains, heavy with ripe fruit, and the gigantic ferns that sprouted out of the hillside like small forests. Overhead the sun beat down upon them pitilessly, but from the sea came a breeze which, if warm, was refreshing.

The climb was so full of interest that Julie forgot to be tired. She never knew how long they had climbed until, emerging from a towering clump of bamboos, she found herself, with her two chums, on a small shady plateau, in the centre of which towered the massive palm-tree. Or, at least, it looked like a palm until they grew closer.

Then—
"Gosh, what is it?" Dick asked in awe, and stood blinking and thunderstruck.

They all stood and stared. For the golden palm was no palm at all. There it stood, a colossal pillar of yellow limestone, all covered with strangely carved inscriptions and, balanced horizontally on its top, other stones which gave it its appearance, from the distance, of a gigantic palm-tree.

"It—it's not a tree at all," Elsie stuttered. "It—it only just looks like one from the sea. It—it must have been put there."

"But not recently," Dick said. "And not in the last thousand years, I'd say. The old professor talks about stones like these—menhirs, he calls them. They were supposed to have been erected in the Stone Age—"

They stared at it again, overcome with awe. But Julie could see that the "tree" was incredibly old, that the signs on it, weather-beaten by time, were broken and smooth in places. And, staring at those signs again, she started.

In a flash she had whipped out the locket she was wearing under her dress. With a sudden thrill she compared the signs on the surface of the locket with those on the great standing stone.

"Dick, look! They're the same!" she breathed.

"Let's see," Dick requested. And, studying the locket and the great stone, he whistled. "That's right," he said. "But the signs aren't in the same order. It looks—it looks," he added uncertainly, "as if your father turned them into some sort of a code."

His blank stare at Julie was met by an equally blank stare on her part. And while they still stood, blinking from locket to stone, there came suddenly a screaming wail from the yacht's siren out at sea.

They wheeled. There came another hoot; another. A blue flag had appeared on the masthead.

"Dick," Julie said uncertainly—"Dick, look! They've hoisted the Blue Peter. That means the yacht is going. But it can't be. It—Dick, it is going. It—it's sailing away."

Wide-eyed, they stared, but even as they watched the yacht slowly turned. Steam belching from its funnel, majestically it went gliding out into the open sea!

THE STORM



IN utter consternation and mystification they stared, unable to make it out. What had happened on the beach below? Why had the professor given orders for the Daffodil to sail?

Without them!

"Oh, it—it can't be true!"

Elsie said uncertainly.

But there was no doubt about it. Even from that distance they could see that the Daffodil's

speed was increasing. It had left behind it a small boat in which was seated a solitary sailor. He was now rowing towards the island.

"Come on," Julie said, and for the moment the locket and the strange monument were forgotten. "Better see what's happening."

They were all agreed upon that. They all shared the same odd feeling that something, somewhere, was seriously wrong.

"Golly, it's hot!" Elsie puffed. "And it seems to be getting darker. I say, what's that?" she added, as a far-off, menacing rumble came from the sea.

Dick gazed at Julie. He knew and she knew, and for the first time they found their feelings sharpened by anxiety. There could only be one explanation for that sound. A storm was brewing—one of those violent, vicious tropical storms for which these islands were noted.

They hurried on, an unmentioned but increasing dread in their hearts. Hotter and hotter grew the air, more and more oppressive the gathering gloom. Under the bamboos and beneath the coconut groves it was almost dark.

At last they came to the beach, where a bewildered crowd was all staring helplessly at the sailor who had just disembarked from the little boat which had left the departed yacht.

It was Hitchcock, Julie saw at once—a young, inexperienced, muscular, but not particularly brainy fellow.

"But I tell you, sir, it was your own order," he was protesting to the professor. "You wirelessed it."

"Me?" I never wirelessed anything," the professor was spluttering. "Neither did anybody else."

"Then, sir, I can only say that Captain Stafford got the message—from you. I was on duty at the radio and the officer told me to give him the message. It said—"

He cudgelled his brain for a moment. "It said, 'Everything's fine here. Making arrangements to stay on with the party. Shan't want you for a fortnight. Carry on to Darwin; then call back. Send blankets and stores.' That was the message, sir," Hitchcock said stubbornly. "And that's why I've brought a boatload of stores. The captain was a bit surprised, I admit, but he said his job was to accept your orders. And so—well, sir, he's gone."

"For a fortnight?" the professor hooted.

"Yes, sir."
"But, dash it, you dolt, I never sent him a message. Nobody sent him a message!" the professor choked. "Did anybody?" he added, with a glare round.

"No, sir," Gilson said, and there was a general, rather alarmed and puzzled shaking of heads.

"Then who on earth did it?"
Again faces were uneasily blank. Then Julie stepped forward.

"There's one thing we can do," she said quickly. "There's a transmitting set in your motor-boat. Why not call them back on that?"

"Gad, yes!" The professor brightened. "Bless the girl for thinking of it. Mardie, you can handle one of these contraptions, can't you? Send a message back to the Daffodil at once. Tell Stafford that there's been a terrific slip up somewhere and order him to put back here as soon as he can. Dash it, where's the boat?" he added, glaring round.

"Along the beach—there, sir, just on the other side of those bushes," Ada Henshaw said. "Oh, Dick, buck up!" she added urgently. "It's going to pour cats and dogs before long."

"Come on, then!" Dick snapped.

They all followed him—even Aunt Martha and the rather helpless and scared-looking Mr. and Mrs. Fry. Julie bit her lip, wishing that she could conquer this dreadful fear upon her; unconsciously keying herself up for something—she did not know what.

She was relieved when, reaching the bushes, they found the motor-boat intact, its canvas stretched over the cockpit. But as soon as Dick threw back that canvas a general gasp of horror broke from every one of them.

"Oh, my golly!" Julie choked. "Somebody's smashed the transmission set! Look!"

Everybody was looking, with eyes that were popping out of their heads. There was the small transmission set, and the first glance told them all that it would never be of any use any more. Some hand had deliberately smashed it to atoms.

"But—but who?" Roly stuttered.

Neil Gilson, the secretary, pushed forward, his lean face dark with anger.

"Professor, can't you see?" The message to the captain was a hoax to make him go off, leaving us here—marooned. And the villain who sent it—whatever he was—smashed the transmitter so that we should not be able to get in touch with the Daffodil again."

"Gosh!" Roly gasped hollowly. "And all the grub we've got is what we brought for the picnic. A fortnight—on this island! What on earth are we going to eat?"

Nobody answered his question. Nobody had an opportunity. For suddenly something hit them—sending them crashing against each other. Above and around them came a sudden shrieking howl. As if some invisible hand had sprayed the heavens with ink, everything became black. A hot wind screamed among and around them with a vicious force that threatened to tear the clothes from their backs.

And then, while they staggered in utter confusion, came the rain.

It came in a sheet—a crashing, beating of stunning violence. It deafened them. It made them gasp for breath. Things about them creaked and groaned and snapped and smashed. In a second they were all completely drenched to the skin. There came a deafening crash of thunder which seemed to tear the island asunder, followed by a dazzling flash that momentarily blinded them all.

Julie, with the rest, found herself swept off her feet. To her it seemed that she was lifted up on the wings of the storm and hurled, with the shriek of a thousand demons in her ears, into a clump of bushes whose twigs and branches tore cruelly at her hands and face. Once before she had experienced a tropical storm. That had appalled her, but the violence of this one completely tore all her senses away from her. Exhausted, she collapsed on the ground.

All about her the wind shrieked. The rain crashed and hammered with a force that threatened to rob her of all sense. She was numbed and dazed, unable to see or to get her breath. And then—

Quite suddenly the storm vanished. The wind whistled a last defiant note across the battered island. As if celestial taps were turned off, the rain ceased to fall. A warm sun came out to restore light and reason and to transform the whole island into a steaming swamp. It might all have been some hideous nightmare dream, save that her drenched clothes clung to her like the flimsy garments of a Grecian statue, and she felt her face hot and bruised by the tearing twigs and the beating rainfall of the storm.

"Oh—oh dear!" she gasped.

She staggered, still half-dazed, to her feet. It was amazing that her first fully conscious thought should have been of Larry Woodstock, the outlaw. Where was he in a storm like this? What had happened to him—somewhere at sea, perhaps, in that motor-boat he had stolen?

She reached the beach to find a scene of desolate chaos. The boat which had brought the stores had gone completely. Roly's picnic, so carefully laid out, had also vanished—except for a few sodden buns lying pathetically in the rain-washed mud that now formed the beach. She found the bewildered professor propped up against a rock, a look of utter incredulity on his face, a fossil ammonite in his wet and sticky hands.

Moans from a near-by clump of bushes set her on the track of Aunt Martha and Mrs. Fry.

Aunt Martha blinked up at her fearfully.

"Oh dear, oh dear!" she said. "I—I'm wet through! What was it, Julie?—I—I hope I don't catch a chill!"

It took some time to help her to her feet. It took some time for the company, all steaming like washing in a laundry, to foregather in a group. But finally that was done and stock taken of the damage. The list was heavy. Except for Roly's sodden buns and the wreck of the motor-boat—magically still on its moorings—the castaways possessed nothing save the clothes in which they stood. Even the professor's map and implements had disappeared.

"And we're here for a fortnight," Aunt Martha moaned. "A fortnight—with no roof, no bed, not even a nightdress! We must get help—we must get help!"

"From where?" the professor snapped.

"From the yacht. Surely in this day and age we can get in touch with the yacht?"

It was hard to convince her that even in this day and age it just wasn't possible.

"The fact is we're marooned," Roly said at last. "No grub except coconuts, which I don't like. No clothes except what we stand up in. No pots and pans. Not even a knife and fork. A fine old mess, if you ask me. The question is, what are we going to do?"

"Well, stop grouching for a start," Dick said in a very grouching voice himself. "Suppose we nip about, find some wood, and make a fire and get ourselves dry first."

"Exactly what I was going to suggest," Julie laughed.

She herself led the way into the woods, glad, in spite of the sun, for a little brisk action. She did not bother to see if the others were following her or not, but ran lightly into a thicket of limes and plantains near by.

The sun, shining through glistening branches, threw soft, dark patches on the blue-flowering grasses. The fragrance of the forest, after the rain, smote her with a delicious sense of exhilaration. Like glistening diamonds, the rain still dropped from the trees, making soft little splashes in the mirror-like pools that gleamed here and there. But there was no dry wood.

Everything was sodden—completely sodden.

There was bound to be some spot which the storm had left untouched, Julie was telling herself. Looking about her, she pressed on. And then suddenly she jumped.

From near at hand came a light laugh. A boyish laugh.

She turned, a sudden memory burning in her mind. That laugh! No, it couldn't be! It was impossible! She was dreaming things. And then all at once her heart seemed to give one mighty bound and stand still.

For there, among the trees, she saw him. He was smiling—that old insolent smile which yet held in it a hint of admiration. Despite the storm he looked dry, comfortable, and in excellent spirits.

"Larry—Larry Woodstock!" Julie stuttered.

LARRY'S SURPRISING OFFER



"SURPRISED?" He laughed. "I guess you'd hardly expect to find me here. It seems that we're castaways together," he added, eyeing her.

"But—but how did you get here?"

He shrugged.

"You can guess. You saw me leave, didn't you? I came here on the motor-boat."

"You mean you—you were forced to land by the storm?"

There was amusement in his eyes as he regarded her.

"I don't allow myself to be forced to do anything—not even by storms," he said deliberately. "No, I came here because I wanted to, because I planned to."

Julie stared. "You mean you—you actually planned to come here?" she repeated after him.

"That's it." He nodded. "You see"—for a moment she saw his eyes fastened on the locket she wore about her neck—"I've a very special reason for wanting to come to this Island of the Golden Palm—"

"What reason?" she found herself challenging.

"A reason I intend to keep strictly to myself," he replied. "Perhaps later— And then he paused. She saw him stiffen suddenly. "I think," he said in a low, amused voice, "that our fellow-castaways are here."

That was true. A moment later Julie heard their footsteps. Wonderingly she gazed towards Larry, but he did not attempt to run as she had half expected he would. Instead he propped himself in the old careless attitude against the bole of a tree, folded his arms across his chest, and smiled.

And then Dick, Roly, Elsie, and Mr. Fry burst on the scene, to halt in flabbergasted amazement at sight of the unexpected figure.

"Gosh, look what the storm's thrown up!" Roly cried. "Woodstock!"

"You!" Dick hooted.

Larry smiled condescendingly. "Any objections?" he asked. "Or do you all think you own this bit of the earth, as you own everything else? It's me all right, and though I don't exactly welcome you on my island—"

"Your island!" stuttered Elsie.

"That's how I regard it," he said calmly. "You see, I've been here before—which gives me a sort of claim, doesn't it? Anyway, don't interrupt us now. Julie and I are talking."

"Julie—and you!" Dick glared. "Julie! Why, you cheeky rotter! You—"

And then he stopped. "Gosh!" he breathed. "I begin to see now. No wonder we never knew who smashed that wireless set of ours. No wonder we couldn't find out who sent Captain Stafford a faked message and so got us stranded here. It was you, you cad!"

Larry looked at him steadily. "I daresay next you'll say I sent the storm!" he said scornfully. "Hasn't everything been my fault from the moment I set foot on your silly ship? Who else could it have been but me—the outlaw, the rotter, the fellow who was due to be handed over to the authorities in Australia! So what?"

"Why, you—you—" Dick choked and clenched his hands, his eyes blazing.

There would have been a fight for a certainty then, but Julie swiftly intervened, casting a look at Elsie which told her to restrain Roly at the same time. Larry watched. Then he laughed, and then, with a shrug, he turned.

"I'll be seeing you!" he said airily.

"You dare show your nose anywhere near us, you scoundrel!" Mr. Fry quivered. And then alarmedly dodged back as the boy paused, turned, and stared at him, and then, with a curl of his lip, walked on. Julie's heart knew a funny little empty ache as he disappeared.

"Let's find this wood," she said hurriedly.

"Just wait till I catch that rotter on my own—without any girls present!" Dick vowed. "If we'd only known he was on the island we'd have guessed at once who played that hideous trick on Skipper Stafford."

"Come and find the wood," Julie insisted anxiously.

They did manage to collect a few dry sticks. But only a few. The rapid dropping of the sun told Julie that it would not be long before the night was upon them, and a certain freshness in the air seemed to suggest that it was going to be a chilly one.

"Gosh, I'm hungry!" Roly said. "Hope somebody's found some grub. I say," he added, with a gasp of alarm at the discovery, "we haven't eaten anything since breakfast."

That was true. Julie realised with a little shock, and immediately felt ravenous herself.

But any hope they might have had that food would have been unearthed from somewhere was immediately dispelled when they reached the beach again.

The castaways were, if anything, more disconsolate, more peevish, than ever. Also, they were still decidedly damp.

"Nothing to eat—nothing to drink—not even a cup of tea," Aunt Martha was wailing. "And where, I'd like to know, are we going to sleep? To think," she added complainingly, "that I should have come to this at my time of life."

"And I'm sure I've got a cold," Mrs. Fry complained. "Oh, Horace, why did you bring me on this awful journey?"

"My dear—" Mr. Fry said uncomfortably.

"Er—er," the professor said—"er—we'll have to do something, of course. I've sent Hitchcock along to bring the motor-boat here, and Gilson and Miss Henshaw are scouring the island for coconuts, or anything they can find. Now, if we can only get a fire going—"

"Let's try," Dick said.

But it was half an hour before they had a fire going. That was when Hitchcock came chugging in with the motor-boat, whose oily rags they used for tinder—Hitchcock's cigarette-lighter taking the place of matches. Then Neil Gilson and Ada returned, staggering under loads of small coconuts which, when the husks were removed and the soft shells split open, proved to be entirely inedible because they were not yet ripe.

Meanwhile, the wind was rising, the sun dropping lower and lower, and there was a tang in the air which caused them all to shiver.

There was despair and anxiety in all hearts as they watched the swiftly gathering darkness.

"And all this is thanks to that rotter Woodstock's idea of a joke!" Roly burst out. "My hat, if only I had him here—"

"What would you do?" asked an interested voice.

They all started as a soft footfall sounded behind them. Then they turned. And Julie felt her heart jump. For there, tall, confident, amusingly insolent, stood the smiling Larry Woodstock.

"I'm here," he said, with a glance at Roly. "But I wouldn't advise you to try anything, pal. I'm feeling pretty tough at the moment. Also I've had a good meal—which you haven't. Bit of a change, isn't it for you over-fed folk to find yourself in a fix like this—"

"And where did you get the meal?" Roly demanded explosively.

"Where I shall get my others," Larry answered cheerfully. "You see," he added, "I happen to know this island. I've got what most of you have never had—some tough experience. I should imagine," he added, with mocking amusement, "that you're going to have a thin time this next fortnight. For one thing, you'll probably starve."

"And if we do, you pig," Dick burst out, "it'll be your fault."

"Will it?" The smile was scornful. "But go easy with the names, pal. I think, Dick Mardie—and all of you—that you'd better learn some manners. You see, I happen to know this island. You'll find out before long that there's only one who can help you—and that's me. I don't know that I will," he added thoughtfully, "but perhaps for a consideration—"

"Young man, you dare—you dare try to bargain with us!" the professor exploded.

Larry eyed him.

"There's no question of bargaining. You've got nothing to offer me," he pointed out. "Perhaps I'm soft, but if you want to exist at all, I'll help. But"—he paused—"but I'm boss on this island. If you want anything from me, you'll have to do exactly as I tell you, from now on. So—what d'you say about it?"

Will the Castaways stand out against Larry—or will they have to accept him as boss? Don't miss a word of next Friday's splendid chapters of this serial in the **GIRLS' CRYSTAL**.



The CASE OF THE Frightened Girl

JUNE'S DECISION

JUNE GAYNOR, niece and partner of Noel Raymond, the famous young detective, went to Glen Hall to investigate the mystery of a spectral figure known as the Green Rajah, who was supposed to haunt Temple Isle.

June discovered that Colonel Raikes, who had once owned Glen Hall and Temple Isle, had hidden a crystal goblet which was the key to the lost secret of the Purple Mountains. She also found out that the Green Rajah was after the goblet.

June believed that the Green Rajah was in reality Jack Linton, a strangely likeable but mysterious boy who had disappeared from Glen Hall.

Mr. Standish, a friend of June's host, believed that Jack was really Ronald Baring, a boy who was a fugitive from the police, and one afternoon he, June, and two fellow-guests at Glen Hall searched a mountainside for Ronald Baring and his sister, Eva.

In a cave June found, not the Barings, but Jack Linton. Jack, who had injured his leg, stated that he was only a friend of Eva Baring, not her brother, and declared that the Barings were innocent of any wrong-doing. They were victims of the Green Rajah's plotting, and he—Jack—was as eager as June was to see the Green Rajah captured.

While June was trying to make up her mind whether or not to believe Jack, Mr. Standish's voice heralded the approach of the rest of the search party.

WHAT should she do?

As a detective, June knew her duty was clear. She should resolutely stifle all personal emotion and give the call which would bring Mr. Standish and the boys rushing to the cave.

And yet she could not forget that Jack Linton had twice saved her life; could not forget that earnest look in his brown eyes when he had implored her to trust him.

June bit her lip.

Another few moments and the searchers would find her here with the boy they suspected of being the Green Rajah. She must act now or not at all.

By PETER LANGLEY

From where Jack sat on the fallen rock there came a bitter laugh.

"Well, it looks as if you win. The worst of it is, I can't even make a dash for it."

And, turning, June saw him fingering his injured limb. The sight of his white, desperate face roused all her pity, and impulsively she gestured with an agitated hand.

"Hide—quick! Behind that boulder!" she gasped.

He stared at her incredulously.

"You mean you—you're going to trust me?" His husky voice vibrated with relief and his dark eyes glowed. "Gosh, but you won't regret it. When you've heard my story—"

"Hide—oh, quickly!" broke in June, and frantically she rushed to the mouth of the cave.

There she saw Mr. Standish and the two boys not a yard away. At sight of her they pulled up, staring in blank astonishment.

"June!" exclaimed Ted Brandish,

"Golly, what are you doing?" asked Billie Murdoch.

She smiled.

"The same as you, of course—searching," she replied. "But I'm afraid—"

An impatient bellow from Roger Standish interrupted her.

"Where is he? Where's that young scoundrel, Ronnie Baring?"

The fact that the newcomers were actually searching for Eva and her brother, and not Jack Linton, gave June her chance. Quickly she shook her head.

"Fraid I haven't the foggiest idea. There's no trace of either him or his sister."

"Mean to say they're not hiding in this confounded cave? But they must be! Those footprints— Here, out of the way!"

And, with a glare, Mr. Standish pushed his way past June and entered the cave. Her heart missed a beat. There was no sign of Jack. He was now crouching behind one of the fallen boulders. But if the furiously glowering man should decide on a thorough search—

There came a shout from the two boys, and eagerly they entered the cave.

"Perhaps they're hiding, sir!"

Swiftly June intervened.

"No; neither of the Barings are here," she cried. "I've had a good look around. In fact, if you want my opinion, they didn't come this way at all. They escaped across the lake in a boat, as I said at first."

Roger Standish swung round, a scowl on his face.

"Rubbish!" he barked rudely. "I tell you they made for the mountains. Those two sets of footprints outside prove it."

June's heart was still beating anxiously, but she forced herself to meet his eyes.

"Those footprints might have been made by anyone," she pointed out. "In fact, one set was made by me."

"Why, of course!" Ted Brandish straightened up from the huge fallen rock behind which he had been peering. "I never thought of that," he said ruefully. "And if the girl's prints aren't Eva's, then the other set can't be her brother's."

"I reckon you're right," agreed Billie Murdoch. "Anyway, it's a waste of time searching here. I vote we get back. I don't know about you folks, but I'm hungry."

Mr. Standish looked around the cave again; then, to June's relief, gave a reluctant nod.

"There certainly doesn't seem to be anyone here," he declared. "But I don't mean to give up the hunt. I'm certain they're hiding somewhere on this mountainside." He turned to June. "Where did you say they lived?" he demanded.

"A queer old place called Lone Cottage. It's situated at the top end of Black Glen."

"Right, then we'll go there and look around. We may find a clue which will put us on the track. Come on, you lads!" He turned to June. "I don't suppose you want to come," he added pointedly.

"No, I don't think so. I'll be getting back." The two boys stared at her in dismay.

"Oh, be a sport—come along with us," urged Ted, but June shook her head.

As soon as they had gone on she wanted to slip back and have a long talk with Jack Linton.

"I'd like to, but it can't be done," she said. "I've got some more investigations to make around here. I'm still convinced the Barings escaped across the lake, and not up the mountainside."

She accompanied Mr. Standish and the boys as far as the road and watched while they clambered into the car. Finding herself alone, June looked eagerly back up the mountainside, but she resisted the temptation to go hurrying back to Jack's hiding-place.

"With that injured leg he'll have to hide up for a day or two," she told herself. "That means he will want food."

Half a mile down the road was a row of grey cottages. One of them had been turned into a small general store, and to this June hurried. Fortunately she had her ration-book with her, so she was able to buy some provisions. Bread, candles, and a box of matches were also procurable. With these parcelled up, she set back along the road, and when she neared the Barings' wrecked car she saw an anxious figure standing beside it.

"Jack," she cried, "you shouldn't have ventured down here. If you're seen—"

He cut in with a grin, that old reckless look in his dark eyes.

"I couldn't let you go without saying thank you," he declared. "I guessed you wouldn't have gone far away, and—"

He caught her by the arm and his voice was husky as he spoke again. "I'll never forget what you did for me, June," he went on. "It was splendid! If there's any way of repaying you—"

"There is," she said, with a smile. "Clear up all this horrid mystery. Tell me all about yourself and about the Barings."

To her delight, he nodded.

"Right! Sit down," he said, "and I'll shoot the whole works."

JACK TELLS ALL



IT was a strange, sensational story which Jack had to tell. It had its beginnings five years ago when Colonel Raikes had begun to take an interest in the orphaned children of his old friend Thomas Baring.

"He paid for both Eva and Ronnie to go to a boarding-school," explained Jack. "In fact, it was at school that I met Ronnie and we quickly became friends. He's a grand chap, June—one of the best. Well, later on Colonel Raikes made Ronnie his secretary, and he made it clear that he intended to adopt both him and Eva. It was then that the Green Rajah first appeared on the scene. The colonel was very worried, for he was convinced that the blighter was out to steal the clue to a secret the colonel had spent most of his life in India trying to solve—the Lost Secret of the Purple Mountains."

"But what is this lost secret?" asked June. Jack shook his head.

"I don't really know. The colonel never told Ronnie. He was an eccentric, secretive old chap, you know. But I suspect it's something to do with some terrific treasure hidden away in India."

He paused, then returned to his story. It seemed that shortly after the first appearance of the Green Rajah, Colonel Raikes began to turn away from Ronnie. The reason soon became apparent. He suspected that the mysterious thief was none other than the boy he had befriended, and one day he discovered several stolen curios in Ronnie's room.

"But Ronnie never put them there," Jack insisted, and he laid an earnest hand on June's arm. "You must believe that, June. It was all a crafty frame-up on the part of the Green Rajah, and—well, to cut a long story short, poor old Ronnie had to do a bunk. But in escaping he met with an accident and broke his leg, with the result that ever since he's been hiding in Lone Cottage, tended by Eva."

"But where do you come into the picture?" asked June.

Quietly Jack explained. It seemed that one day, in response to a frantic letter from Eva, he had visited the Barings. He had found them in despair, for at last they had managed to decipher a letter written in code by the Green Rajah and which Eva had picked up when visiting Temple Isle.

"The letter made it clear that just before his death Colonel Raikes had begun to realise the injustice he had done Ronnie, and with the crystal goblet, on which was engraved the vital clue to the Lost Secret of the Purple Mountains, he had hidden a document not only exonerating Ronnie, but making him and his sister his heirs."

"Naturally, that made Ronnie desperately keen to find the goblet," continued Jack. "But the letter also made it clear that not only was the Green Rajah also out to steal the goblet, but also to steal a package which the colonel's trusted servant was sending from India."

June nodded. She knew that the contents of this package had contained the key to the hieroglyphics engraved on the hidden crystal goblet. She also knew that the parcel had been sent to the London office of James Henley, Colonel Raikes' solicitor.

"We decided that at all costs we must prevent the Green Rajah from getting hold of that package," went on Jack. "But it was no use getting in touch with Mr. Henley. He would never have listened to Ronnie, who was still wanted by the police, so—"

"So you decided to get hold of it yourselves!" put in June excitedly. "That was why you disguised yourself as Mr. Standish! I see it all now. And when you'd got the package, you and Eva popped into Uncle Noel's flat in order to prevent the real Mr. Standish seeing you!"

Jack grinned a little sheepishly. "It was a mean trick—bluffing you like that," he admitted. "But, honestly, it was the only way."

"And, afterwards, you disguised yourself as the Green Rajah in order to get the package back," said June.

Again he nodded. "Yes, I impersonated him twice—once at your uncle's flat and once here at Glen Hall. But it was all a waste of effort. You see, the Green Rajah had been too cunning. He somehow managed to get hold of the package before it was delivered at Mr. Henley's office."

June drew in a startled breath. Now she knew why the package had only contained bricks. Its real contents had already been stolen. If Jack was to be believed, they were now in the Green Rajah's possession, ready for use when the spectral figure discovered the hidden crystal goblet.

Sharply she regarded the boy. Was the strange story he had told her true? As if guessing what was in her mind, Jack's fingers tightened their grip on her arm.

"It isn't I who have been scaring everyone up here—that's the real Green Rajah, the villain who's responsible for all Ronnie's troubles. He's the scoundrel who's out to steal the lost secret. June, you must believe me. Earnestly he regarded her, and his voice was husky with emotion. "I'm sorry for tricking you as I did, but it was the only way. I couldn't let Ronnie down. I had to try to clear his name. Say you forgive me, please."

It was impossible to doubt his sincerity, and suddenly June found herself smiling. She gave the hand on her arm a friendly pat.

"You're forgiven," she said. "And you believe what I've told you?" She nodded again.

"Yes, I believe you." "That's simply whizzo!" He gave a shout of joy. "Then that means that we're friends—partners! From now on we're going to work together—not only to run to earth the Green Rajah, but to find that jolly old crystal goblet!"

He gave another whoop, then winced and clapped a hand to his leg. Suddenly remembering his injury, June lifted up the parcel of groceries she had brought for him.

"You've got to lie up for a day or two," she declared. "I must be going now, but I'll come and see you up at the cave to-morrow."

"Good!" He grinned with satisfaction. "And by then I'll have got that copy of the Sanskrit writing on that piece of paper the Green Rajah pinched. Once we've translated that we'll soon lay hands on that jolly old goblet—" He broke off, and they both stiffened as from the distance could be heard the clop-clop of hoofs and the clatter of wheels. "Look out, someone coming!" he whispered in alarm. "I'd better clear off. Cheerio till to-morrow."

"But, Jack—" began June. The boy, however, had gone limping up the path, hugging the parcel of groceries, and as she saw a horse and cart swing round the near-by bend June strode out along the road.

Her thoughts turned to the Barings and all her sympathy went out to them. Her instinct had not been at fault when it had aroused her pity for Eva. Nor when it had drawn Jack and herself together. What a fine fellow he was. She knew that for certainty now. Never again would she doubt him.

Then, as she remembered the stolen paper which Jack had mentioned, she frowned. By the time Jack regained possession of his copy it might be too late. The Green Rajah might have succeeded in translating the Sanskrit writing on the original clue and have found the crystal goblet itself. That goblet was doubly important now, for it not only contained the key to the lost secret, but also a document which would make Ronnie Baring an outlaw no longer.

"There isn't a moment to lose," June told herself as she clambered over the stile which gave access to the manor grounds. "I've got to act now."

And then abruptly the smile returned to her face, for she had thought of a way of retrieving her shattered detective reputation—a way not only of safeguarding the hidden goblet, but one which might lead to the capture of the villainous Green Rajah!

THE AMBUSH



IT was happily that the girl detective entered Glen Hall; happily that she went up to her room to wash and tidy herself in readiness for tea. And when she came downstairs again she was humming to herself.

She broke off, with a smile, as she saw Mr. Henley down in the hall. At sight of her he coughed and looked a little embarrassed.

"Mr. Raymond has just been on the telephone," he said.

"Uncle Noel?" cried June in delight, momentarily forgetting what was likely to have been the reason for his call.

The elderly solicitor nodded. "Yes, he has received my telegram and has agreed to take charge of the case. He hopes to arrive on Monday, and so—"

He gave another embarrassed cough. June stepped forward gaily.

"So I had better think about packing my bags? Is that it?" she said, with a chuckle.

"Oh, there's no need for you to rush off, my dear. I am sure my daughter would be very pleased for you to stay on, on the understanding, of course, that—"

"That I don't try to play the detective," June finished for him.

Mr. Henley nodded, obviously relieved that June had taken the whole thing so lightly.

At that moment the tea gong boomed out, and Mildred and the other girls came boisterously running down the stairs, and June was swept with them into the dining-room.

If all went well, Mr. Henley might have to revise his opinion about her detective ability. June was telling herself, a gleam in her eyes. So might Mr. Standish! If only her plan worked—

Tea was just coming to an end when the door opened, and in came Mr. Standish and the two boys. June greeted them cheerily.

"Still a bun or two left for you," she said, grinning sympathetically at Billie's hungry face. "But how did you get on at the cottage? Find any clues?"

"No, nothing at all." It was Mr. Standish who replied. "But on the way home we did discover that a girl has been shopping in the district—a stranger she was, the woman in the shop told me. And I'm positive it was Eva Baring buying provisions for herself and that brother of hers." He scowled. "That proves they've got their hide-out somewhere up in the mountains, possibly that very cave we visited. Anyway, wherever it is, I don't mean to rest until I've found it."

And he beat one fist into the other to emphasise his determination.

June's smile faded. She realised that she would have to take extra precautions when she visited Jack next day. It would be disastrous if she were seen—as disastrous as it would be if Mr. Standish ever discovered that the girl shopper had been not Eva Baring, as he thought, but June herself.

But as she thought of her secret plan June's high spirits returned, and immediately tea was over she set to work to put it into operation. When Mr. Henley and the other adults had left

(Please turn to the back page.)

The Merry-makers at College



By
DAPHNE GRAYSON

A TAKE-IN FOR THE CHUMS

"JELLIES, trifles, doughnuts, chocolate sponge —" Sally Warner ran her eye eagerly along the sumptuous spread in the Merry-makers' clubhouse. "Better open that tin of peaches, Johnny!"

"It's the last tin we've got, Sally, and we were saving that for a picnic—" Johnny Briggs began.

"Our guest's more important than any picnic!" burst in Don Weston, echoed excitedly by Fay Manners. "He's Mr. Simon K. Trupper, promoter of the Hollywood Sports Fair—"

"And he's reserved a block of tickets for his old college, the same as he did last year, when K House got them," rushed on Sally, giving a final flourish to the lavishly spread table. "This year it's got to be our turn! We've got to see to it that it's J House he invites to Hollywood to the biggest sports fair in the world. Never let it be said that we lost our chance through stinting Mr. Trupper of a tin of peaches!"

In spite of her laughing words, Sally was quite sincere in her wish to show hospitality towards their distinguished guest. All Roxburgh Co-Ed College were proud of Mr. Simon K. Trupper, once a student, now a bearded celebrity who was founder of the world-famous sports fair in Hollywood. It was a thrilling honour to Sally & Co., of J House, to entertain him to tea in the Merry-makers' Club.

But it was going to be a bigger thrill if he, in turn, extended his coveted invitation to J House. To spend two days with the film stars at the great sports fair in Hollywood.

"Some of those K House people think they'll get the invitation again this year as they did last. I heard Nat Piggot chortling only this morning," breathed Sally, darting in and out of the kitchen with the freshly opened peaches. "Say," she finished breathlessly, "I can hear him now!"

The wheels of a car sounded in the college drive, echoed by an impressive scurry from Pat Waters & Co., who were waiting outside to greet the honoured guest.

Sally had just time to whisk off her apron and give a pat to her hair, when with due ceremony the door swung open, and beaming upon his escort, in came Mr. Trupper.

A short, stocky figure with bushy brown hair and bushy brown beard, he was exactly as his photos always pictured him, except that he was surrounded now by breathless Co-Eds instead of Hollywood film stars. The boys ran to relieve him of his bag bearing the imposing initials "S. K. T."

"Well, well, a monster spread—just like my old days here in coll!" he boomed, taking a hearty survey of the table. "This is home-coming to me indeed!"

"Gee, that's just what we want, Mr. Trupper—to make you feel at home!" cried Sally in delight.

"Look at his whiskers!" squawked a raucous voice from the window sill.

Blushing, Sally grabbed up her parrot Abdul in his cage and rushed him out to the kitchen. But Mr. Trupper hadn't noticed that jarring interjection, or else didn't mind. He sat himself down at the table with homely alacrity.

"Do try these doughnuts, sir!" And Don and Jerry fell over each other in their haste to serve him.

"Thank you!" And Mr. Trupper innocently took the whole plateful they handed him. "I always enjoy these college teas," he said. "Good plain stuff, but plenty of it!"

Sally hurried in with the tea just as he was finishing the doughnuts. The rest of the party were discreetly making do with bread-and-butter.

"Haven't they passed you the trifle or anything else, Mr. Trupper?" And with a chiding glance across the table, Sally added brightly: "I'm afraid everybody's mind is on the sports fair."

"We've never been to it ourselves," rushed on Johnny, "but we've heard from K House what a marvellous time you gave them last year, Mr. Trupper—"

"Is that chocolate sponge I see?" And Mr. Trupper looked eagerly along the table. "Thank you, my dear." And he drew the dish from Sally's hand as she was about to serve some out on a plate. "This is rather more than I need, but never mind, you're like me," he laughed. "You believe in looking after your guests well."

"I'm sure your guests always have a wonderful time, Mr. Trupper," said Sally artlessly,

as the chocolate sponge disappeared. "We've heard such a lot about the jaunts to Hollywood, to your wonderful sports fair."

"I know," he chuckled in his beard. "I'm an old Roxy myself, young lady—I know why you've put that raspberry trifle on the table to tempt me."

"Do have some, Mr. Trupper." And Pat Waters nearly upset the trifle in her eagerness to pass it to him. "That horseshoe on the top is real cream. I made it myself. I thought it might bring us luck."

"Ah, you're superstitious, eh?" And with a hearty prod of his fork Mr. Trupper demolished the horseshoe at one stroke. "I suppose the luck you had in mind was the Hollywood trip, eh?" He laughed, starting now on the jellies. "That accounts for this feast, I suppose?"

What an appetite! Sally was thinking. The amount he was eating, and the speed at which he was tucking it away was positively breathtaking. She watched the champing of his beard with fascinated interest. It was as if he'd been starving for a week. As if he didn't mean to part up with those Hollywood invitations till he was full to the ears.

Ears! Sally's gaze was suddenly held riveted upon Mr. Trupper's ears. They were monstrously large, like his appetite. Yet there was something about those ears, something familiar, reminding her of someone—And then her thoughts gave a sickening lurch. She got up and moved to the kitchen door.

Don and Johnny saw her hovering there, making feeble signals to them. They thought she was telling them they were neglecting their guest. Eagerly they asked him what he wanted next. Then they passed up more plates of cakes and other dainties and hurried to join Sally.

"More tea for Mr. Trupper—" they began. "That's not Mr. Trupper!" Sally said in a weak voice. "We've been japed—it's Nat Piggot!"

Don and Johnny went quite limp with the shock. Japed! In their own club by a member of the rival House! No other than Nat Piggot!

"P-Piggot!" stuttered Don. "He's scoffed all the grub we laid in for Mr. Trupper—and we've been helping him—serving him—" He made unsteadily for the half-open door. "Let me get at him!"

Sally pulled him back gently. "Not yet, Don. Let him sit pretty for a little longer," she whispered, leading her chums back to the kitchen. "It's our turn to serve up a few surprises for old Piggy, don't you think?"

"Ah!" Johnny took the lid off the teapot and emptied the mustard tin into it. Sally filled it up with pepper, salt, vinegar and hot water. Don popped next door and stole back unobserved with the impostor's bag. By the time he and Johnny had finished tampering with it, that bag was even more phoney than its initials, "S. K. T."

"Sorry I've been so long, Mr. Trupper. I was waiting for the hot water," Sally explained brightly, as she sailed in with the teapot. "Let me pour you but a fresh cup."

But at that moment a quick step sounded at the door.

Into the clubhouse bustled the head of J House—Mr. Grittall.

"Then you are here already, Mr. Trupper?" And with eager impotence he extended his hand to the bearded visitor. "I understood you would be delayed for some hours, sir."

So had Piggot, thought Sally, when he played this hoax on them. But he carried matters off brazenly.

"I changed my plans, professor," he gabbed through his beard. "These young people met me, and seemed most anxious to entertain me."

"Oh, yes!" And Mr. Grittall frowned slightly at Sally, as if he felt that she had cheated him of the honour. "And are they looking after you well, Mr. Trupper?"

"I'm sure they mean to!" But "Mr. Trupper" was looking rather closely at that

second cup of tea Sally had poured him. "Praps you will join me, professor, and give me your opinion?"

And to Sally's horror he handed that "cup of tea" to Mr. Grittall.

"It's very kind of you, sir!" beamed Mr. Grittall, and he put the cup to his lips and took a deep draught.

"Ugh—ugh—ouch!" And next second Mr. Grittall was choking and spluttering as if he'd swallowed a firework.

"My dear professor, what ever's the matter?" cried Mr. Trupper in affected amazement.

"This t-tea—it's not TEA—it's burnt my mouth! It's a trick!" howled Mr. Grittall. "It's a hoax!"

"A hoax?" Mr. Trupper's voice was charged with horror. "Surely not. Think what that would mean, professor. The tea was offered to me. I was the intended victim! Oh! Oh!" He made a grab for the teapot. "This must be looked into. I was prepared to invite your students to Hollywood, but I shall have very different ideas if they have tried to insult me!"

He pulled off the lid of the teapot, and he stuck his bearded face close to it, solemnly examining the contents.

"Bless my soul, you are right, professor!" he cried. "It is a concoction of vinegar and mustard and sneezing powder! A deliberate hoax!"

Sally & Co. stood glaring speechlessly. But there was nothing they could do. Piggot knew he was safe—knew that they would never break the college code and unmask him before Mr. Grittall.

"Must be a m-mistake somewhere—I must have brought the wrong teapot!" Sally gasped out. "If Mr. Trupper would kindly come out to the kitchen with me—"

"Indeed, no!" And the bearded face looked knowing. "I suspect yet another hoax awaiting me there. I will know better now than to invite such hooligans to Hollywood! It shall be K House again! You will please inform the dean, professor, of my decision."

Dramatically he rose and reached for his large black hat. But even Mr. Grittall tried desperately to save the situation. It was Mr. Grittall's wish, naturally, that his own J House should have the honour of the Hollywood invitation.

"I am sure it was a mistake, Mr. Trupper—I will vouch for it myself," he said in a rush. "I beg you to reconsider your decision. My House have been greatly looking forward to your esteemed invitation. I know they would never stoop to hoax a distinguished visitor like yourself—"

"It seems they have, but if there is any mistake I will redeem it when I return later," put in Mr. Trupper, with a sweeping wave of the hand. "Is my bag there?"

"Yes, sir! Allow me!" And with ready deference Mr. Grittall reached for the bag and picked it up.

Whrrrrrr— Bouff! There was a whirr of a spring, then a sharp explosion.

The bag burst open in Mr. Grittall's hand, discharging a shower of battered old boots, empty tins, and a dilapidated frying-pan.

"Dis-graceful! A deliberate insult!" cried Mr. Trupper, his hands to his bearded face in sheer horror. "Now do you tell me there is any mistake, professor?"

"N-no, sir!" And a shudder ran through Mr. Grittall. He gazed at Sally & Co. as if he hoped for ever to disown them.

"You will inform the dean, professor, that my eyes have been opened by J House!" boomed Mr. Trupper, making for the door. "It would lower the whole tone of Hollywood to invite such scallawags to the sports fair. The tickets will be reserved solely for K House, whose own behaviour last year is still a fragrant memory to me. Kindly escort me to my taxi!"

It was a complete defeat for Sally & Co. In stifled fury they saw their bearded tormentor march to his taxi, escorted by Mr. Grittall.

TURNING THE TABLES



"DID you see Nat Piggot, Sally?"

There was an inscrutable expression on Sally's face as her excited housemates came rushing to her for news. Led by Johnny and Don, they had been lying in ambush by every entrance to the college, awaiting Piggot's return. If he had not returned, he had somehow eluded them. But Sally had meanwhile been keeping hidden watch on his chalet.

"I didn't find Piggy," she said in a queer tone, as she steered them all into J House community-room. "What I did find was a telegram from the real Mr. Trupper. Piggy took it from the boy, of course, pretending he was going to deliver it for him to the dean. That's how he pulled this jape on us. Here it is."

The telegram, addressed to the dean, stated simply:

"Have been delayed. Unlikely I can visit you after all. Am sending promised tickets for Hollywood Sports Fair. Please distribute them as you think fit.—TRUPPER."

A furious outcry rose from J House, and Elsie Pym, for one, would have gone blabbing to the dean if she'd had her way.

"That telegram's evidence—it would prove Piggot's trick!" she shrieked, echoed hotly by her toady, Lena Tooting.

But their voices were drowned by the rest of J House, who were in no mood to suffer sneaks in their ranks.

"We're going to settle with Piggy ourselves, and in our own way!" Don said with force.

That inscrutable look deepened in Sally's face, and she called for silence.

"Listen, everybody! I've been doing some thinking," she said softly. "Piggy caught us on the wrong foot, didn't he? He's got away with it as far as it goes. But only so far. What we've got to do now is to catch him on the wrong foot."

"What's the idea, Sally?" came breathlessly from all.

"So far," proceeded Sally, "Gritty hasn't told the dean anything, because the dean happens to be out, and won't be back till five. That gives us a couple of hours' breathing space, for Piggot will be returning then to see the dean. And so—"

Ten minutes later, when they all adjourned brightly to the college cafeteria, they did see Nat Piggot. He was sitting smugly at the counter with Sidney Fiske and a bunch of others from K House. Nor was there the least sign to betray his recent escapade, except that he had no appetite left to eat, and was sipping iced Kola instead.

"Hallo, Nat! Hallo, Sidney!" smiled Sally, pushing up to the counter. "We'll have strawberry sundæes, Mrs. Barwell, please."

While plump Mrs. Barwell was serving her, Nat Piggot began an audible conversation with Sidney Fiske.

"I'm looking forward to the Hollywood trip, aren't you? We're sure to get plenty of new film star autographs. We might bring back some for J House."

"We'll bring them back some picture postcards, anyway."

"Yes, I'll make a note of that," said Piggot, pretending to scribble something on his cuff. "These J birds would be very grateful for any trifling souvenirs of the Hollywood Fair."

Sally and Don exchanged secret looks, but said nothing.

It was just a few minutes before five when a taxi rolled up at the college gates. Its door was opened smartly by a buttoned pageboy. So smartly that the bearded figure inside had no time to recognise him as Johnny Briggs.

Countless pairs of hands yanked him out of the taxi and rushed him through the shrubbery to the woodshed. He put up a desperate but forlorn attempt at bluster.

"Hooligans! What are you doing? Do you know who I am?"

"We know!" cried Sally, while the boys galloped him into the shed, and Don made a grab at his bushy brown hair and beard.

Off they came, to reveal the perspiring and chagrined features of Nat Piggot. He had been taken rudely by surprise, but he was defiant still, chortling with triumph and mockery.

"You're clever, but you didn't get up early enough! I beat you first time! Thanks for the tea, and—Ow!" He finished up with a yell.

While Don whisked off his heavily padded tweed coat and winged collar and tie, Johnny advanced upon him meaningly with a large, empty sack.

Despite all Piggot's struggles, the sack was dragged down over his head and arms, and Sally tied it securely at the waist with a skittish-looking sash. Then the boys sat him down on the woodpile. Micky Rogers sat on top of him. And Sally and Johnny proceeded to dress up Don in the discarded disguise.

In a couple of minutes the transformation was made. The bearded Don was indistinguishable from Nat Piggot's version of Mr. Trupper.

Breathlessly Sally & Co. ushered him out of the shed, locking the door on Nat Piggot, and leaving him squirming in his sack.

"You'll do, Don!" panted Johnny.

"Do your stuff, and jolly good luck!" breathed Sally. "J House is counting on you, Don!"

"Our Hollywood trip hangs on this—you leave it to me," Don said gamely through his beard, and with a bold and fearless step he set off to the dean's house.

Mr. Grittal was waiting in the hall, and hurried anxiously to meet him.

"Ah, Mr. Trupper!" he said nervously. "I have not yet spoken to the dean about the— the unseemly hoax played upon you— And then he paused with a sudden breath of relief.

The bearded visitor was holding up his hand benignly.

"Forget it, professor—forget it!" he said. "I know all about it, and I know now that it was a pure misunderstanding. I take back every word I said, and I want you to know that I have the highest esteem for J House. You are to be congratulated as leader of such a fine body of students."

"My dear Mr. Trupper, this is most gratifying!" burred Mr. Grittal; and Don had never seen him look so pleased with himself. "The dean—"

"I have to leave in a great hurry," Don went on swiftly, "so I will ask you to make my excuses to the dean, and as regards the Hollywood invitation, professor, please tell him—"

"But the dean is here, Mr. Trupper, at this moment!" And eagerly Mr. Grittal pushed open the nearest door and ushered him straight into the dean's study.

Don's scalp tingled under his wig while the dean shook hands with him and greeted him effusively. But he was standing well back from the glare of the open window, and no glimmer of suspicion entered the dean's mind.

"I think Mr. Trupper wishes to tell you, sir," Mr. Grittal said, smiling archly, "that he has elected my house—J House—to be his guests at Hollywood this year."

"Precisely what I came to say," assented Don, deciding he might as well take the plunge. "I extend a most hearty welcome to J House, sir, hoping that I may leave all the arrangements in your hands."

"Certainly! And I thank you sincerely on behalf of J House!" exclaimed the dean. "I trust this does not mean, Mr. Trupper, that you were dissatisfied with the behaviour of K House last year?" he added quickly, with a slight frown.

"I would rather not answer that," stated Don meaningly. And then his gaze was diverted oddly to the open window.

He saw Sally bobbing up and down outside, making frantic signals to him. Why was she

doing that? What was she trying to tell him? "I'm not surprised to hear Mr. Trupper's high opinion of my own House," Mr. Grittal said with grim satisfaction. "I am more than gratified, because an odious jape was perpetrated to-day, and I realise now that it must have been the work of K House. You see, sir," he explained warmly to the dean, "when Mr. Trupper first arrived this afternoon a disgraceful hoax was played on him—"

Tap, tap! came a knock at the door, interrupting him, and it was opened smartly by the dean's valet.

"Mr. Simon K. Trupper, sir!" he announced. A stout, bearded gentleman stepped into the room.

Don took one petrified look at him—just long enough to meet the other's outraged glare—then with a wild leap for escape Don bolted out through the open window.

He knew now why Sally had been signalling. That bearded newcomer was the real Mr. Trupper!

MR. TRUPPER'S DECISION



"SCOOT for those bushes, Don! Hide—quick!" Sally just had time to gasp, as he landed in the dean's garden.

Then he dived for the bushes, and in the very next second three ominous figures were leaning furiously out of the window.

"Where is he—where is the rapsallion?" Mr. Grittal was panting.

"Miss Warner!" The dean had spotted Sally now, who was stooping over the bushes and pretending to be absorbed in a botanical study. "Miss Warner," he cried, "why didn't you stop that villain? Which way did he go?"

"Who, sir?" inquired Sally, swinging round with an expression of innocent amazement.

"That villain who jumped out of this window!" yelled Mr. Grittal. "You must have seen him. He was wearing a check coat and a brown beard, and—"

"Oh, I thought it was Mr. Trupper!" gasped Sally, playing for time.

"Never mind what you thought! Here's Mr. Trupper! Here!" howled Mr. Grittal. "Where did that brazen impostor rush to? Which way?"

"I—I think"—and Sally pointed recklessly to the opposite end of the dean's garden—"I think he went that way. I wasn't noticing particularly."

Before she could blink Mr. Grittal was leaping out of the window, the dean and Mr. Trupper following him. They stood within a yard of Don's hideout. They would have seen him in the next second if Sally's wits hadn't been quicker.

"This way, sir—I'll show you!" she said, and she burst into a run across the garden, decoying all three with her.

"He couldn't have come to this end of the garden!" Mr. Grittal yelled, as he pulled up furiously amongst the rows of sweet corn. "There's a blank wall here!"

Sally looked suitably bewildered, but her heart was racing in thankfulness, for Don had seized his chance during this brief respite. Over their shoulders she saw him flit from behind the bushes, dash across the lawn, and vanish over the hedge. He was safely out of the dean's garden.

But still in imminent peril!

No one realised that better than Don. He heard the valet's steps rushing in his direction. He dived down behind a water-but in the nick of time. Somehow he'd got to get to the woodshed, get rid of this disguise, and grab up his own coat. It was his only chance.

How could it be done? The valet's feet came racing along the path. Don gave himself up for lost, then Johnny's voice rose to the rescue in a false alarm:

"Here he is! This way!"

The valet doubled back excitedly in his tracks—Don doubled out from behind the water-but and made a sprint for the kitchen garden. He could see the woodshed only twenty yards away, across the open potato patch. Breathlessly he hovered a second in the shelter of the greenhouses. Dare he venture across?

Left and right he looked. He could see no one, hear no one. All was seemingly quiet, even normal. With luck he might do it. It was now or never.

Stealthily he moved forward and crept noiselessly across the open potato patch.

But not unseen! Through a chink in the woodshed glittering eyes were watching him. The eyes of Nat Piggot!

Those eyes glittered brighter at every step Don took. Not an inkling had Piggot of the disaster which had caused Don's stealthy return. It was enough for him that his rival was indeed returning, and alone!

"Oh, boy—oh, boy!" gloated Piggot to himself, and could scarcely believe his luck. He drew back from the chink and crouched down behind the locked door.

It had taken him ten solid minutes to extricate himself from the sack. Ten minutes of squirming wrath, with nothing to do when he emerged except to hatch schemes of reprisal and revenge. And now his chance was at hand. Here was his rival walking right into his arms!

He crouched low in the dimness of the shed. He heard the click of the key in the lock.

"Got you!" And he made a grab at Don's feet as the door opened.

"O-ouch!" With a gasp Don went sprawling flat on the floor of the shed, and before he could get his wind back Nat was kneeling on top of him.

"Off with this wig and beard—they're mine!" yelled the triumphant Nat, rolling Don's head in the dust as he pulled off these appendages. "And this coat! I'll show you!"

"Listen, you owl!" Don tried to gasp out, but Nat pressed his head down into the floor, knelt on his neck, and none too gently began dragging his arms out of the sleeves of the tweed coat.

"I'll teach you to borrow my get-up and try to copy my good idea!" he crowed, yanking the first sleeve free. "You didn't get up early enough, Weston! I told you that before! Only a born half-wit like you would have come back here, instead of getting on with your funny games! Thought I was trussed up, did you?"

"I—I'm trying to warn you!" gasped Don again. "Ouch!" And his voice was smothered as Nat thrust a cap into his mouth, gagging him.

"Warn me, eh?" cackled Nat. "Next time you'll warn yourself before you try to be cleverer than I am! Trying to impersonate Mr. Trupper! You! Off with this coat!"

He wrenched the coat free, then grabbed up the sack which had cost himself such struggles. In the space of a moment Don was encased in the sack, and his arms and legs securely tied beyond all hope of escape.

Only then did Nat Piggot lift his weight from him. Don's desperate mumblings were smothered inside the sack. Nat paid no heed to them. He was too busy now, dressing himself again in the wig and beard and coat.

"I think that will do nicely, thank you!" he chortled, giving a last pat to his beard. "I'll see you later, Weston—after I've seen the dean about those Hollywood invites for K House!"

Then, locking the door behind him, Nat Piggot sallied boldly out of the woodshed on his way to the dean's house.

He crossed the potato patch with a spring in his step. He swaggered past the greenhouses and the kitchen garden. He puffed out his

(Please turn to the back page.)



The SECRET of the WRECKER'S LANTERN

(Continued
from
page 384.)

She saw him nod his head slowly, as if he had been expecting some such happening as this.

"You may remember I warned you not to go in there," he said. "But now—tell me, Miss Daphne—was your friend on the track of that mystery inscription on the wrecker's portrait in your picture gallery?"

The question startled Daphne. How could he have guessed?

"Yes," she answered quickly. "Joan's a clever girl, and I really believe she had solved it. She said she would tell me to-morrow, and now—"

"Now she has gone," Dave murmured. And then added, as if to himself: "Perhaps that explains it!"

"What do you mean, Dave? You're talking in riddles!" Daphne burst out. "Can't you help me?"

"Not yet," he said quietly. "Listen, Miss Daphne. You and your friends are wasting your time here; you'll not find that missing girl on the cliffs. Go back to the house. Say nothing to anyone but try to find what your chum was doing—how she meant to solve the mystery. If you find anything, let me know at once, at my cottage along the cliff. And hurry, Miss Daphne, for it's my belief that time is growing short."

With that he turned and strode silently away into the gloom.

Daphne's brain was in a whirl. In a way, Dave's words had left her more puzzled than before, but she trusted Dave, and she meant to carry out his plan.

By now the others were giving up the cliff search. One by one they were rejoining Daphne on the beach, worried and disconsolate.

"I think we'll get back to the manor," she decided. "I hate giving up the search like this, but I'll have to report it to Mr. Riggs. After all, he is in charge, and he'll have to know. Don't you agree, Peter?"

Peter nodded. "I'll make one suggestion, though," he said. "Michael and I will stay down here, in case Joan should turn up. The rest of you return to the house and work from that end."

It was a very silent party that made its way up the cliff path, and back to the house.

Late as it was, they found Jan Riggs in the hall. In a few words Daphne told him what had happened.

"I've been fearing something like this, ever since I first found that young ruffian, Dave Costello, hanging around the picture gallery," he said grimly. "There's only one thing for me to do, Miss Daphne. I must cycle down to Polmartin village and report this to the police."

He hurried away, leaving Daphne strangely disturbed.

Again the steward had voiced his suspicions of Dave Costello, and again Daphne shook her head, resolutely refusing to believe them.

Leaving her chums talking uneasily in the lounge, Daphne quietly ran upstairs to Joan's room.

The sight of her vanished chum's belongings brought a lump to Daphne's throat, but she

forced herself to keep calm and collected. She must try, first of all, to find out what line of inquiry Joan had been following; how she had hoped to solve the mystery inscription.

"If only she had told me a little more!" Daphne murmured, looking round a trifle hopelessly.

Then, on the small bedside table, she spied a writing-pad. She knew that Joan, in her methodical way, was fond of making notes about things that interested her. Was it possible she had noted something down about the wrecker's picture?

Quickly Daphne stepped to the table and picked up the pad. Her face fell as she saw that the top page had been torn off, and that the next sheet was apparently blank. Then, as she looked more closely, an eager little cry left her lips.

"There's something here!" she exclaimed. Joan had evidently written on the top sheet, and the impress of the pencil marks could be detected on the lower one. Daphne carried it across to the light, and peered at it closely. She could just make out eight words:

"Treat lantern with liquid. Possibly that will . . . secret . . ."

That was all, but it was enough to make Daphne's pulses race.

The note, of course, must refer to the old iron lantern in the picture gallery. But what was the liquid? Eagerly Daphne turned back to the table, and on the shelf above it she saw a small bottle of colourless fluid; on the label was the name of the firm of picture dealers which Joan's father owned.

"Perhaps it's some stuff for restoring old works of art and other relics," she said to herself. "And Joan meant to try it on the lantern, to see if anything would show up."

Anyway, her course was now clear. She would take Joan's note, with the bottle and the lantern, to Dave Costello's cottage. Between them they might be able to discover something there.

For Dave, it seemed, believed that the mystery of the inscription was in some way bound up with the riddle of Joan's disappearance.

The picture gallery, of course, would be locked, but the key would be in the steward's room, hanging up with the other keys of the estate, and breathlessly Daphne sped away to Jan Riggs' little office.

She found the key, and was slipping it into her pocket when a footstep sounded in the corridor outside.

Dave's warning flashed into her mind. He had advised her not to breathe a word of their plan, and if she was found here with the key of the picture gallery it might lead to awkward questions. On the spur of the moment she slipped behind a curtain.

It was Jan Riggs himself who entered the office, a frown on his dark, intent face. Evidently he had not yet started for the village police station. He carried in his hand a large, heavy-looking walking-stick which Daphne did not remember seeing before.

Carefully Mr. Riggs hung the stick on a hook in the wall. Without suspecting Daphne's presence, he hurried away again.

"A good thing he didn't see me," Daphne murmured, thinking of the steward's suspicions of Dave.

She waited a moment, then hastened to the door. As she brushed past she accidentally

knocked down the large walking-stick which Jan Riggs had just hung up; and as she picked it up to replace it, something rather curious struck her about the stick.

But she didn't give it a second thought. In her breathless haste to find some clue to Joan's disappearance she could not pause to puzzle over a walking-stick.

It was the work of only a few moments to reach the picture gallery and secure the old iron lantern. She hurried away, not even bothering to lock the door behind her.

On to the cliffs she raced, heading for Dave's little stone cottage. She pulled up in Dave's sweet-scented cottage garden, for there, under a leafy arch, she spied his broad-shouldered figure.

"So you've come, Miss Daphne!" he murmured.

Almost it seemed that he was waiting for her, that he had known she would not fall him.

"I've found something, Dave, though not much," she told him breathlessly. "A few words in Joan's writing, that's all. And I've brought the lantern itself, and a bottle of liquid she referred to."

"Good! We will go in and look at them under the light," Dave said.

He escorted her into his little sitting-room with its ceiling of ancient beams. A ship's lantern, hanging from the centre beam, threw a warm glow over the room.

His brows knitted, Dave read the faint impress of the words Joan had written.

"Maybe it means just this," he said slowly. "If we rub some of this liquid on the lantern certain words or signs may show up which will solve that mysterious inscription, Miss Daphne. And once we have solved that, we shall be on the way to finding your friend."

"Then let's do it—let's start!" Daphne cried eagerly.

They placed the lantern on the plain oak table. Dave brought some scraps of rag, and they splashed them with the liquid and began to rub the metalwork of the lantern.

Silently and eagerly they worked. Too intent on their task were they to notice the sound of footsteps.

They had rubbed and cleaned and examined every square inch of the lantern. And slowly the light of hope had died from Daphne's face.

"It's no good, Dave," she murmured. "We're on the wrong track. Somehow we must have misunderstood Joan's note."

Dave shook his head in a puzzled way. Not a sign or mark or word had shown up on the ancient metal.

Daphne stepped back hopelessly from the table, and as she did so, accidentally touched a cupboard door. It swung open, and Daphne, turning to close it, gave a cry.

For there on a shelf lay a fine gold chain and locket. She knew it at once. It was the chain Joan always wore, and in the locket was her own picture. And it was here, hidden in a cupboard in Dave's cottage!

All her faith in the Cornish boy suddenly vanished. The suspicions which Jan Riggs had so often voiced crowded back into her mind.

The presence of that chain and locket could mean only one thing. Dave Costello knew where Joan was, and—he had robbed her!

She grasped the chain with trembling fingers, swung round on the fisher-boy, her face pale, her blue eyes blazing.

"Dave! You cheat! You—you trickster!" With a start of surprise Dave looked up from the lantern.

"Miss Daphne! What is it? I don't understand—"

"Don't understand!" she mocked. "And I suppose you'll say you don't understand how Joan's gold chain and locket came to be in your cupboard!"

He drew in his breath sharply. His level eyes met hers steadily.

"On my honour, Miss Daphne, I know nothing of all this," he replied.

He had no time to say more. There came a

thunderous knock at the door, which immediately was pushed open, and into the little cottage room strode Jan Riggs and—Uncle John!

His face dark with anger, the steward pointed at the fisher-boy.

"There he is, Mr. Elliott!" he burst out. "There's the young ruffian who has been breaking into your picture gallery. What's more, I have reason to believe he has had a hand in kidnapping one of our young guests this very night!"

And Daphne, with that telltale gold chain in her hand, felt as if the world was coming to an end!

JAN RIGGS' WALKING-STICK



"AND what, Daphne, are you doing here?" Mr. John Elliott inquired, his voice stern as he gazed from Dave to his niece.

Daphne's eyes flashed as she held out Joan's gold chain and locket.

"I came here because I trusted Dave Costello, uncle," she replied.

"I thought he would help me to find Joan. But now I know that Mr. Riggs is right, and that Dave is a young ruffian not fit to be trusted by anyone. I found Joan's chain and locket in his cupboard."

"Then that proves my accusation up to the hilt, sir!" Mr. Riggs snapped.

Daphne's uncle nodded. He had arrived home unexpectedly, and had met Jan Riggs on his way to the village, learning from him of the mysterious happenings at Poinmartin Towers.

"Better take the boy back to the house, Jan," he said shortly. "The police will come for him there."

Still the fisher-boy made no attempt to defend himself, beyond a proud headshake. His steady eyes met Daphne's, and again she felt her ideas of him changing, felt she would give anything to prove him innocent. She looked at his squared shoulders and obstinately held head as he walked between her uncle and Mr. Riggs, and she heaved a sigh of puzzlement and distress.

Back at the Towers, the front door was thrown open at their approach, and Molly and Jack and the rest of the house party hurried out to meet them.

"Daphne! Another mysterious thing has happened!" panted Molly. "We found the door of the picture gallery open, and we looked in, and—what do you think? That lifelike painting of the old wrecker has vanished!"

"Cut clean out of the frame," put in Jack.

Again Jan Riggs pointed an accusing finger at Dave Costello.

"And it's that young ne'er-do-well's doing!" he burst out. "That's why he tried to break into the picture gallery again and again. We've proof of it! 'Twas he who stole the wrecker's picture!"

"The most valuable work in my collection!" Uncle John added sternly.

They pressed on into the picture gallery. Sure enough, the gilt frame which had contained the picture of the old-time Cornish wrecker was now empty, displaying nothing but an expanse of blank wall.

"Costello must have broken in here in spite of all our precautions," the steward said harshly. "He cut the canvas from the frame, rolled it up and smuggled it away."

Daphne looked sharply at Jan Riggs. Two words spoken by the steward struck her as being odd. Why should Jan Riggs be so sure that Dave had "rolled up" the canvas?

An idea began to dawn on her mind. With fast-beating heart she stepped closer to the empty frame, and examined it carefully. Then she looked down at the floor, which was rather dusty at this spot.

And in the dust she saw a small, round mark such as might have been made by the ferrule

of a walking-stick if it had rested there. A big walking-stick, such as Jan Riggs had hung up in his office while she had been hiding.

The amazing idea gripped her more firmly, and quietly, unnoticed, she slipped away, and hurried along to Jan Riggs' office. Yes, the walking-stick still hung there. And as she reached out to grasp it, Daphne remembered that odd thing she had noted about it when she knocked it down earlier in the night.

"I wonder—," she breathed.

Meanwhile, in the picture gallery, Mr. John Elliott was sternly facing the captured fisher-boy.

"Why don't you confess, Costello?" he urged. "You'll have to do so, sooner or later, when the police come. Where is, Joan Bryant? What have you done with her?"

"Again that obstinate head-shake. I cannot tell you, sir, because I do not know," Dave replied. "But I will tell you this. The secret lies somewhere in Wreckers' Cave, if only we could find it. And I am minded to try again!"

Puzzledly the party surveyed each other. In the momentary diversion Dave acted. With a sweep of his arms he thrust his guards from him, and made a dive for the door.

"Stop him!" Jan Riggs cried, his face twisted with anger.

Jack Lindley tried to grab him, but was pushed off. Not one of their clutching hands succeeded in stopping the Cornish boy, as he raced into the open.

"He is making for the Wreckers' Cave!" the steward gasped. "After him, all of you! He's up to some new trick!"

It was a wild chase through the moonlit night. At breakneck speed they rushed down the zigzag cliff path, with Dave ahead of his pursuers.

But there was something Dave did not know. Just inside the Wreckers' Cave Peter Ross and Michael were waiting, as they had arranged, in case the missing Joan turned up there. They heard the sounds of the chase, and saw the fugitive being pursued across the sands.

As Dave Costello hurtled into the cave the two boys flung themselves on him, all three of them tumbling over in a confused heap.

And when Dave struggled to his feet he found himself a prisoner again.

"Get him back to the house," Jan Riggs snapped. "The police must be there by now. They'll deal with him."

"Ay, you are mighty keen to get us all away from the cave, Mr. Riggs," Dave observed in his deep voice. "But do not be afraid. I don't know the secret, though I've searched and wondered and guessed—"

His voice died away as a startling thing happened.

Echoing through the cave came again that weird wailing sound, rising to a shrill scream and filling the cave with eerie echoes, to die away at last to a hushed silence.

A strange pallor overspread Jan Riggs' face, as he stood as if turned to stone, listening to those mysterious echoes dying slowly away.

And then, far back in the cave, came a glow of light.

"The—phantom wrecker!" Molly gasped.

But it wasn't the shape of the old-time wrecker that appeared before their astonished eyes now. In that glow of light two girlish figures came to view, arm-in-arm and smiling. One of them was Daphne Elliott, her blue eyes agleam with triumph. The other was—

"Joan!" Peter fairly shouted. "What—"

He was interrupted as Daphne gave a shout.

"Stop, Jan Riggs! Don't let him get away!" she cried. "It was Riggs who captured Joan. Dave is innocent!"

The steward had begun to edge away, guilt showing on every line of his face, but at Daphne's cry he was held fast. Everyone could see now an opening in the cave wall behind the two girls. In amazement they gathered round as Daphne told her story.

"You see, Riggs accused Dave of stealing the wrecker's picture," she explained. "But I had happened to notice a heavy-looking walking-stick hanging in the steward's office, and when I knocked it down by accident I found it was extraordinarily light. And it suddenly occurred to me that the stick might be hollow, and might be just the place for holding a rolled-up canvas."

"And that is what I found when I went to investigate," Daphne went on. "The top of the stick screwed off, and inside was the missing picture."

"But why on earth should Jan Riggs want to conceal it?" Uncle John broke in.

"Because it held a secret, and Riggs was afraid of it being found out," Daphne explained.

She turned to Dave with a smile.

"We were on the wrong track, Dave," she said. "Joan meant to treat the painted lantern in the picture with that liquid, not the iron lantern, as we thought. She had noticed, you see, that the paint on that lantern was much fresher than the rest of the oil painting, as if it had been painted over just recently. And the liquid would take off the outer coat, revealing what lay beneath."

Daphne explained how she had applied the liquid, and found beneath the outer coat of paint a few words of instruction, telling how to press the picture frame to make the section of wall inside the frame swing back like a door, disclosing a secret passage.

It was there that she had found the captured Joan. And also a quantity of smuggled goods—jewellery, tobacco, luxury clothing, and perfume, which Riggs and an accomplice had smuggled in from the Continent, using Wreckers' Cave and the secret passage as a hide-out.

"It was Riggs who staged that phantom business to scare us away from the cave," Daphne finished up. "There's a hidden entrance into the cave at this end, and when it is opened the draught of air makes that weird whistling sound. And when Riggs discovered that Joan was on the track of his secret, he decided to keep her prisoner for a while, until the smugglers had got safely away with their haul."

Knowing that the game was up, the steward confessed that he had planted Joan's necklace in the fisher-boy's cottage, hoping to get him into trouble, for he knew that Dave was on the track of the smugglers, too.

It was not till next day that Dave had a chance of thanking the girl who had cleared his character.

He met Joan and Daphne by his little cottage on the cliffs.

"You are a friend worth having, Miss Daphne," he said slowly. "Never shall I forget what you have done for me."

"Nor I!" Joan smiled, her grateful glance resting on her girl chum. "Daphne is a true-blue pal, if ever there was one."

"And I'm hoping you will both count me as one of your friends—for life!" Dave Costello said.

They joined hands to seal the compact, while the blue Cornish sea whispered happily in their ears.

THE END.

HER MYSTERY FRIEND OF THE DESERT

By RENEE FRAZER

The colourful Middle East provides the setting for next Friday's thrilling double-length complete story. You will vote it Renee Frazer's best to date.

THE CASE OF THE FRIGHTENED GIRL

(Continued from page 392.)

the room she gathered the youthful guests about her.

"How would you like to help me capture the Green Rajah?" she asked.

A startled silence greeted the question, and incredulously Mildred, Ted, Billie, and all the rest regarded her.

"Are you serious?" asked Ted.

"Never more so," she assured him.

"Then the answer's yes," Ted said.

There came an enthusiastic chorus of agreement and excitedly the boys and girls gathered round.

"What's the scheme?" demanded Billie.

"To lay an ambush around the museum on Temple Isle," June declared. "Then, when the Green Rajah shows up, we'll close in and grab him."

"But what makes you think he'll visit the museum?" inquired Mildred.

"Because of that piece of paper he stole. You know, the one I found last night—with the Sanskrit writing on it."

"But Jack Linton's got that," pointed out Ted, and frowned. "Gosh, then do you really think that Jack is the Green Rajah?" he added dismally. "I know it was suspicious Jack disappearing like that, but—well, I liked the chap and I was hoping against hope that it was all a beastly mistake. But if you say the Green Rajah's got that paper—well, he and Jack Linton must be one and the same."

"Suppose so," muttered Billie, and a frown also darkened his face.

"It'll be time enough to decide who the Green Rajah is when we capture him," June declared confidently.

"Well, count me in," said Ted, and grinned. "I'm dying to know who this Johnny really is."

"And me!" came in a chorus from all around. June surveyed them with sparkling eyes.

"That's great!" she declared. "We'll all meet, then, down on the landing-stage in ten minutes, but, remember—mum's the word!"

They all promised to keep silent, and when they had donned warm coats they stole out of the house one by one. Ted had armed himself with a cricket bat; the other boys carried sticks. They meant to make certain of things if the Green Rajah did show up.

Crowded into three of the rowing-boats, they set off across the lake in the gathering darkness, and when they reached the rocky, little island June swiftly gave her instructions.

"Mildred and Bessie, you go with Ted," she ordered. "Your job's to keep watch at the back of the museum. Twins"—she smiled at the Smith sisters—"Billie will look after you. You hide, behind those trees, and you, Frank—"

She turned to the next boy, and in small groups they stole away to take up their positions. Soon every avenue to and from the museum was closely guarded.

June, as she took up her post behind a bush, felt her heart thudding.

Would her hunch come off? Having mastered the secret of the Sanskrit writing, would the Green Rajah come in search of the crystal goblet?

If he did—

She broke off and every muscle grew rigid.

What was that?

A faint crunching noise like footsteps on a gravel path. There it was again, and this time it sounded louder, nearer—

June's heart gave an excited leap and her fingers tightened over the whistle she clutched in one hand. One blast from that whistle would bring the ambushers leaping into action.

Peering over the top of the bush, she dimly discerned a shadowy shape, and her breath caught in her throat. For it wore a turban and from its clothes came a greenish hue.

The Green Rajah! Then her theory had been confirmed. The mystery thief had come in search of the hidden goblet.

Will June & Co. be able to capture the Green Rajah? See next Friday's splendid chapters of this exciting thrill-and-mystery serial.

THE MERRYMAKERS AT COLLEGE

(Continued from page 396.)

chest and assumed a portly tread as he reached the gate, opened it, and marched boldly out on to the path leading to the dean's house.

The broad open campus on one side of him, the stately college buildings on the other, it was a setting that made Nat Piggot feel like a great actor playing the triumphant rôle of his life. He got almost to the gates of the dean's house. Almost!

But that was as far as he got.

There was a sudden roar.

"There he is! LOOK! There's the scamp!" Piggot stopped dizzily. He had a crazy vision of figures rushing towards him from the dean's garden. His eyes popped. He could see the dean and Mr. Grittall and half the coil, advancing like a tidal wave. But there was someone else leading the surge. A portly stranger. A bearded gentleman.

Piggot's knees suddenly sagged. Could it be—

"You buffoon, you caricature, how dare you burlesque me?" And a roar from that bearded gentleman thundered the truth upon Piggot's ears. "Me! Simon K. Trupper!"

Piggot's bearded mouth opened in a soundless gasp.

"Don't move!" stormed Mr. Grittall.

Piggot couldn't.

"Who are you?" cried the dean.

Sally and Fay and Johnny pulled up behind him, their hearts in their mouths, the whole of J House halting in breathless dread for the coming showdown. How Don had walked like this into the very jaws of his pursuers they couldn't imagine. K House halted with them in grinning excitement.

"Who are you, you rascal?" the dean cried again, and with a snatch he whipped off the impersonator's beard.

The sensation was electric. Sally and Johnny and all J House stared as if in a happy dream. K House seemed to have been suddenly overcome by a nightmare.

"Piggot!" said the dean in an awful voice.

"Who?" raged Mr. Trupper.

"Piggot, sir—of K House!" Mr. Grittall cried in angry triumph.

"K House!" thundered Mr. Trupper. "The House that I invited to Hollywood last year, and this is how they repay me!"

Sally was gazing stupefied at the hapless Piggot, wondering however the change-over had been effected.

"Send him out of my sight, and all the rest of his K House clowns!" boomed Mr. Trupper. "That settles it. I know who I shall invite this year to Hollywood. I shall invite J House!"

The whole world has agreed that this year's sports fair was Hollywood's best, and a rollicking time was had by all J House. Nor did Sally and Don forget to send a picture postcard to Nat Piggot!

(End of this week's story.)

Look out for more fun and frolic with the gay Merry-makers in next Friday's complete story featuring these cheery chums.