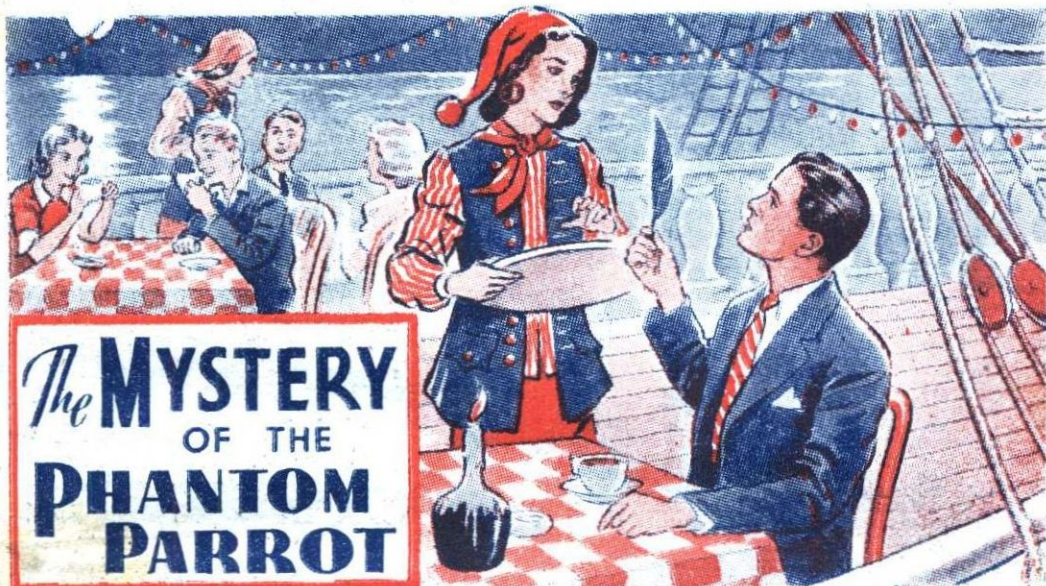


No. 558.
Vol. 22.
EVERY
FRIDAY.

GIRLS' CRYSTAL³

AND "THE SCHOOLGIRL"

Week
Ending
June 29th,
1946.



The MYSTERY OF THE PHANTOM PARROT

A Haunted Schooner Provides The Setting For Noel Raymond's Latest Detective Adventure—Written By PETER LANGLEY

BARBARY JOE

"A HOY, there, Noel! Welcome to the Golden Quest!"

Noel Raymond, the famous young detective, grinned boyishly as he climbed aboard the old-time schooner.

A tall young man in the costume of a merchant seaman of bygone days stood on deck, waiting to greet him.

"I'm glad you've come, old man!" declared Brian Curtis as he gripped his friend's hand. "I'm about at my wits' end for advice."

"So I gathered from your letter, Brian," rejoined Noel, looking at the other keenly. "But what's worrying you? It looks to me as though you've hit on a little gold-mine with your latest venture. It's the most novel idea for a cafe I've ever seen!"

Brian Curtis, ex-pilot and owner of the Golden Quest Cafe, smiled wryly as he glanced across the deck of the ancient schooner, now lying moored alongside the stone jetty of a small Cornish seaside resort.

From the masts and riggings that towered above them a hundred twinkling lights shone on the tables arranged on deck and on to the gay crowd of holiday-makers attracted by the romantic setting.

"It's novel enough," admitted Brian, "and I've sunk my last penny into the scheme. Sheila and I had big hopes, till about a week ago. But now"—he lowered his voice—"now I'm afraid—"

"Afraid?" echoed the young detective incredulously, remembering his friend's gallant war record. "Not you!"

His friend smiled grimly. "Afraid of losing my customers, if you like—of losing everything that Sheila and I have put

into the concern. You'll probably laugh, old man, but I'm deadly serious when I say that I've bought—a haunted ship!"

Noel did not smile. He shot a keen, questioning glance at Brian's face, and what he saw convinced him that the other was in earnest.

"Tell me about it," he rejoined tersely. "Not here." Brian glanced anxiously at the crowded tables. "Too many rumours have got round as it is. Come down to the state-room."

In a panelled, oak-beamed cabin that had once belonged to an old-time skipper, Noel was greeted by his friend's attractive young wife, Sheila.

Her face lit up as Brian explained the reason for the detective's visit.

"Oh, thank goodness!" she breathed. "Now we'll have someone to advise us—to help us beat Barbary Joe—"

"Who?" demanded Noel, staring.

For reply Brian pointed to a framed picture hanging above an old oak settle in a corner of the cabin. It was the portrait of a villainous-looking old sea captain, wearing a three-cornered hat and wig, and perched on his shoulder was a parrot—a parrot with bright green and red feathers.

"That's Captain Forster, one-time owner and skipper of the Golden Quest," explained Brian grimly.

"Are you going to tell me that his ghost haunts the ship?" asked Noel.

"No!" returned Brian unexpectedly. "Not Captain Forster—but the ghost of Barbary Joe, the captain's parrot!"

Noel grinned broadly in spite of his friend's earnest tone.

"Look here, Brian," he protested, "that's a bit thick. The ghost of a parrot!"

"Mr. Raymond, Brian isn't joking!" put in Sheila, a catch in her voice. "It may sound funny to you, but it's horrid—uncanny! We've heard it ourselves, and one of the waitresses was scared out of her wits and gave notice. If only we could find out what it means—"

She broke off, with a gasp, as there came a sudden clatter outside the cabin. Noel strode to the door and jerked it open.

A girl was kneeling there, picking up the fragments of some crockery that had slipped from a fallen tray. Slight, dark-haired, and wearing a picturesque replica of a seafaring uniform, she was obviously one of the cafe waitresses.

For a moment she looked flustered as the young detective bent to assist her, but she quickly regained her composure.

"I'm sorry, sir," she murmured. "I was hurrying and slipped on the polished boards."

"Accidents will happen!" rejoined Noel, with a smile, aware that the girl was glancing curiously over his shoulder into the cabin.

Her dark, expressive eyes were looking, as though fascinated, at the portrait of the old sea-captain and his parrot.

She was recalled to herself by a gentle cough from Sheila.

"Excuse me, Mrs. Curtis," she said hurriedly, "but I saw you had a visitor, and I thought you might like me to bring in refreshments."

"Thank you, Moyra," returned Sheila. "I'm sure Mr. Raymond would like some coffee."

The girl backed slowly from the door, her gaze still fastened on the old portrait; then, turning abruptly, she hurried away.

"That's Moyra Harvey, our new waitress," explained Brian, meeting Noel's questioning glance. "It's not like her to be so clumsy."

"She's a strange girl," put in Sheila. "I don't think she's afraid of anything. She comes of an old seafaring family, and she volunteered for evening work when most of the other girls were too scared."

There was a thoughtful gleam in Noel's eyes as he plucked something from the door-handle—a girl's long, dark hair. So Moyra had been attempting to look through the keyhole, as he had suspected!

"You say the other girls were afraid?" he asked casually. "You mean, of this phantom parrot?"

Brian nodded, a worried frown on his face.

"It sounds fantastic, Noel, but it's really pretty grim. Just a voice, you understand—yet no one can explain it. Last night was the worst. Half a dozen frightened customers left, most of them without paying. Come with me and I'll show you where it happened."

His interest keenly aroused, Noel accompanied Brian and his wife out of the cabin and past the steward's galley to the entrance of the oak-beamed dining saloon.

"Sheila and I were standing here," said Brian. "Old Bob Silver was busy in the galley." He nodded towards an open hatchway, through which Noel caught a glimpse of the rubicund, grey-haired ship's steward busy among his pots and pans. "The tables were just filling up when suddenly the thing happened."

"That dreadful voice—" breathed Sheila, and broke off with a sudden cry, catching at Noel's arm. "There it is again!" she breathed huskily.

The young detective stiffened as from the direction of the cabin they had just left came a blood-curdling screech, followed by a harsh, raucous voice.

"Belay there, ye lubbers, belay there! Make way for Cap'n Forster! Ha, ha! Davy Jones may rattle his bones, but old Barbary Joe will seek you out!"

Another terrifying squawk was accompanied by startled cries from the customers in the dining saloon and a sudden rush for the stairs leading to the deck.

"You reassure the customers—I'll find out what it's all about!" jerked Noel at Brian, and, without waiting for a reply, raced off for the

cabin, followed by Sheila and the old steward, who appeared agitatedly from his galley, saucy in hand.

Pausing outside the door of the state-room, the young detective gripped the knob and listened. Muffled, yet close at hand, he heard a harsh, ominous chuckle.

"Stand back, both of you!" ordered Noel, and flung the door wide open.

There was nothing to be seen, nothing but the panelled cabin, as they had left it and the portrait of the sea-captain and his parrot.

The young detective switched on the light and stared around, then he glanced along the corridor.

"What's in the next cabin?" he demanded.

"That's the servery," explained Sheila unsteadily, "where the crockery and trays are kept."

Noel pushed open the adjoining door—to come face to face with the dark-haired waitress. She was standing by a trestle, polishing some cups.

"Moyra, did you hear it?" gasped Sheila.

The girl nodded composedly.

"Yes, ma'am, I heard it. Just the same as last night. In my opinion it's a trick!"

"It's an omen—that's what it is," muttered the old steward darkly. "There's a Jonah on board, if you ask me—someone that's bringin' bad luck to the ship!"

And he stared suspiciously at the young waitress.

"Will you have your coffee brought in now, ma'am?" asked the girl, ignoring him.

"Not—not to the cabin," said Sheila hastily.

"We'll have it on deck, Moyra," put in Noel, watching the girl closely. "As soon as things have quietened down."

In spite of her cool appearance, the young detective's sharp eyes noticed that the waitress' hands were trembling slightly as she put the cups on the tray and went out to the galley, followed by the suspicious stare of old Bob Silver.

"It's a queer thing," muttered the steward, addressing himself to Noel, "but these here scares started just after that girl joined us."

"Oh, but, Mr. Silver," protested Sheila, "you surely aren't suggesting that Moyra could have anything to do with that—that horrid voice?"

"I dunno," muttered the old man, shaking his head dubiously as he made for the door. "I dunno what to think. It's uncanny, that's what it is!"

Noel had moved aside and was staring keenly round the servery. He bent to pick up the tea-cloth the girl had been using and a startled expression flashed into his eyes.

With a swift, unobtrusive movement he slipped something into his pocket.

"This phantom parrot," he remarked casually "I suppose it has never been seen?"

"Never," declared Sheila. "In a way, that makes it more scaring. You couldn't be frightened of an actual parrot—but a voice coming from nowhere—" She broke off, with a slight shiver, and Noel nodded understandingly.

Just then his friend returned, looking pale and agitated.

"Have you discovered anything, Noel?" he asked.

"Nothing tangible," replied the young detective evasively. "But I've got a theory—for what it's worth—and I want to put it to the test. I think I'll go on deck for a breath of air."

"You'll have plenty of room, old man," said Brian, with a twisted smile. "Most of the customers have deserted us—and I can't really blame them. I've talked like a Dutch uncle to those who remained and assured them that there'll be no more scares—as we've got a famous detective here. I'm relying on you, Noel!"

"Looks as if I'll have to be on my mettle," commented Noel dryly. "What about the staff? How are they taking it?"

"Well, we can depend on old Bob," replied his friend. "He's been with us from the start. And Moyra isn't likely to leave us. But two of the other girls have threatened to give notice. I'll get Sheila to talk to them. We'll join you on deck later, old man."

Noel nodded, and mounted the stairs to the gaily lighted deck.

The tables presented a woefully deserted appearance now, for at least half of the customers had departed hurriedly.

The young detective made a tour of the deck, his keen eyes on the look out for a possible clue that might confirm his theory. He was particularly interested in the old wheelhouse and a rope-ladder that led to the "crow's nest" set high on the mainmast.

Finally he selected a table in view of the cabin stairs, and, taking out his notebook, he jotted down several names, putting a question-mark against each.

The last name was—"Barbary Joe."
He had barely written it when he heard a light footstep on the deck behind him, and he turned quickly to find the dark-haired waitress standing there with a tray.

She was staring at the open page of the notebook, but she looked away quickly, her expression giving no hint of her thoughts.

"Your coffee, sir," she murmured.
"Thanks," rejoined the young detective pleasantly as he pocketed the book, then groped for the mysterious object he had found in the servery. "Er—Moyra," he added, detaining her, "I believe you dropped—this."

The girl looked round, and a startled gleam flashed into her eyes as she saw what Noel had taken from his pocket and was now holding up. A green parrot's feather!

THE MARK OF THE CLAW



HER face pale, the young waitress shrank back, staring, as though fascinated, at the green quill.

"I—I don't know what you mean," she breathed. "That isn't mine!"

"Sure?" inquired Noel pleasantly. "I wondered if you wore a feather in your hat, but I suppose they're a bit out of fashion. It must belong to someone else."

He spoke casually, but he knew by the scared look in the girl's eyes that she was badly shaken.

Before he could pursue his inquiries the girl had hurried away, and Noel was prevented from following her by the arrival of Brian and Sheila, both looking more cheerful.

"We've had a talk to the staff," said Brian as he pulled up a chair for his young wife, "and they've promised to stand by us—so long as these scares don't continue. You know, it's our gala night to-morrow. I've had adverts put in the local Press and boosted it for all I'm worth. I'd feel easier if you could come along, Noel."

"You can count on me!" Noel promised. "I wouldn't miss it for anything. By the way, how did you explain the voice to them?"

"I assured them it was a practical joke," said Brian, with a shrug. "I think most of them believed me, but old Bob wasn't convinced. He still thinks there's a hoodoo on the ship, and he declares that it started when Moyra Harvey came aboard."

"But that's perfectly ridiculous!" exclaimed Sheila. "I engaged Moyra because I was sorry for her. She's an orphan and has to pay for her young brother's schooling as well as keeping herself. She—"

She broke off as there came a terrified scream from below, accompanied by a peal of muffled, raucous laughter.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Brian, paling. "What's happened?"

But Noel had leapt to his feet and was hurtling down the cabin stairs.

The noise had ceased as he reached the corridor and had given place to a stifled sobbing. A waitress was huddled at the foot of the stairs—but it was not Moyra. She was a pretty, fair-haired girl, her blue eyes scared and tear-stained.

"It—it came out of the captain's cabin!" she faltered, as she caught at Noel's arm. "I heard it laugh as I was passing, and—and then the door opened, and I saw its shadow."

"What kind of shadow?" demanded Noel tersely.

But the girl shook her head, too frightened to recollect.

Leaving her with Brian and Sheila, who had appeared on the scene Noel hurried to the state-room, switching on the light.

A stifled ejaculation escaped his lips as he sprang forward. The picture of the old sea-captain and his parrot lay on the floor; its gilt frame damaged by the fall—and across the oak panelling where it had hung was a deep treble scratch, like the mark of a parrot's claw!

His eyes gleaming, Noel examined the strange mark, his agile mind endeavouring to piece together the amazing puzzle.

The parrot's voice—the parrot's feather—and now this!

The mystery had taken a new and startling turn and he was more anxious than ever to question Moyra Harvey.

Replacing the picture on its hook, he hurried to the galley, to find old Bob Silver busily testing freshly baked scones with his cooking-fork.

But before he could inquire for Moyra, Brian appeared in the doorway.

"I've rounded up the staff, but Moyra's missing," he declared unsteadily. "She must have slipped away in the general commotion. It looks as though Bob's right about her, and Sheila's wrong."

Noel's eyes were grim.
"I'd rather not jump to conclusions, Brian. Give me till to-morrow and I'll find the answer. What about the customers?"

"They've all left," said Brian hopelessly.
There seemed very little purpose in keeping the floating cafe open for what remained of the evening. The few waitresses who remained, together with the old steward, were only too glad to pack up their things and depart.

Brian and Sheila stayed to turn out the lights and fasten the hatches. Noel made a final tour of the ship, then joined his friends on deck.

"One thing, if the 'ghost' walks to-night there'll be no one it can harm," he remarked dryly. "And by to-morrow I may be able to lay it by its heels—or, rather, its claws!"

"I hope so!" said Brian gloomily. "If not, it'll mean the end of our hopes. We'll have to sell the old ship at a dead loss to the local junk merchant."

"Brian, don't talk like that!" urged Sheila, squeezing her husband's arm. "I'm sure Mr. Raymond will solve the mystery."

"I'll do my best," promised Noel gravely.
He was the last to leave the ship, and as he made for the steps he clumsily knocked over a small drum of creosote, hastily righting it, but not before a small quantity of the tarry liquid was spilt on the boards close to the gangway.

He apologised profusely, and refused Brian and Sheila's invitation to accompany them home, explaining that he had certain urgent business to attend to; and, besides, he had already booked a room at the local inn.

With a final assurance that he would be present at the fateful gala night, Noel took his departure.

The young detective lost no time in following up his theory. Inquiries at the inn led him to Moyra Harvey's home—a picturesque, timbered cottage standing in an old-world garden.

The little garden was trimly kept, and a faded board beside the gate announced "Teas and Light Refreshments."

Noel whistled softly. Here was a possible

motive behind the baffling affair! The little tea-gardens would have been badly hit by the novel floating cafe, yet somehow he could not believe that the dark-haired waitress would have stooped to such a revenge.

The cottage seemed to be in darkness and apparently deserted; but Noel pulled the old-fashioned bell and waited. As there was no reply he tried the heavy knocker, and to his surprise he discovered that the door stood ajar!

"Anyone at home?" he called.

There was no answer to his shout, and the young detective ventured to step into the little hall.

Through an open doorway he saw the moon-light streaming into a low-ceilinged, raftered parlour. There were nautical prints on the walls and a model schooner in a bottle on the mantelshelf.

It was typically a sailor's room, though its tasteful arrangement and the flowers in the vases revealed a girl's handiwork.

Then Noel stiffened suddenly as he caught sight of something gleaming in an alcove—a large parrot's cage, encased in a canvas cover. Lifting the cover, Noel saw that the cage was empty, but a swift examination revealed that it had been prepared for an occupant.

There was fresh sand at the bottom and parrot seed and clean water in the receptacles.

The young detective's eyes narrowed. So the waitress had not told the truth about that feather! She knew more about the phantom parrot's voice than she would admit.

Puzzled, yet still unwilling to believe that the girl was a trickster, Noel turned his attention to the only other object in the recess—an old family portrait album.

It lay open at a sketch of a fully rigged sailing-ship, with an oval portrait pasted below—the portrait of a handsome, bearded man in seafaring uniform.

Beneath it something had been written in ink, dimmed by age. A soft whistle escaped Noel's lips as he flashed his torch on the faded inscription:

"Richard Harvey, ship's master, falsely imprisoned for piracy."

He looked again at the portrait. There was something about the bold, dark eyes of the old ship's master that struck a chord in Noel's mind.

There was a soft step in the hall which brought him round with a start as the lights were switched on, and he found himself staring into those same dark eyes, smouldering now with a mixture of fear and anger.

"What—what are you doing here?" demanded Moyra Harvey, her hands clenched. "How dare you walk into my cottage like this!"

Noel looked keenly at the girl. She wore a red scarf over her dark hair and her likeness to the old ship's master was striking now.

It threw a new and surprising light on the mystery.

"I'm very sorry, Miss Harvey," said the young detective gravely. "I came to see you, and found your cottage door open. Perhaps this will explain."

He held out his professional card, watching her closely. The girl drew a sharp breath as she read it and stared at him, her face pale.

"You're Noel Raymond, the detective!" she breathed. "Did—did Mr. Curtis engage you to spy on me?"

Noel shook his head.

"No, Moyra, he certainly did not," he said quietly. "He and Mrs. Curtis are your friends. I came here on my own account because"—he paused—"because I thought it might save you trouble if you told me your story."

The girl drew back, her dark eyes full of fear. "I—I don't know what you mean!" she breathed.

"I think you do," said Noel gently. "This evening you denied having dropped a green

feather. Can you explain the small green feather I found among the sand in that parrot's cage?"

It was a shot at random, but a trapped expression crept into the girl's eyes.

Then she gave a quick, mirthless laugh.

"That's easy," she rejoined with assumed carelessness. "My grandfather brought a parrot home on one of his voyages. It lived for many years in that cage, and—and when it died we kept the cage for sentimental reasons. I only recently brought it down from the attic."

She stared at him unflinchingly, but Noel knew she was not telling the truth. The feather was his own invention, but the fresh water and seed told their own tale.

Yet he was convinced the girl was not a trickster. A shrewd judge of character, he read desperation rather than guilt in her defiant glance.

"Then you know nothing about the recent scares on board the Golden Quest?" he asked bluntly.

"On my honour, Mr. Raymond, they're nothing to do with me!" she assured him earnestly. "I know nothing about that horrid voice. You must believe me!"

In spite of himself Noel felt inclined to believe her, yet why was she deliberately trying to conceal the fact that she owned a parrot? How was it that the green feather came to be on board the floating cafe?

That the young waitress knew more than she would admit was plain, but how deeply was she involved in the mystery?

Noel realised that it would be useless to press her for further information, and there was another line of investigation he was anxious to follow.

Bidding the girl a brief yet kindly good-night, he left the cottage and made his way back along the country lane towards the harbour. He had a theory to put to the test, and now was the time to do it, he decided.

As he hurried along the lane he imagined once or twice that he heard light footsteps following him, but he put it down to his imagination. In spite of himself he could not rid his thoughts of Moyra Harvey's strange, reckless eyes.

The moon was clouded as Noel reached the deserted quayside and looked along the jetty at the dark hulk of the old sailing-ship limned against the frowning sky.

Boarding it, he first of all examined the patch of tar that he had spilt—purposely—by the gangway. But there were no footprints, as would have been in the case if someone had crept on board during his absence.

Noel started for the battened hatchway that led to the cabins, but he had barely taken a step when a hollow, sinister laugh momentarily froze the blood in his veins.

It seemed to come from overhead, from somewhere among the towering masts; but even as Noel spun round, his hands clenched, the laughter ceased, and a mocking voice sounded apparently in the air:

"Barbary Joe is watching—and dead men tell no tales!"

The young detective's face was pale as he drew his revolver, staring round him. He was convinced now that there was something sinister behind this—something more sinister than a parrot.

His eyes gleamed as he caught sight of the swaying rope-ladder that led to the crow's nest. With sudden determination he sprang to the ladder and commenced to mount it, his gaze fastened on the platform high above.

Rung over rung, swaying dizzily above the deck, Noel made for his objective, till suddenly a girl's scream rent the air:

"Look out—oh, look out!"

There was a creaking, flapping sound, and as Noel glanced quickly over his shoulder the blood drained from his face.

(Please turn to page 237.)



A PUZZLE INDEED

"DOROTHY MASTERS. Dorothy Masters." As she repeated the name, the girl on the boulder lifted her gaze from the label pasted on the suitcase which rested on her knees, and looked about her.

But the wild, rugged coastal scenery was as unfamiliar to her as the name she kept murmuring.

Ruefully she shook her head.

"It's no good. I can't remember a thing," she told herself. "This suitcase evidently belongs to me, so the name on the label must be mine, but—"

She finished with a baffled sigh.

It was not pleasant to know that she had completely lost her memory. Indeed, such a discovery would have reduced many girls to tearful despair. But Dorothy, as she supposed herself to be called, was not so much alarmed as filled with a sense of wonder.

It was so incredible—so intriguingly mysterious.

A few moments ago she had blinked open her eyes, as if awaking from a deep sleep, to find herself seated on this boulder beside the dusty road which ran along the cliff-top. How long she had been there, she hadn't the faintest idea—neither where she had come from, nor where she was supposed to be bound.

When she had got over the first shock, she had opened the big suitcase that lay on the ground at her feet. It contained summery clothes, a tennis racket, a swim-suit, and other holiday requisites, but beyond the name on the label, not a solitary clue to tell her anything of the owner's background. There was not even an address.

It was a situation which held a hundred and one intriguing possibilities, and despite herself Dorothy gave an excited chuckle.

"I might be a film star—a typist—on holiday—anyone!" she ejaculated. "And I must say I certainly chose a lovely spot in which to lose my memory."

With appreciation she looked about her. Beyond the road were rolling moors, broken by cool, inviting little woodlands. Behind her were black, cave-pitted cliffs, guarding picturesque little coves into which a bright blue sea rippled and splashed. On every side the scenery was superb—and yet to Dorothy it was like looking on a completely foreign land.

There was nothing which struck a chord of remembrance in her mind.

"Judging by the sun, it must be late afternoon," she murmured. "I must do something."

As, for the first time, she realised how serious was her plight, she sighed and raised a helpless hand to her face, then suddenly she gave a start. On her left temple there seemed to be a bump. Exploringly she ran her fingers over it, then gave an excited gasp.

"Perhaps I was walking along the road—on my way to stay with friends or relatives!" she exclaimed. "Then—pouf! Along comes a car or something and bows me over. That would explain the bump—and my lost memory, too. When I recovered consciousness I could easily have stumbled across to this boulder and flopped down on it. But—"

She broke off. She had been so wrapped up in her thoughts that she had not heard the battered old four-seater which had chugged its way up the steep hill. Only now, as it drew up almost alongside her, was she conscious of its presence, and as she looked up she saw that its solitary occupant was a broad-shouldered youth, with curly hair and a sun-tanned, rather earnest-looking face. He had very attractive brown eyes, and now they were regarding her in humorous reproof.

"So there you are!" he exclaimed. "I've been chasing all over the place for you. But what made you walk up? Why didn't you wait at the station?"

Excitedly Dorothy surveyed the boy in the grey flannels. What she saw she decided she liked; there was only one disappointing thing about him. As far as she knew, she had never met him before. But he knew her—that was the main thing.

"What station?" she asked.

"Why, Southward Ho, of course." He frowned in sudden doubt. "I say, I haven't made a mistake, have I?" he asked. "You are Dorothy Masters, aren't you?"

His manner was so earnest that she could not resist the temptation to chuckle.

"Well, that remains to be proved," she replied.

He stared at her blankly.

"What on earth do you mean?" he demanded, then chuckled himself. "Oh, I see—some kind of leg-pull, eh? Well, be a sport and explain the joke. Sorry to be dense, but I don't see the point."

"The point is," she told him calmly, "that I've lost my memory."

"You've what?"

So startled was his expression that she had to laugh.

"Don't be alarmed. It's as I say—it's my memory that's gone. But I'm all right otherwise. I just can't remember a thing," she added with surprising cheerfulness. "For all I know I may be Betty Grable, or the Lady of the Lake. Though I must admit," she added with another chuckle, "the evidence all seems to suggest that you're right and that I'm really only Dorothy Masters. For that's the name on my suitcase."

Lifting up the case, she pointed to the label, then, as he still sat there staring at her dazedly, she quickly related what she suspected must have happened. As she finished he drew a deep breath and, a new expression in his brown eyes, clambered out of the car and placed an awkward but sympathetic hand on her shoulder.

"I say, I didn't realise. I thought you were joking!" he exclaimed. "Is there anything I can do to help?"

She smiled up at him, touched by his obvious sympathy.

"Please. Just tell me all about myself," she said.

"But I—I can't. I mean, I don't know anything about you, except that you're to spend the summer at the holiday camp."

"Holiday camp! What holiday camp?" she asked.

He made a gesture towards the trees away to the west.

"The one over there. It's a swell little place. You'll enjoy yourself there. There's a wizard swimming pool—hard tennis courts—a games hut—everything."

"It sounds lovely. And you really mean that I'm to make holiday there all the summer?"

She regarded him with sparkling eyes. The delightful prospect made her forget the mystery of her lost identity.

He nodded.

"Yes—at least, that's what old Wilkins told me—he's the manager, you know. But let's get going. I'll tell you all about it on the way there. And don't worry about your memory. The records will tell us where you come from and we'll soon put everything right. Now, let's have your case."

Seizing it, he put it into the back of the car, then helped her into the spare front seat. Insisted on wrapping a travelling rug around her legs, then got in beside her.

As they drove on, the boy introduced himself as Basil Kerr. It seemed that the holiday camp had been a German prisoner-of-war camp during the war, and it had been Basil's idea that his uncle, who owned the property, should convert it into a holiday camp. A little doubtfully, Mr. Samuel Kerr had agreed to try out the idea for one season before deciding whether or not to carry on the camp permanently, and, having to go abroad on a business trip, had put his secretary, Mr. Wilkins, in charge.

"At the moment I'm part guest, part host," Basil confided, as he swung the car round another steep bend.

"You mean, you collect people from the station, make them feel at home, and help to organise the fun?" Dorothy asked.

He nodded.

"But I hope to become assistant-manager next year—if uncle decides to carry on. That's why I'm so keen on the camp being a terrific success. And it will be, providing old Wilkins forgets his old-fashioned ideas. Do you know"—turning his head, he regarded her in horror—"at first he wanted to fill the place with old fogeys. I had a frightful job in persuading him that we didn't want it to be a sort of nursing home. And another thing

— Breaking off, he lifted one hand from the steering wheel. "That's it," he announced proudly. "Well, what do you think of it?"

Dorothy caught her breath, as they swung back towards the sea. Outspread before them, nesting in a hollow right on the cliff top, was the holiday camp.

In the red afternoon sun, the gaily painted rows of wooden chalets looked very attractive. Between them were laid out flower gardens, tennis courts, and a large swimming pool from which arose splashes and shouts of delight.

Bunting and flags fluttered from the long, green-roofed dining-hall and recreation-room, and beyond this, hemmed in by a semi-circle of majestic oaks, was a turreted, ivy-covered building which originally had been the local manor house.

"It looks simply lovely!" Dorothy declared. "I'm sure I'm going to enjoy myself here."

"You bet you are," Basil agreed. "If only we can clear up that lost memory of yours and—"

"Oh, I'm sure we can," said Dorothy.

But her confidence received a setback when they entered the office and consulted the camp records. The index card bearing the name of Dorothy Masters simply stated that the booking had been made by telephone, and attached to it was a letter written in a bold, masculine handwriting. It confirmed the telephone booking and stated that the money for the first two weeks charges was enclosed.

Dorothy, peering over Basil's shoulder, gave a surprised gasp as she looked at the letter.

"How queer!" she exclaimed. "There's no signature—and no address! Who could have paid for my holiday here, and why were they so anonymous about it?"

Glancing up, she saw that Basil was looking even more perplexed than she was.

"Queer isn't the word for it," he declared. "Any ordinary person—your father, for instance—would have been bound to have given his name and address. Strikes me, Dorothy, that it isn't only your lost memory which is a puzzle. Everything about you is wrapped in mystery."

And he regarded her with baffled, worried eyes.

A HAUNTING WORRY



FOR the first time Dorothy began to feel uneasy. Until now she had been too intrigued by the strange situation in which she found herself to worry.

But now—

An icy hand seemed to be closing over her heart, draining the blood from her face. She

had the uncomfortable feeling that her stay at the holiday camp was not going to be the gay, jolly experience she had anticipated. Though she told herself that it was absurd, she could not shake off the suspicion that hidden in her past life was some dark, disturbing secret.

Basil, seeing the look of distress, was instantly apologetic.

"I deserve kicking for upsetting you like that!" he exclaimed. "Don't worry now, Dorothy." All concern, he impulsively took her hand in his. "Everything will turn out O.K. Sooner or later your relatives are bound to get in touch with you, and there's sure to be more luggage on the way for you. That'll help to jog your memory. Meanwhile, forget it, and make up your mind to have a good time."

His obvious sympathy and cheery optimism drove away the dark cloud which had settled over her. Once again her happy-go-lucky self, she smiled gratefully.

"Thanks for being so helpful," she said. "I don't know what I should have done without you. You've been awfully sweet, and—"

She broke off and they both turned, as the door opened to admit a fussy, important-looking man, carrying a sheaf of papers.

Basil introduced him as Stephen Wilkins, the manager, then proceeded to explain all about Dorothy. As he listened, Mr. Wilkins' eyebrows rose and the look he bestowed upon Dorothy was almost one of disapproval.

"This is most irregular," he declared. "The booking should not have been accepted until we had obtained full details about Miss Masters. In a business like this we cannot be too careful. And this lost memory business is most awkward." Frowningly he surveyed Dorothy. "Actually, you know, we can't be sure that you really are the Dorothy Masters we have been expecting."

Dorothy found herself going red, but before she could speak Basil came indignantly to her defence.

"I say, that's a lot of rot!" he protested. "Of course she's Dorothy Masters. Her name's on her suitcase. And I must say it's a bit thick going for her like that. It's not her fault she's lost her memory."

The manager made an irritable gesture. "Of course not. I was not putting forward such an absurd suggestion," he said testily. "I have every sympathy for Miss—er—Masters. Most distressing, I'm sure. Nevertheless, the whole business is decidedly irregular. However, we must make the best of it. I will telephone the police and then we must await developments. Meanwhile, Miss—er—Masters, you must, of course, make yourself at home here. Please show her to her chalet, Basil, then return here. I wish to speak to you with regard to that other worrying business."

"You mean, last night's burglary?" asked Basil, his cheery face clouding over.

"If it was a burglary and not some stupid practical joke," was the brusque reply. "However, that's what we'll discuss."

And with a curt nod to Dorothy, Stephen Wilkins strode into an inner office and slammed the door behind him.

Basil scowled. "Old Wilkins makes me boil!" he declared. "He's always looking for trouble. That ghost business, for instance—"

"Ghost?" put in Dorothy in surprise. "Don't say you have your own private ghost here!" she added, with a chuckle.

Basil, however, did not return her smile. "It's jolly serious," he told her. "You see, donkey's years ago the Manor House here used to be the headquarters of a smuggling gang. The most reckless of them all was a girl named Jess Stornaway, and the legend is that she still haunts the place."

"And has she been seen?" asked Dorothy, intrigued by this romantic story of the past.

"Not exactly, but there have been one or two disturbing happenings at the Manor House. Uncle's turned it into a kind of museum, you know. There are heaps of German war trophies on view there, and someone's been helping himself to them. But come on," he added. "Don't you worry. Let's see you settled in."

A smile replacing his worried frown, he unhooked a bunch of keys from the board on the wall, picked up Dorothy's suitcase, and led the way outside.

By now, the sun was almost set and the grounds were deserted, but they looked more beautiful than ever, and Dorothy drew in an excited breath, as she followed Basil along a gravel path, past a long row of green-and-white chalets, each with its own tiny private veranda.

"Despite everything, I'm going to enjoy myself here," she declared.

"That's the idea!" he approved, stopping before one of the chalets and fitting a key in the lock. "By rights, you're supposed to share a chalet," he added, "but I'm putting

you in on your own. You'll find it more comfortable. Well, how do you like it?" he asked, pushing open the door.

"Simply wizard!" cried Dorothy, her eyes sparkling, as she gazed around the chalet.

On one side was a comfortable-looking camp bed. At its head was a bookshelf filled with novels and magazines, and with a reading-lamp perched on top. On the other was a double wardrobe, a writing-table, and an arm-chair, while in an alcove was a washbasin with hot and cold water. There was a strip of carpet on the floor; gay chintz curtains at the windows; and on the table was a glass bowl of freshly cut roses.

Basil put down her suitcase. "I'll leave you to unpack now, but as soon as I've seen old Wilkins I'll come back and introduce you to the rest of the campers. All but the old fogies will be in the rec. hut, working up an appetite for supper. So long."

With a cheery wave of the hand, he closed the door and departed. Left alone, Dorothy stood there for a few moments, thinking of the queer position in which she found herself, then with a sigh opened her case and started to hang up her clothes.

Suddenly she gave a start. Though she had examined the contents of the case, she had not looked in the pockets of her clothes. Perhaps there she might find some clue to her past life.

Eagerly she started going through them, but one by one she tossed them aside disappointedly. All the pockets were empty. Right at the bottom of the case was a raincoat, and pessimistically she thrust her hand first into one pocket, then the other.

"Oh!" An involuntary gasp escaped her lips, for suddenly her fingers had closed around something which crackled.

Papers! Her heart thumping excitedly, she drew them out, to find that what the pocket contained was part of a long foolscap envelope, one end of which was jagged, as if it had been roughly torn off. In the envelope was a folded paper, and as she pulled it out something fell with a clatter to the floor. Wonderingly she picked it up, to stare at it with eyes which were wide with astonishment.

About four inches long, the object was made of metal, painted black and with a gilt border. Like the envelope, it seemed to have been cut in half. The part which lay on the palm of her hand looked like half of a crooked cross. She searched the envelope, but there was no sign of the other half. There was something vaguely familiar about the broken cross, and suddenly she realised what it was.

"A swastika!" she ejaculated. "Part of a German emblem! But what on earth's it doing in my raincoat? Why—"

Breaking off, she turned her attention to the paper she had drawn out of the envelope. It also had a ripped, ragged edge, and clearly half of it had been lost when the envelope had been torn across.

As she unfolded it, a fragment of notepaper fluttered to the ground, but for a moment or two she ignored it. Her attention was held by the parchment-like document in her hand. It was a faded map—very old by the look of it, and on it were cryptic figures and signs. It showed part of a rocky coastline, and something about it seemed strangely familiar.

"Why, I do believe it's a map of the coast here!" she exclaimed with a gasp. "Yes, there's Southward Ho marked on it. And this must be the Manor House. But where did I get it from, and what's become of the other half?"

Utterly baffled, she folded up the parchment, then, stooping, picked up the torn piece of notepaper which had fluttered to the ground. She saw that it was a fragment of a

letter, but only a few disjointed phrases were visible.

"For your own sake, as well as mine, you had better say nothing. Secrecy essential. Disastrous if . . ."

Her heart gave a startled leap as she read those words. Again some black, ominous cloud seemed to be settling over her, and again she had the feeling that hidden in her past life was some dark, alarming secret.

What could it be? And what was it the unknown writer of that letter had urged her to keep to herself?

As if stunned, she stood there, oblivious of the passing of time until a rat-tat on the chalet door roused her.

"I say, are you ready to be shown around?" asked a cheery voice, and she realised that it was Basil out on the veranda.

"Coming! Shant' be a moment!" she called, and, stuffing the broken swastika, the torn map and the other scrap of paper into her pocket, she hurried outside.

A CURIOUS FIND



"JUST a second, folks! I want to introduce our latest arrival!"

The noise was so great in the big recreation-room that Basil, standing in the doorway, had to shout.

At one end of the long hall a group of boys and girls were playing skittles. In the centre a game of table tennis was being hotly contested. A darts board was another centre of attraction, while around the radiogram another light-hearted group was watching a red-haired girl teaching a grinning boy the latest dance steps.

Dorothy, standing at the boy host's side, thought she had never seen such a jolly crowd of young people. Everyone was so obviously enjoying themselves.

What fun she would have here herself, she thought—if only she could drive away those vague fears which still filled her brain.

At Basil's shout the laughter ceased, and the boys and girls turned. For a moment they all stared curiously at the girl beside Basil, then eagerly they came forward.

One by one Dorothy was introduced to them. The red-haired girl, she discovered, was Molly Blair. Her dance partner was freckle-faced, mischievously-looking Tommy Simpson. Then a strikingly beautiful girl, dressed in an expensively-cut sun-suit, rather languidly took Dorothy's extended hand. This was Barbara Carstairs.

Basil reeled off so many names that Dorothy's head soon began to whirl. All of them seemed to welcome her, and when they learnt about her lost memory, first there was a stunned silence, then a chorus of sincere sympathy.

"Oh, what a shame!"

"You poor thing!"

"But don't worry," put in Molly Blair. "We'll make you forget your troubles."

"Rather—you bet!" grinned Tommy Simpson.

Only one girl failed to join in the friendly chorus—that was Esme Young, a thin-faced, rather malicious-looking girl with straight black hair parted in the middle. She gave a pout as she looked across at Dorothy.

"I don't know what this camp's coming to," she declared. "One queer thing happens after another. First there are burglaries at the Manor House, frightening the life out of us. Then a girl lands from nowhere, saying she's lost her memory. I don't know what my parents will say when they hear of all these funny goings on."

And with a disdainful shrug she turned away. This one unfriendly greeting made Dorothy flush, but Basil quickly ended the slight tension.

"I say, where's Archie?" he demanded, looking around.

Barbara Carstairs raised a languid hand. "Still looking for clues when I last saw him," she drawled.

"Rather! Laden down with detective gadgets he was!" put in Molly Blair, with a giggle. Then, seeing Dorothy's bewilderment, she chuckled. "Archie Speller is our pet detective," she explained. "He's absolutely crazy on it!"

"I'll say he is," grinned Tommy Simpson. "So you'd better look out, or he will be chasing across the countryside in search of your lost memory. Here, what about seeing how he's getting on?" he suggested. "He's bound to be prowling around the Manor House."

The suggestion met with enthusiastic approval, and, chucking at the memory of Archie's well-meant, but generally futile detective exploits, the whole crowd started streaming out through the doorway.

Basil turned to Dorothy. "Shall we join them?" he asked. "You'll like Archie. He's a bit of a chump, but a jolly decent chap."

Dorothy nodded. "I've never seen a detective at work," she said with a smile, as she followed him along the path leading to the Manor House.

By now it was getting dark, but the figure crouched on the entrance steps, examining the front door through a magnifying glass, seemed to be oblivious of the fact.

Archie Speller was a tall, lanky lad, with a head too big for his body, and blue eyes which glistened through horn-rimmed spectacles. At sight of the approaching holiday-makers he turned eagerly, a look of pride on his thin face.

"It's in the bag!" he announced dramatically.

"You don't say!" exclaimed Basil, staring down at the bulky haversack standing by the boy detective's feet.

Everyone laughed. It was clear to Dorothy that they all delighted in teasing the boy detective. He looked indignant.

"I didn't say I'd actually caught the miscreant," he protested. "In the bag is a technical expression. It means—well, that I've as good as solved the mystery."

"Then who is it who's been boning uncle's war trophies?" inquired Basil.

Archie coughed a little sheepishly.

"Well, I haven't actually narrowed down all the suspects yet," he confessed. "But it won't be long now. I've got two gilt-edged clues, and as the crook is a member of the camp—"

"What, you mean it's one of us?" cut in Esme Young indignantly. "Well, of all the cheek!"

The boy detective scowled. "This was an inside job, I tell you," he insisted. "And when I have followed up the two clues I've discovered— Here, take a look at this!"

Proudly he produced an envelope from his haversack and held it out.

"Red sand!" he announced dramatically.

"Red sand! And as soon as I find someone with red sand on his or her shoes I'll be able to apprehend the thief," he declared. "I found this sand on the floor, near where the trophies were stolen, and—"

He paused, his gimlet eyes suddenly fixed on Dorothy, then dramatically he pointed with a long forefinger. "Where were you last night?" he demanded.

"M-me?"

(Please turn to the back page.)



FALSE FRIEND OF THE *RIVER REVELLERS*

THEY MUST NOT DISCOVER HER

RITA CHALMERS and her chums of River House School joined forces with the boys of the near-by Grey Towers, under the leadership of Barry Howard, to enter a team, known as the River Revellers, for the forthcoming local regatta.

The River Revellers soon discovered that someone was secretly plotting against them.

The boys believed that the secret enemy was Rita's chum, Cherry Oakwood. Rita, however, knew that it was really Mr. Nevison, the popular young sportsmaster at the boys' school.

Thanks to the plotting of the secret enemy, Cherry was to be expelled, but managed to escape from the detention-room and apparently run away.

Rita discovered that really Cherry had been kidnapped. One morning she dived into the river to retrieve a brooch which contained a clue she believed might lead her to Cherry's whereabouts. As she rose above the water, the brooch in her hand, she heard voices, and saw, to her dismay, Mr. Nevison and the local squire approaching in a boat, on the look-out for a girl trespasser.

RITA'S heart turned cold with dismay as she swam softly among the rushes, watching the dark shadow of the approaching boat. Instinctively her fingers closed more tightly over the precious brooch she had retrieved from the river-bed.

Mr. Nevison's suave tones reached her ears. "The canoe belongs to River House School, sir—the name is painted on the gunwale. The girl who brought it here is undoubtedly trespassing in the grounds of the cafe. I suggest we keep watch."

"A good idea, Nevison," came the squire's gruff rejoinder.

Rita drew a sharp breath as she cautiously trod water, fearful of making the slightest splash that might attract attention. The boat was coming closer, nosing its way among the rushes.

Rita's hopes sank as she stared round her desperately. If she attempted to reach the bank she would almost surely be detected—and to swim out into the open would be to court even more certain disaster.

There was one chance only—a perilous chance—but Rita decided to take it.

By **RENEE FRAZER**

Drawing a deep breath she dived—down among the tangled weeds and rushes—striking out feverishly in the hope of gaining open water before she was forced to the surface.

The slight sound she made in diving, the faint movement among the reeds, might be put down to a water-rat, or other denizen of the river.

Even as she shot upwards again, she struck out instinctively to put the greatest distance possible between herself and the prowling boat.

As she cut the surface, taking a sobbing breath of life-giving air, Rita stared round her.

She could almost have cried aloud in her relief, had not caution come to her aid.

Her reckless dive had taken her clear of the rushes, and several yards from the bank. Her own canoe floated almost within her reach, screening her momentarily from the occupants of the other boat.

She could hear their now distant voices as she trod water, endeavouring to regain her breath.

"No sign of anything here," Mr. Nevison was saying. "I suggest we search the bank. The girl can't have gone far."

Rita's heart was pounding as she supported herself with one hand on the gunwale of her canoe, and ventured to peer round the side.

She saw the young sports master spring out of the boat, and turn to assist his older companion.

They set off among the bushes skirting the bank, and in a few moments were lost to sight.

It was Rita's chance. Her heart beating wildly, she drew herself up into the canoe and reached for the paddles.

The faint splash made by the paddles sounded terrifyingly loud to her ears. Her gaze was fastened anxiously on the bank as the canoe skimmed out into midstream.

Thank goodness the river was running strongly in the direction of the school. Even as Rita paddled desperately towards the bend, she threw a hurried glance over her shoulder—and her heart missed a beat as she saw the figures of the two searchers appear from the bushes.

As yet they had not noticed the absence of the canoe—but just as she was rounding

the bend she heard Mr. Nevison's distant shout.

A backward glance assured her that she could not have been seen—let alone recognized—as a clump of willows hid her from view. But the disappearance of the canoe had been discovered, and it would not be long before the angry squire and the treacherous young master were scouring the river in search of her.

Fortunately, the river was sheltered at this point and completely deserted. But ahead of her, beyond the next bend, she could hear distant, merry shouts.

The bathing party from the Towers! Rita caught in her breath sharply as she ceased paddling. In the excitement and suspense of her venture she had completely forgotten Barry's invitation to the swimming practice.

Then a gleam of hope crept into her eyes. The swimming party gave her a chance to hoodwink her pursuers—and Barry's invitation could be used as an alibi!

Paddling swiftly to the bank she hid the canoe among the dense rushes and scrambled out, hurriedly slipping on her bathing wrap and shoes.

Darting along the towpath, she came in sight of the boy swimmers, disporting themselves around a bathing-raft anchored in mid-stream.

Concealed among the bushes, Rita paused for a moment to regain her breath. Her appearance must be natural, and give no hint of any excitement or anxiety.

This was the moment, she decided, to examine the precious object for which she had risked so much.

With trembling fingers she took it from the pocket of her wrap—the quaint old brooch that belonged to Cherry.

Opening the secret aperture behind the cameo, she drew out the scrap of charred paper. Fortunately, the cameo-brooch was practically watertight, and the paper, though damp, had not been saturated by its long immersion.

Carefully unfolding it, she stared eagerly at the blurred, disjointed writing.

It was difficult to decipher, but as she scanned it her pulses quickened with amazement. No wonder Cherry had been excited—no wonder she had taken the risk of breaking out of the detention-room in order to follow up this vital clue!

For it threw a startling new light on the mystery surrounding her chum.

By the faded handwriting it appeared to have been written many years ago—by whom, Rita could not surmise. Yet it linked dramatically with the activities of the secret enemy:

"Proof—Oakwood's innocence—Island—sundial—destroy—all cost—does not suspect—"

Rita's heart thumped wildly as she re-read it. If only she could decipher those missing words!

This vitally concerned Cherry—or someone connected with her chum. And the clue to the mystery lay on the island, as she had suspected from the first.

Her thoughts flashed to the old picture she and Cherry had found—the picture of the island and sundial—signed with the name "Oakwood."

And the attempts of the secret enemy to set fire to the bushes in the clearing where the old sundial had once stood.

It all linked up!

But what was Mr. Nevison's purpose? That the young sports-master was the secret enemy, Rita knew, now, beyond a shadow of doubt.

He had shown his hand clearly at their last encounter, when she had accused him of having kidnapped her chum.

He had laughed at her—but she had seen

the fear in his eyes. And his effort to rob her of the vital brooch had clinched her suspicions.

He was holding Cherry a prisoner because she knew too much!

But—where was her chum hidden? The answer came to Rita in a flash as she stared at the telltale document.

The island! Come to think of it, it was the only possible place. It was banned to the public, and officially out-of-bounds to members of the two schools, except when engaged on rehearsals for the forthcoming regatta.

Rita's heart beat quickly as she refolded the precious paper and slipped it into the brooch.

Her first task was to rescue her chum! Then she and Cherry between them would unmask the smiling, treacherous young master—show him up to the squire and the admiring boys for the trickster that he was—

At this point her racing thoughts were interrupted as a chuckle reached her ears, and a hand fell heartily on her shoulder.

"Hallo, Rita! We're waiting for you!" exclaimed a cheery voice. "Why on earth are you hiding here?"

SWIFT PLANS



FOR a moment Rita froze, a startled cry on her lips—but a wave of relief swept over her as she turned to encounter a pair of laughing, grey eyes.

"Barry!" she gasped.

"So you decided to come along and join our swimming party, after all?" he asked.

Rita nodded, smiling a little unsteadily.

"Y-yes. I hope I'm not late."

"Not a bit!" rejoined Barry heartily, as he took her arm. "I told the chaps you might be along—and they thought it pretty sporting of you. Come on! Race you to the raft!"

Rita slipped off her wrap, carefully concealing the precious brooch. Even as she and Barry prepared to dive, she caught a glimpse of a boat appearing round the distant bend.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Barry, staring. "That looks like Nevison—and the squire!"

"Does—does it?" asked Rita, trying to speak lightly. "I expect they're out for a morning constitutional."

"I bet they'll be surprised to see you here!" chuckled Barry. "Here we go!"

They dived together, and Rita threw herself into the spirit of the race, trying to forget the anxiety that gripped her. In a few minutes they had reached the raft, almost neck and neck, to be greeted by cheery shouts.

"Well done, Rita!"

"Jolly good show!"

"You nearly beat me to it that time!" panted Barry, as he clung to the raft. "Hallo, sir! What do you think of our new pace-maker? We boys will have to look to our laurels," he added, grinning cheerfully at the interested occupants of the boat that had glided silently on to the scene.

Rita, brushing a tendril of hair out of her eyes, found herself looking into the handsome, mocking features of Mr. Nevison, the young sports-master.

Mr. Nevison eyed her curiously as he rested on his oars.

"You're keeping early hours, Rita," he remarked. "Been here long?"

"I invited her last night to come along and join us," said Barry promptly, "and I think she was jolly sporting to accept the challenge."

"Extremely!" agreed the young sports-master pleasantly, yet with a barb in his smooth tone that was evident to Rita's ears. "By the way," he added dryly, "the squire and I are looking for someone in a canoe—possibly a girl—who must have come along here from the direction of the river cafe. Have you boys seen anyone?"

Rita held her breath as she encountered Mr. Nevison's meaning stare.

"Not a soul, sir," declared Barry. "We've seen no one in a canoe, have we, Dan?"

That boy shook his head.
"Strange," murmured Mr. Nevison, biting his lip. "Very strange. I shall look further into this—"

He broke off as the squire stepped forward.
It seemed to Rita as though he made an effort to throw off his cares as he glanced benignly at the merry crowd disporting in the water.

"As the leaders of the Revellers seem to be present, I'll take this opportunity to have a few words with them."

"A good idea, sir," declared the sports-master, with false heartiness.

Interestedly the youthful swimmers gathered on the raft, with Rita and Barry well to the fore.

The squire was evidently moved as he cleared his throat.

"I don't wish to rake up the past," he said gruffly, "or to make more than a passing mention of the reckless girl who has caused us all so much trouble—"

Rita's hands tightly clenched as she stared at the speaker. The squire's expression was kindly as he glanced in her direction.

"And so," he went on, "I should like to arrange for a final grand rehearsal—without loss of time—as I expect shortly to be away on business. I hope to return in time for the regatta itself. Now—how soon can this rehearsal be arranged?"

The boys exchanged glances, and Barry looked questioningly at Rita.

Her heart was beating quickly as she returned his glance. The sooner the final rehearsal could be arranged, the better for her project.

The general excitement and activity would be a cover for her own movements—and the secret enemy would have less time in which to complete his plotting.

"To-morrow?" she whispered.
Barry looked startled for a moment, then a smile crossed his face as he glanced at the squire.

"As soon as you like, sir," he replied promptly. "We'll be ready to-morrow."

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the astonished squire. "And where do you propose holding it?"

"I suggest—the island!" exclaimed Rita quickly. "We've rehearsed there before, and we all know it."

"Hear, hear!" agreed Barry.
The young sports-master bit his lip, forcing a smile.

"I would have suggested that myself," he replied smoothly, "but I've already arranged for a surveyor to inspect the island, with a view to erecting that new pavilion you have ordered, sir."

The squire coughed, though he did not look displeased as a murmur of interest went up from the youthful audience.

"Now you're letting the cat out of the bag, Nevison!" he chuckled. "Yes, I've ordered the new pavilion," he admitted, in response to eager questions, "anticipating your success in the regatta. Should my hopes of the Revellers' prowess be justified, I am prepared to overlook the recent trouble—and the pavilion and island will become the joint property of your two schools—"

His further words were drowned by a loud cheer.

Rita's eyes were shining as she saw Mr. Nevison's secret mortification, but obviously the squire had as good as made up his own mind.

"The island it is, then," went on the squire, good-humouredly. "Let the youngsters have their way, Nevison. I shall see the headmaster and headmistress, and arrange for a special half-holiday to-morrow—"

Another cheer greeted his promise, and Mr. Nevison's handsome face was pale with suppressed venom as he encountered Rita's challenging stare.

But he quickly regained his composure, and listened with his usual cool smile as the final arrangements were quickly made between Rita, Barry, and the squire.

It was Rita's suggestion that she and Barry should make a final inspection of the site that evening, to make sure there would be no hitch in their arrangements.

Thrilled with anticipation, she hurried back to school to break the exciting news to the girls, and to make her own secret plans.

Twice during the day she was reprimanded by the Form-mistress for her inattention. But how could she concentrate on her work, she asked herself, when her mind was full of this evening's visit to the island, and the possible results of the search she had mentally planned to carry out?

The day seemed to be endless, and it was with a mixed feeling of relief and excitement that she at last heard the bell ringing.

Quickly she collected her books together, and hurried to her study. There she tidied herself, and after snatching a hasty tea, left the school and hurried off to keep her appointment with Barry.

Barry was waiting for her on the towpath at the appointed time, a skiff moored in readiness, and he hurried forward with his usual cheery smile.

"All ready?" he asked. "Splendid! I've brought the draft of the pageant plans with me, and we can check up on them as we go over the island."

Rita's heart was beating quickly as she took her seat in the boat. Barry had no inkling of the dual purpose of her visit or how much depended on it.

She wished she could confide in him—for in Cherry's absence he was her only real friend—but his stubborn loyalty to the young sports-master forced her to keep silent.

She listened to Barry's eager outline of to-morrow's plans as they crossed to the bank, where he moored the boat to a gnarled tree, and assisted her to alight.

"Let's have another look at the old summer-house first," suggested Barry. "We should be able to stage our invasion show from there, using it as a sort of fort."

That was exactly what Rita had wanted. She had intended to commence her own search at that end of the island—the most likely spot for a secret hiding-place.

The ruined sundial would be a starting point. It was clearly mentioned on the document Cherry had found.

While Barry went to investigate a safe spot for landing, Rita lingered by the summer-house, anxiously seeking a trail.

But the ground had been trampled by many feet since her last visit, and she wandered farther afield—into a tangled thicket of trees and shrubs, interspersed with rocks.

This part of the island was rarely used, owing to the rough, uneven ground.

Yet she was convinced that someone had come this way recently. In several places the bushes were broken, and the tangled undergrowth trampled underfoot.

Emerging suddenly into the open, she stared round her breathlessly. She had never been here before. Hemmed in by the dense trees was a curious grotto, its entrance half-filled with fallen rocks and earth and overgrown by weeds.

As she peered into the dark opening, her heart racing wildly, she saw unmistakable footprints on the soft earth—and something else.

Scrabbled on the smooth surface of one of the rocks were three words: "Help! Come—quickly!" And they were in Cherry's handwriting!

THE VANISHED MESSAGE



WITH a stifled gasp, Rita dropped on her knees by the boulder and stared at the dramatic, unexpected message.

"Cherry!" she breathed.

Her suspicions had been well-founded. Cherry had been brought to the island—a prisoner! And somehow she had contrived to leave that desperate message—in the forlorn hope of its being found by a friend.

Her pulses racing, Rita ventured into the dark mouth of the grotto—only to find her way barred by a seemingly impassable boulder.

"Cherry!" called Rita brokenly.

"Che-r-r-y!" came the mocking echoes.

There was a rustle in the bushes behind her, and Rita turned eagerly.

"Barry, is that you?" she gasped. "Quickly! Come and look!"

"Certainly, Rita!" came the pleasant rejoinder, as a tall figure stepped smilingly from the shadows. "Can I be of any help?"

Rita shrank back, her heart turning cold, as she stared into the mocking features of young Mr. Nevison.

"You!" she gasped.

"At your service, Rita—as always," rejoined the sports-master smilingly. "I did not expect this pleasure!"

"Didn't you?" breathed Rita scornfully. "We'll soon see! Barry!" she called clearly. "Barry!"

The young sports-master made a hurried move as though to silence her—but, thinking better of it, he stood back with a sarcastic smile.

"Hallo, Rita! Where are you?" came Barry's surprised voice, from among the trees.

"Here!" called Rita breathlessly. "Quickly!" She could hear Barry push his way through the undergrowth—and Mr. Nevison's soft laugh.

The next moment the boy appeared, flushed, and obviously anxious.

"Why, Rita, what's happened?" he panted. "I've been looking for you everywhere—"

"Rita's been doing a little exploring on her own, Barry," interposed Mr. Nevison's pleasant voice, as he strolled from the mouth of the grotto.

Barry started, his face lighting up.

"Hallo, sir! You here?"

"Just came over with a hamper of costumes from the squire," explained the young sports-master casually. "I heard Rita call, and thought she might be in difficulties."

"I've got something to show you, Barry," breathed Rita, ignoring Mr. Nevison. "I want to know what you think of it. Look!"

She pointed to the boulder lying near the entrance.

Barry stepped over to it, the young sports-master following. A puzzled expression crossed the boy's face.

"I don't see anything, Rita—" he began.

But just then a broken, dismayed gasp escaped Rita's lips. She was staring at the boulder. The scrawled, desperate message was no longer visible. It had been erased as her back was turned, and all that was visible now was a series of illegible scratches.

Once again Mr. Nevison had tricked her.

White-faced, she turned to Barry.

"There—there was something there, Barry!" she gasped. "The word 'help.' I'm certain that there's someone hidden on this island!"

She did not mention Cherry's name. At the moment is might cause complications.

But if only she could enlist Barry in her search she was convinced they would find her imprisoned chum—or some evidence that even the young sports-master's cunning could not refute.

"Someone—hidden on the island?" exclaimed Barry, staring at her in amazement.

Mr. Nevison laughed tolerantly.

"It's Rita's romantic imagination, Barry," he intervened. "This part of the island is dangerous, as you know—the ground has subsided more than once. I can't imagine why anyone should be hidden here."

Rita clenched her hands.

"I want you to help me search, Barry!" she breathed desperately. "I know I'm right!"

"Another time, Rita," put in Mr. Nevison hastily. "I'm afraid there's a storm coming up, and I've got the valuable costumes in an open boat. I'd like you two to give me a hand with them into the marquee."

"Of course, sir!" said Barry quickly. "Look here, Rita—Mr. Nevison's right. We can't waste time now. If there's anything in your idea we'll organise a search-party to-morrow after the rehearsal. Come on! It's starting to rain."

He took her arm firmly, and Rita, meeting Mr. Nevison's cool smile, realised that it would be useless to resist.

Alone she could do nothing, but with a search-party from the school they would discover the secret of the island, in spite of the sports-master's efforts to prevent them.

It was raining heavily as they emerged from the trees, and Barry hurried to assist Mr. Nevison in unloading the valuable hamper from the boat.

The squire had kept his promise, and already the marquee was piled with hampers of costumes and properties for the pageant rehearsal.

They secured the flap and hurried to their boat, Mr. Nevison accompanying them as far as the landing stage.

"To-morrow afternoon, Rita!" exclaimed Barry, as he gripped her hand.

Rita nodded, forcing a smile, but her heart was filled with anxiety as she encountered Mr. Nevison's glance.

Anything might happen between now and to-morrow. Yet Mr. Nevison could not stop the rehearsal, as it had been the squire's expressed wish. And she would keep Barry up to his promise.

The next day dawned brilliantly, with a clear sky—a good omen for the pageant rehearsal.

To the delight of the girls, Miss Lester granted them the morning off for their preparations, and for once even the grumblers were silenced.

Eagerly Rita led her team down to the boat-house, where they collected their paddles and oars and awaited the arrival of the boys.

Barry and his team turned up in high fettle for the coming contest.

"Mr. Nevison will be here with the squire any minute now," said Barry cheerfully, as he glanced at his watch. "The squire's as keen as any of us to—Hallo! Here they come!" he added, waving as a car approached the landing-stage.

A cheer went up from the boys and girls—a cheer that died away as the car pulled up and the young sports-master sprang out, followed by the squire.

For Mr. Nevison's boyish face looked grave, and the squire's usually jovial expression was clouded with anger.

They strode up to the landing-stage, to encounter the dismayed, surprised glances of the assembled teams.

"You young people can put your boats and oars away and return to your schools!" said the squire sternly. "Something has happened—a scandalous act on the part of one of the girls—that compels me reluctantly to withdraw my promise. I shall speak to your headmaster and headmistress with a view to banning the regatta—and in future the island is out of bounds to all of you!"

What has happened? What does the squire mean? There are exciting developments in next Friday's chapters of this fine serial. So don't miss your **GIRLS' CRYSTAL**.

The Merry-makers at College



By DAPHNE GRAYSON

NAT PIGGOT ENJOYS HIMSELF

"IT'S a shame," Sally Warner declared warmly, "the way they guy Mr. Renway!"

"He's too soft with Piggot & Co.," admitted her chum, Don Weston, but he couldn't help grinning expectantly.

Mr. Renway was a new tutor to Roxburgh Co-Ed. College, and he was also the youngest, with a shy, gentle manner that constantly made him the butt for practical jokes. He was taking French this morning, but the attention of the class was centred eagerly upon Nat Piggot, the notorious japer of K House.

Piggot had hurried to the front with unusual willingness, and was wiping the blackboard before the lesson began.

"It was quite unnecessary, Piggot, but thank you," Mr. Renway said in his nervous but courteous way.

He took up his chalk and moved to the board.

"Now if you will please pay attention, everybody," he began, "I will write down a sentence in French—"

He stopped, bewildered, while a spasm of mirth rippled through the class. His chalk was gliding over the board without making the faintest mark.

"I—I thought you cleaned this blackboard, Piggot?" he stammered.

"Yes, sir," Piggot said solemnly. "I polished it specially for the lesson, sir."

"P-polished it?"

"Yes, sir! With the best french polish!"

Sally didn't join in the general mirth. Her sympathy went out to the young tutor in a warm flood. He had taken more than his share of chipping, day after day, and he'd taken it like a sport. He was a jolly good lecturer, and it was time he was given a break.

"That's enough, Piggy, you've had your little joke," she whispered sharply to Piggot.

"Hear, hear!" It was her chum Johnny Briggs who echoed her. "Lay off now, Piggy!"

But Piggot hadn't finished yet. Behind his back he was grabbing a box from his chum Sidney Fiske.

"There must be something wrong with those

chalks, Mr. Renway!" he exclaimed. "Try these, sir!"

And he handed him that innocent-looking box. For a moment the tutor eyed the box doubtfully, and then he lifted the lid.

BANG! A firework exploded, and the contents of the box burst over Mr. Renway, smothering him with powdered chalk. In his startled alarm the tutor backed against his desk, knocking a pile of books to the floor. There came a roar of laughter from Piggot & Co., then as a bell rang signalling the end of the lecture period, they hurried out of the room, leaving Mr. Renway standing there covered with powdered chalk and with a helpless look on his face.

Sally, running forward, picked up his mortar-board, which had also fallen to the ground, then seized a brush from the cupboard.

"Let me brush you down," she said. "I think you've been a real sport to take all this guying in such jolly good part, but you've got to put your foot down, sir—hard!"

He gazed at her in startled confusion. For a moment she felt embarrassed by her own temerity. Then he seemed to read the very real sympathy in her eyes.

"Thank you, Miss Warner. I—I know you mean well," he said unsteadily, "but it's no good. I just can't cope with fellows like Piggot. I've failed."

"Not a bit of it, sir!" Sally exclaimed, as she brushed the powdered chalk off his gown. "All you need is to take a firm hand, and no one will respect you more for it than Piggot and his kind."

"Firmness, yes!" And he heaved a weary sigh. "That's where I fail, and they know it. I suppose I'm weak, Miss Warner, but I can't overcome it. It's my nature. It seems"—he paused, and looked away from her in abject worry—"it seems to me that I shall have to hand in my resignation."

"Resign! Let them badger you out of your post, Mr. Renway!" cried Sally. "Oh, you mustn't give way like that! Everyone likes you. Even Piggot & Co. like you. They wouldn't jape you if you weren't so popular as you are. They're all decent chaps, truly, and they know you're a decent chap. But

you've got to stand up to them! You're master, and you've got to show them you're master!"

He looked up into her face wistfully, a wan smile trembling on his lips.

"The trouble, Sally, is that I can't domineer and master other fellows, and I never could," he told her with simple candour. "When I was a student myself japers like Piggot and Fiske used to torment the life out of me, but I couldn't hold my own against them. Funny thing, my brother was just the opposite," he confided boyishly, "although we're twins. He was the best amateur boxer in the state; he loved a scrap, and I've never known anyone get the better of him yet. But they took it out of me instead. I was easy. I put up with it till in the end they always tired of ragging me. If I thought it would be the same here—" And he sighed.

"Of course it will," Sally assured him stoutly. "They'll tire of this monkeying before you do, Mr. Renway. Especially if you show them they're just making fools of themselves."

"But how can I?" he asked. "It's no good talking to them."

"That all depends," murmured Sally, who'd already decided that she would do the talking herself to Piggot & Co. "But why not turn the laugh against them? Pretend their little japes are accidents, and order them politely to go down on their knees and scrub up the split ink or whatever it is. They wouldn't dare disobey, you know," she added with a flash of insight. "You've got personality, Mr. Renway."

"Personality?" he quizzed.
"Rather!" Sally insisted warmly. "You've made everybody respect you because you're quiet and courteous, and you could make Piggot and his crew do whatever you liked without even raising your voice. That quiet way of yours is enormously effective. It's sheer personality."

"It's very encouraging to hear you say this, Sally," he said, brightening.

"It's true," Sally assured him. "You don't know your own powers, Mr. Renway."

There was no vanity in the wistful smile he gave her, but he was truly grateful, for she had restored his faltering confidence.

"You've done me a lot of good, Sally," he said softly. "I can't tell you how much I appreciate it. It's been heavy weather for me, and there was no one I could talk to like this. I was beginning to feel I'd have to resign. And that was a worry, because—because, frankly, I need the salary and I can't afford to throw it away."

Sally broke in impulsively at the tutor's words.

"Oh, no, Mr. Renway," she cried, unconsciously placing a hand on his arm. "Please don't think of doing anything like that."

"But I'm not at all keen on remaining at the college to be the constant victim of all these practical jokes."

"You'll love Roxburgh when you've been here a little longer, and you'll even love our scallywag japers," said Sally. "You're only finding it tough, Mr. Renway, because you don't know us yet."

At that moment a step sounded outside, and both turned as the door opened. Sally caught a fleeting glimpse of the Dean. Then—

Crash! A fire-bucket clattered over at a jerk from the door, and a great flood of water went swishing across the floor.

"Bless my soul!" The Dean jumped aside, his boots drenched, and the edge of his gown dripping wet.

"A booby trap!" he cried angrily, and his eyes glowered from Sally to the young tutor. "Can't you stop these fool japes, Renway? You let the students make a constant butt of you for their practical jokes, and you seem to have no control over them whatever! I'm thoroughly disappointed in you! Are you a complete failure, incapable of keeping order?"

A PLAN TO JAPE THE JAPERS



IT was a shock to Sally, and a distressing setback to young Mr. Renway. Desperately she tried to defend him before the Dean. "I'm ever so sorry, sir, but Mr. Renway was busy, and the joke must have been meant for me."

"Oh, I've no doubt you know plenty about it!" the Dean cut her short, doing her an unintentional injustice. "I shall stop this nonsense sharply if Mr. Renway cannot. You may go, Miss Warner!"

Her cheeks burning, Sally walked out of the hall, leaving the young tutor to face a stern admonition from the Dean.

It was not only unfair, it was an unwitting injury that Piggot had done Mr. Renway by his latest foolery. He had jeopardised his post—a post that he would have resigned already had he not admittedly needed the salary. Indignation broiled in Sally as she rejoined her chums on their way to lunch, and recounted what had happened.

"Piggot's an ass!" Don said, exasperated. "He'll do anything to raise a laugh, and he doesn't realise that he's doing harm to poor little Kennie."

"No, but he's got to realise it!" Sally said, set-lipped. "I'm going to talk to Piggy, and if he won't see reason I'll get you and Johnny to come along and enforce the argument."

"There he is now!" Johnny said, nudging her eagerly as they entered the café.

"What about applying the force first?" Piggot & Co. were sitting round the large K House table, all whispering together in gleeful excitement. Sally eyed them narrowly and decided that this was not the moment to intrude. It would only lead to more ragging and a shindy between the two Houses.

"Leave it to me, Johnny!" she cautioned him hastily. "I'll talk to Piggy afterwards—alone!"

There was no chance during lunch. She noticed that Piggot & Co. hurried out as soon as they had bolted their meal, still chortling with secret glee.

"What are they on to now?" murmured Don suspiciously.

"There's something in the wind," quizzed Sally.

"Might be a House jape. We'll be close on your tail if you want us, Sally."

They hid themselves watchfully in the bushes, when Sally set off to the rival K House quarters, to Nat Piggot's chalet. But there was no sign of Piggot there. Sally sat down on the steps of the terrace to wait for him.

Suddenly she heard his impish laugh, and he came hurrying round the corner with Sidney Fiske. Sally jumped up sharply. Piggot was carrying a bundle half-hidden under his jacket.

"Just you wait till Friday night, Sidney!" he was chortling. "This'll be the biggest scream we ever—"

Then swiftly he broke off as he saw Sally. With a lightning movement he tried to hide that bundle. But she had already seen it.

It was a tutor's cap and gown.
"What's the idea, Piggy?" she asked with sharp suspicion.

"Idea?" he bluffed. "You flatter me, Sally. I thought it was only J House who ever got an idea—"

"Look here, Piggy, you can play all the House japes you like, but you've got to stop guying Mr. Renway!" Sally burst out. "What's that cap and gown for? What—"

But Nat Piggot was not listening. There had come an urgent call from his chalet, and together with Sidney Fiske he went hurrying across. Next moment the door closed behind them.

Biting her lip, Sally rejoined Don & Co., who had heard everything from behind the bushes. "I don't know whether they're on to Rennie

again, but it looks like it," she said in grim dismay. "They haven't got that tutor's clothes for nothing."

"Piggy said something about Friday night," Don said, gleaming-eyed. "Anything happening on Friday?"

"Gee! That's when the wax models are coming for the Art class!" exclaimed Johnny. "I'll bet a million dollars Piggy's thought up something funny with those models."

"But if that's the game, Mr. Renway wouldn't be brought into it," said Sally hopefully but perplexedly. "He doesn't have anything to do with the Art models, does he, Fay?"

Fay Manners shook her head; she was the Art enthusiast amongst the chums.

"They're just a few wax figures, presented by a local society, and the Dean's going to unveil them on Saturday," she said. "Sounds to me as if Piggy's got a jape with them against J House. No need to worry about Mr. Renway—he doesn't have anything to do with the Art class or the models."

Sally wasn't so sure. Why had Piggy got hold of that cap and gown unless it was to jape a tutor? And what easier victim could he choose than Mr. Renway? Sally's fears persisted, and she was determined to save the young tutor from another hoax. How could she find out just what Piggy's little game was?

The next two days yielded no clue. Mr. Renway was only mildly ragged each time he took classes, but it was always Piggy & Co. who practised their tricks upon him, and Sally felt a growing uneasiness that he was their chosen victim for Friday night.

When lecture ended on Friday, she lingered behind with him on the excuse of helping him put away the books.

"Praps you'd like me to finish clearing up for you, Mr. Renway, then you could get out early," she suggested brightly.

He smiled at her gratefully. "It's very kind of you, Sally," he said, "but I can't get out this evening. It's my first spell of House duty. I'm on Rounds."

Sally's heart gave a jump. "Rounds" was a duty taken by a junior tutor each evening. It made him responsible for touring all round the college after dark to see that everything was safely locked up and in order.

"I shall be extra busy," Mr. Renway told her, "because there are some wax models arriving this evening, and the Dean wants me to set them out carefully in the Art-room in readiness for his unveiling ceremony tomorrow."

"What time are you expecting them, Mr. Renway?" Sally asked, suppressing her excitement.

"I shan't know till they arrive," he said. "But I do want to make a good job of them, Sally," he confided with a rather shaky little smile, "because it's a chance to get me back into the Dean's favour."

"Yes, rather, and jolly good luck, Mr. Renway!" breathed Sally.

He must have wondered why she left him in such a curious hurry, but there was a whole lot to be done. Sally's suspicions of Piggy & Co. were now a certainty. It was Mr. Renway they were planning to jape. But what exactly was their plan? How was it to be scotched?

She raced off with her news to Don & Co., and the four of them were tightly concealed under the veranda of Piggy's chalet when he returned from tea.

It was a painfully cramped position. It was enough, as Johnny said with a groan, to choke him off eavesdropping for the rest of his life. Hours went by before they at last met with their reward.

Sidney Fiske and a crowd of other K-ites went pouring into the chalet, and all raised their voices in gloating applause.

"Piggy, you're marvellous! You look like old Rennie to the very life!"

Sally craned her eye to a chink in the

floor. There in the chalet stood Piggy, clad in the tutor's cap and gown, and wearing a wig and make-up that did indeed give him an uncannily resemblance to young Mr. Renway.

"Now you know the programme, chaps," he said in hoarse excitement. "The first thing is to get Rennie out of the way. That's easy. You can't go wrong once he starts on his rounds. He doesn't know the lay of the coll., and I've made a slight alteration on his chart. He'll go marching into the boiler shed thinking it's the book store—"

"And there he'll stay!" giggled Fiske. "He'll find the door jammed when he tries to get out—owing to your having locked him in," grinned Piggy. "The rest of you will wait for me in the Art-room. I shall go down to the gates in these togs, and sign for the models when they arrive. Then we'll arrange them better than Rennie ever could. The Dean will be quite overcome when he unveils them tomorrow. We'll paint their faces with moustaches, and—"

Sally & Co. did not wait to hear any more. Softly they stole out of hiding. Now that they knew the details of Piggy's latest jape, they knew what to do. They would turn the jape against him.

"All we shall need for Piggy," whispered Sally, "is an old sack—"

"And a wheelbarrow to cart him back to K," breathed Don.

They took up their hiding-places as soon as it was dark, in the shrubbery near the gates. They hadn't long to wait. Piggy was a fast worker when it came to a jape. Footsteps sounded on the gravel path, and Sally gave the boys an excited nod.

An unsuspecting figure loomed up in the gloom, carefully garbed in gown and mortar-board. Don and Johnny crouched in readiness, holding a grimy coalsack between them.

"Now!" Sally gave a gleeful shout. "Bonnet him, boys!"

It was timed to a nicety. The boys pounced, the sack enveloped their unguarded quarry, and his yells were muffled before they were uttered. Sally dashed out with the wheelbarrow and pushed it behind his knees.

Bump! and he landed backwards in the barrow with his feet waving in the air.

With Don and Johnny pushing the barrow, they rushed it at a gallop over the bumpy ground, straight for the Art-room where Piggy's cronies were eagerly gathered.

"Are you fellows waiting for some dummies?" cried Sally, throwing open the door in high glee. "Here's the first one!"

"The prize comic!" chuckled Don and Johnny, tipping their victim out of the wheelbarrow. "Have a good laugh at him, K! He enjoys japing like a duck enjoys—"

Their voices smothered away. Sally's laughter suddenly choked in her throat. The victim staggered up from the floor, struggling free of that grimy sack—but it wasn't Nat Piggy! It was Mr. Renway!

"Sally"—his voice was only a whisper, drowned by the roar of hilarity from K House—"Sally, that wasn't fair," he said with an agony of scorn in his eyes. "I trusted you, and you're as bad as the worst of them!"

A SURPRISE FOR NAT PIGGY & CO.



WORDS failed Sally as she perceived her blunder. The cruel humiliation of the young tutor was nothing to her own sorrow.

"I didn't mean," she tried to tell him in suffocated tones, "I didn't mean it for you, Mr. Renway. I thought—"

"We thought it was Piggy, sir," gasped Johnny and Don.

But it was doubtful if Mr. Renway even heard them. He was a tutor, with a tutor's position to maintain, and he could only feel

that his dignity had been deliberately dealt its last blow—by Sally! His pale face was grief-stricken. She ran to help him when his trembling hands tried to remove the coal-grimed gown and mortarboard.

"Let me take these, Mr. Renway. I'll clean them. Do—do believe me, it was a horrible mistake," she pleaded brokenly.

He didn't speak. Sally hurried to her chalet and hid the things away. She met Piggot as she returned across the campus. Piggot had removed his own disguise, and was gleaning over the turn events had taken.

"I knew, Sally Warner!" he taunted her, shaking with mirth. "I knew you were hiding in the shrubbery. I spotted you just in time. Gee, this was better than my own little jape—the way you pounced out on old Rennie—"

But Sally wasn't listening. Her heart felt stifled. How could she make Mr. Renway understand? How could she restore his faith in her?

It was an hour later before she saw him again. The wax models had arrived, and Mr. Renway was quietly arranging them in the Art-room for the Dean's ceremony. Sally stole inside to him.

"Please, Mr. Renway—please may I help you?" she began softly.

"I'd rather you didn't, thank you," he answered, without looking at her.

The hurt had gone even deeper than she realised. There was something in the young tutor's face which spelt not only unhappiness, but utter defeat.

"Mr. Renway, I do feel so terribly sorry about this evening," Sally declared. "It was all a shocking mistake. I'll never forgive myself for it, but I mistook you in the dark for someone else. It was a jape against K House. I didn't dream it was you. Will you please let me explain?"

Breathlessly she told him all as best she could, without giving away Nat Piggot's real design, yet she noticed that his face didn't change. He scarcely appeared to be listening.

"It doesn't matter how it happened, Miss Warner," he said wearily. "It has shown me again that I haven't the respect of any of you, only your ridicule, and it leaves me in despair."

"You could have the last laugh, Mr. Renway, by gating the lot of us—you have the authority to do it," Sally said earnestly.

He shook his head.

"My mind is made up. I know what I must do," he muttered.

There was no consoling him yet, Sally realised, with a pang. That ribald laughter was too fresh in his memory. She helped him with the models until the task was finished, and quietly he thanked her at the end, without another word about that unhappy episode.

Next morning it cheered Sally a lot to see the Dean carry out the unveiling ceremony with due decorum. It would have been a very different kettle of fish if Piggot's jape hadn't been scotched. She spent the afternoon cleaning Mr. Renway's gown and mortarboard, then with a light heart she carried them along to his study, feeling that he would have fully got over his dejection by now.

A shock awaited her. She was entering the tutor's wing when she met Mr. Renway hurrying out, his coat over his arm, his expression drawn and preoccupied.

"I was just bringing your cap and gown back, Mr. Renway," Sally began, a tentative smile on her lips. "I've given them a good cleaning, and they're fine now."

"Oh!" He looked at her quickly, and she saw his colour warm. "Oh, thank you, that was very kind of you!"

"Am I forgiven, Mr. Renway?" she pleaded softly. "You do believe that it was all a mistake, don't you?"

"Yes, yes, of course!" His hand went out to her in a boyish, embarrassed little grip. "I know you were only trying to help me, Sally,

and I shall look back on you as my one friend in Roxburgh who really understood me."

"Look back—", Sally's heart gave a thud. "What do you mean, Mr. Renway?"

"I'm leaving, Sally," he said unsteadily. "I wrote to my brother last night, telling him of my decision. It is the only honest thing I can do since I have failed in my post."

"But—but you haven't failed—" Sally began, aghast.

"I am paid to maintain order and discipline, and I have failed," he put in flatly. "I am meeting my brother at Denver now to talk matters over, and afterwards I shall hand in my resignation to the Dean. Believe me, Sally, I would have been happy here if they had all been as kind as you." Then his hand tightened over hers, and he was gone.

A mist blurred Sally's eyes. She moved shakily into his study. She laid the gown and mortarboard on his chair, and it came to her with a sense of dismay that Roxburgh was losing a true friend in young Philip Renway. Everyone liked him. His kindly patience and scholarly learning were just what everyone needed in the vital matter of getting through their exams. His only weakness was that he was too gentle, too soft-hearted, to exact a firm measure of discipline.

A photo gazed up at her from his desk. A portrait that might have been Philip Renway himself, except that the chin was squarer and the eyes held a more pugnacious gleam. "Jolly good luck—Steve" it was signed. It would be his twin brother, of course, Sally recollected. The boxer.

Brrrrrrrr!—the telephone bell rang as she was gazing at the photo.

"Hallo!" Listlessly Sally picked up the receiver. "Who is that, please?"

"I want to speak to Mr. Renway," a resonant voice answered. "This is his brother Stephen."

"But—" Sally gave a start. "But Mr. Renway's out, sir. He's gone to Denver to meet you."

"Gone already?" And she heard a note of sharp dismay in the other's voice. "But I wanted to speak to him first—urgently. I'm worried about him. I had a letter from him this morning which—I say, miss, are you his secretary? Do you happen to know anything about it?"

Sally's gaze was fixed upon the portrait of the speaker, with his fighter's chin and his pugnacious eyes. She heard the anxious, confiding tone in his voice, and a wild idea leapt into her mind.

"No, Mr. Renway, I'm not your brother's secretary, but I do know something about that letter he wrote you," she said excitedly. "You don't want him to leave Roxburgh, do you? And, believe me, we don't—he's one of the best. I'm going to ask you if you'll please listen to me for a jiffy. It may sound crazy, but I guess I can see a jolly fine way for you to help your brother."

NAT PIGGOT and Sidney Fiske were crouching in gleeful ecstasy in a dark cubbyhole in the college basement. Hiding in the next recess were their fellow-japers, Gerald Glisson and Tony Fry. Before them stretched a dark, cellar-like passage which was used for storing books and stationery.

"We'll give old Rennie the scare of his life!" throbbed Fiske, eagerly nursing a bundle of fireworks.

"Any minute now!" gloated Piggot, who was swathed in a ghostly white sheet. "We'd have missed this chance, chaps, if I hadn't overheard Sally Warner talking."

But Piggot's ears were large, and he had plainly overheard Sally saying that Mr. Renway was coming down to this basement at six o'clock to sort out a quantity of stationery. He had even heard Sally mention that she didn't want the news to get round in case

(Please turn to the back page.)



The MYSTERY of the PHANTOM PARROT

(Continued
from
page 224.)

One of the great sails, long disused, had been released from its fastening ropes, and the huge boom was swinging towards him as a hideous peal of laughter rang out across the ship!

THE VANISHED PICTURE



IN a flash Noel realised his peril. There was only one chance of escape—a desperate chance.

With a swift glance towards the nearest mast, the young detective sprang for his life.

His fingers clutched desperately at the rigging, breaking his fall, but nearly wrenching pain caused a wave of faintness to sweep over him, but with a supreme effort he managed to retain some kind of hold on the rope as he slid dizzily towards the deck.

There was a sickening thud, and Noel lost consciousness.

It might have been minutes or hours later that he opened his eyes dazedly, with conflicting recollections of a cool hand on his forehead—a pale, haunting face bending over him.

But there was nothing there now except the moonlit deck and the masts towering above.

Then he became aware that he was lying on a heap of tarpaulin that had broken his fall, and his head was pillowed on a folded ship's blanket, covered by a red silk scarf.

So he had not been dreaming! He had not imagined the girl's warning cry, nor that white, tragic face.

He sat up unsteadily, gazing round him. His glance fastened on the swinging boom that had so nearly cost him his life, and his eyes hardened.

That had not been an accident!

Noel stumbled to his feet, bruised and badly shaken. His first care was to examine the ropes and pulleys that operated the mainsail, and a grim ejaculation escaped his lips.

The rope securing the boom had been cut near the pulley-wheel. Someone had made a deliberate attempt to silence him—for good.

Noel lit a cigarette to steady his nerves and thought quickly. The mystery of the spectral voice had taken an even more sinister turn. This treacherous attempt upon his life had been made by the owner of the phantom voice. And was that elusive "phantom" still aboard?

Pulling himself together, Noel returned to the gangway and glanced down at the patch of tar. A soft whistle escaped his lips as he bent closer. Indented in the tar were the clear impressions of two totally different footprints.

One had been made unmistakably by a girl's high-heeled shoe. The other was more curious—and a strange gleam crept into the young detective's eyes as he examined it.

On the deck he found more traces of tar, and these he followed to the cabin hatch.

The hatch was open, and Noel cautiously descended the stairs, revolver in hand.

The door of the state-room stood ajar, the pale moonlight streaming into the corridor. Noel kicked it open and entered quickly, imagining that he heard a faint scuffling sound in the shadows.

"Stand where you are!" he rapped.

But the moonlight revealed a deserted cabin—and a blank wall where a picture had once hung.

The portrait of the villainous old sea captain and his parrot had vanished!

Noel pulled up sharply, momentarily taken aback by the discovery.

The picture itself had been valueless—an amateurish daub of no intrinsic worth. Yet once before it had been moved, and now it seemed to have been spirited away, coinciding with the sound of the phantom voice.

With the aid of his torch, which luckily had escaped being broken in his fall, Noel carried out a careful search of the cabin.

It was clear that the mystery was in some way centred round the old captain's state-room, and the missing portrait.

But his search proved fruitless, except for a scrap of paper he found lying near an old oak settle.

He examined it hopefully, but a grunt of disappointment escaped him as he saw that it was merely an old play-bill advertising a show at the local music-hall.

He was about to toss it aside when he paused, and read the announcement with closer attention, his eyebrows raised.

"There's something in this!" he murmured.

"If only I could discover Moyra Harvey's connection with this affair, it might explain everything!" And thoughtfully he slipped the play-bill into his pocket.

When finally, after a thorough search of the schooner, he left and made his way back to his room at the local inn, he felt confident that now he had enough proof to expose the phantom.

Early next morning he hurried to Moyra Harvey's cottage, to find it shut up and deserted.

There was a worried expression in his eyes as he returned to the village and made a few inquiries.

He discovered that Moyra's family had suffered unpopularity in the past, owing to the shadow that hung over the name of their sea-faring ancestor. Their small fortune had dwindled—and recently Moyra had found it difficult to provide money to run her little home, and pay for her young brother's education.

The opening of the floating cafe had been the last blow—and Moyra had confessed to a neighbour that she would have to do something desperate.

Shortly afterwards, she had taken the post of waitress on the floating cafe.

With this information, Noel went in search of old Bob Silver, the steward.

The old man had rooms in a cottage near the harbour, and he welcomed Noel in a little room that smelt of tarred nets and strong tobacco.

"Take it from me, sir," he remarked, shaking his grizzled head, "history repeats itself—as the saying is. There's a wild streak in the Harvey blood. I've got nothing against Moyra herself—but strange things'll happen so long as she's on board that ship."

"Don't worry!" Noel said dryly. "It looks to me as though the girl's run away. That means the hoodoo should be broken—in time for Gala Night. You've got some influence with the staff, Bob, and I want you to persuade them to stand by their posts this evening—whatever happens. It's Mr. Curtis' last chance to keep the cafe open."

"Trust me, sir!" declared the old man gruffly.

"If anything goes wrong this evening, Noel—I'm ruined!"

Noel laughed reassuringly, as he clapped a hand on Brian Curtis' shoulder.

"Don't worry, Brian! If the phantom voice is heard again to-night it'll be for the last time—and I give you my word that the trickster will be exposed!"

They stood on the captain's bridge, looking down on the lighted deck of the old schooner.

It was a gay and romantic scene. In spite of the recent rumours a large-sized crowd had turned up for the gala night.

Among other attractions was a fancy-dress dance, and colourful costumes lent added zest to the proceedings.

Enconced in the poop, a hired orchestra played lilting dance-music—and the towering masts and riggings formed an ideal setting against the glamorous background of the moonlit harbour.

"The mayor is here with his daughter," said Brian, pointing to a table in the centre of the deck, where a merry party was gathered. "His opinion, reported in the local papers, will mean success—or failure. I'm relying on you, old man!"

Noel gripped his friend's hand. "Cheer up!" he said. "It'll be success—I promise you!"

But the young detective's words were a shade more confident than his feelings as he descended to join the gay throng on the deck.

Everything depended on confirmation of his startling theory.

He strolled towards the buffet that had been set up on deck, where old Bob Silver, in spruce white overalls, was handing out refreshments to the guests.

He met Noel's questioning glance with a broad grin.

"I've followed your instructions, sir," he declared, in a low voice. "I've got members of the staff posted in the cabins and on deck. If there's any monkey business by that there phantom voice, someone'll be caught—mark my words!"

"Good man!" breathed Noel approvingly.

Just then he saw Brian's young wife coming towards him through the crowd, and he waved to her smilingly.

"May I have the pleasure of the next dance, Mrs. Curtis?" he asked.

Sheila nodded, with a faint smile, though her face wore an anxious look.

"I'm worried about Moyra, Mr. Raymond," she breathed, as they stepped out into a slow waltz. "I'm certain that she's not the kind of girl to run away because of rumours. People are saying now that she had something to do with the recent scares—that her absence proves it."

"Don't you believe it, Mrs. Curtis!" said Noel warmly. "Moyra is as innocent as you are. And I assure you that to-night will see the end of the scares... The phantom will be well and truly laid—"

He broke off as there came a stifled cry from Sheila. The shimmering fairy-lights suspended above the deck were suddenly extinguished as a mocking laugh rang out over the heads of the dancers.

"It's the phantom voice!" choked Sheila. "I knew this would happen!"

"Stay here!" breathed Noel tersely.

But even as he pushed his way through the frightened crowd surrounding the buffet, where old Bob Silver was trying to stem a panic-

stricken rush, a harsh, mocking voice sounded from the direction of the wheel-house.

"Belay there, ye lubbers! The cap'n is coming with Barbary Joe—coming for his revenge!"

A girl's terrified scream rang out as the mayor's young daughter pointed a shaking finger.

"That face at the window—look!"

An incredulous ejaculation was torn from Noel's lips, as a gasp went up from the crowd.

In the pale moonlight a face was peering from the glass window of the wheel-house—the face of the villainous old sea-captain, with a parrot perched on his shoulder!

At the same moment the moon was hidden by a passing cloud.

THE PIRATE'S SECRET



ONLY for an instant was Noel taken aback: then with a reassuring shout he leaped for the wheel-house, shattering the glass with a blow from the butt of his revolver.

Thrusting his hand through the opening, his fingers closed on wood and canvas, and turning

to the scared crowd, he flashed his torch on the object he held.

The picture that had vanished from the captain's cabin!

"It's all right!" he shouted. "It's just a trick—a trick to cause panic, and to distract attention. There's no ghost here."

"But the voice came from the wheel-house!" panted Brian, as he hurried up, accompanied by the angry mayor.

"I demand an instant search!" exclaimed the mayor. "The scoundrel, whoever it is, must be arrested!"

Noel's eyes were grim and his expression uneasy, as he unlocked the door and entered, followed by an excited crowd.

But there was nothing in the wheel-house except dust and cobwebs—but in the far corner he noticed a battened hatchway.

The young detective caught in his breath sharply, as he saw a trace of tarry footprints on the floor.

"Where does that lead?" he demanded.

"To a store-room below deck," said Brian.

"It's never used—"

Noel unbolted the hatch and descended an iron ladder, torch in hand. A little doubtfully Brian and the mayor followed.

The beam from the young detective's torch stabbed the darkness, fitting over cobwebbed walls and coils of rope—to come to rest on a terrified girlish figure, clutching a small bundle wrapped in a shawl.

As the light came to rest upon it the "bundle" gave a feeble squawk and fluttered from the shawl—a ruffled and ancient parrot.

"Moyra Harvey!" exclaimed Brian accusingly. "Then she was the trickster, after all!"

The words seemed to arouse the girl from her dazed condition.

"No!" she gasped. "No—it's not true! I brought Joe here to discover the truth, but I swear he didn't—" Her voice trailed away as she swayed suddenly, and would have fallen in a dead faint if Noel had not sprung to her aid.

Sheila, who had followed them to the cabin, went quickly to the assistance of the fainting girl. Squawking in faint protest, the aged parrot permitted Noel to pick him up.

"Noel—what on earth does it mean?" demanded Brian.

"It means," said Noel quietly, "that Miss Harvey is innocent! This parrot of hers can scarcely talk—he's terribly old, in fact, he's the original Barbary Joe, once owned by the pirate, Captain Forster!"

"What!" exclaimed Brian incredulously. "I've been linking up the old story," said

Noel. "Moyra Harvey's grandfather was falsely accused of piracy—and Forster escaped with his ill-gotten wealth. The stigma has dogged the Harvey family ever since. The only living creature that held a clue to the truth was Forster's parrot, Barbary Joe.

"The parrot came into the hands of the Harvey family, and Moyra determined to make an effort to discover the truth. She obtained a post here with the idea of smuggling her parrot on board, and inducing him to talk. But her attempt was frustrated by the terrifying scare of the phantom voice!"

"But—what caused that voice?" exclaimed Brian.

"Come with me," said Noel, with a grim smile.

Leaving the fainting girl in Sheila's care, Noel led the way to the captain's state-room.

The cabin appeared to be deserted, but Noel closed and locked the door after Brian and the mayor had entered.

Then carefully he placed the old parrot on the floor.

"Where does Cap'n Forster keep it, Joe?" he asked. "Where does he keep it—eh? Speak up, Joe!"

The mayor and Brian watched curiously as the ancient parrot cocked his head on one side, and eyed the young detective warily.

"Come now, Joe, speak up!" coaxed Noel.

"Tell us where Cap'n Forster keeps it!"

He waited, his eyes on the bird, but still the parrot continued to survey him puzzledly.

The mayor gave an exasperated ejaculation and made as if to turn away.

"Really, Raymond, you are wasting time trying to get that parrot to talk. It's far too old. And even now that scoundrel may be at large on the schooner—"

Noel interrupted him suddenly.

"No, please wait. I believe he's going to—"

His eyes were fixed excitedly on old Joe, and wonderingly the mayor followed his gaze as the parrot uttered a faint, feeble croak and fluttered its wings restlessly, while its bright eyes roved searchingly around the cabin.

Then, with a strange, rolling gait, he trotted off across the cabin towards the old settle. There he turned as if to see if he were being watched. Satisfied that he was, he turned again to the settle and tapped it with his beak.

Noel's eyes gleamed. He crossed to the seat, and raised the heavy lid that concealed a chest beneath.

"Nothing in there!" remarked Brian. "It was full of old maps and papers, but I've cleared them out."

"Wait!" murmured Noel. He was groping inside the chest. His finger touched a concealed spring, and with a faint whir the back of the chest swung open—revealing a dark cavity.

"The pirate's secret hiding-place!" exclaimed Noel, flashing his torch.

"Empty!" exclaimed Brian, disappointedly.

Noel bit his lip as he stood back.

"The scoundrel's been too quick for us," he muttered. "Unless—"

Just then, apparently from the corridor outside, came a harsh, mocking laugh.

With a startled squawk, Barbary Joe fluttered on to the table, while Brian and the mayor made a rush for the door.

"Stop!" shouted Noel sternly. "Keep that door shut. The scoundrel's here!"

As he spoke, he pulled off the heavy plush cloth that covered the table and seized the struggling, grey-haired figure who attempted to leap past him.

"Bob Silver!" exclaimed Brian, in blank amazement. "But—but that voice—"

"Was Bob Silver's voice," snapped Noel. "Or, rather, the voice of a certain music-hall ventriloquist who is wanted by the police for a series of clever frauds!"

"Confound you!" snarled the man, all trace of his rollicking, seafaring accent absent from his voice as he struggled in Noel's grasp.

But a pair of handcuffs were snapped ceitly over his wrists, and Noel snatched off the scoundrel's wig—revealing a close-cropped head of dark hair, surmounting a face livid with fury.

Swiftly Noel felt in the man's pockets, bringing to light a sheaf of yellowed papers—and then a quantity of scintillating sparkling stones that rolled to the floor.

"Diamonds!" exclaimed the mayor, in awed tones.

"Captain Forster's treasure," said Noel grimly. "Now belonging, by poetic justice, to Moyra Harvey. And I've an idea that these papers will remove the shadow from the Harvey name—for good!"

A HAPPY little party was gathered round one of the tables on the deck of the "Golden Quest." Brian and Sheila were there, with the mayor and his daughter—and their guest of honour was Moyra Harvey, their one-time waitress.

Noel, urged by his friend, explained how he had first suspected the trickster.

"It struck me," he said, "that old Bob was just a little too much like a sea-cook to be true. His mistake was in over-acting the part. Then he gave himself away when he searched the cabin during one of the scares, and left a curious scratch on the panelling.

"It looked like a scratch made by a parrot's claws—but I discovered that the scratch exactly fitted the cooking fork he had in his hand at the time! The next clue was a footprint he left on deck."

Brian whistled admiringly. "You didn't miss much," he said. "But what about the picture? Why did he remove that?"

"In the hope of finding some clue to the old pirate's hiding-place," said Noel. "Then it occurred to him to use it as a means of drawing suspicion on Moyra Harvey, whom he had locked in the hold. Thank's to Barbary Joe, his last trick was foiled."

"Good old Joe!" chuckled Brian, as the ancient parrot hopped from its mistress's shoulder on to the table.

Noel laughed and, raising his glass, he looked across at the young waitress.

"To Moyra Harvey's good fortune," he said, "and long live Barbary Joe!"

From the old parrot came a faint, feeble croak of approval.

THE END.

HER STRANGE TASK AT THE MASKED BALL

by

ENID BOYTEN

When Jose boarded the South American train she little realised what a tangled web of mystery and adventure awaited her at journey's end.

This enthralling long story will appear complete in next Friday's

GIRLS' CRYSTAL

THE HOLIDAY-MAKER WITHOUT A MEMORY

(Continued from page 228.)

It staggered the rest of the japers. They couldn't believe their eyesight. Rennie wasn't scared after all, was he! They'd show him! And Sidney Fiske flung a firework at his feet.

Bang! There was a thud as the cracker went off. Another thud as Sidney Fiske received a punch right on the point of the jaw. He went sprawling headlong on top of Piggot. "Any more there?" came the mild voice of Mr. Renway.

Gerald Glisson wasn't usually a hero, but Gerald considered himself more than a match for the meek little Rennie. He bounced out of hiding with a sack to throw over the young tutor's shoulders.

Crack! It was a beautiful punch that took Gerald clean off his feet. It sent him somersaulting right across the passage, sack and all. "Any more?" inquired Mr. Renway, and then he spotted Tony Fry.

Tony was leader of K House, and their champion boxer, too. But Tony never afterwards remembered what hit him. He felt a blow like the kick of a mule, and the next thing he knew he was on his back.

"Okay, sir!" gasped Piggot, and there was a new admiration in his voice as he tottered to his feet. "We came here to jape you, sir, and we've got to hand you the palm. You win. If you want our n-names—"

"Never mind about names!" interrupted Mr. Renway. "You have been punished enough, but let this be a warning to you. If I have any more nonsense—if there is any more of this stupid japing—I will give it you hot. You understand?"

"Y-yes, sir!" stammered Piggot & Co., and tenderly feeling their bruised faces, they staggered up the steps.

"Who'd have thought he packed a punch like that?" wailed Gerald.

"That's what he's been saying up for us all along!" Piggot said hollowly. "I ought to have known there was a catch somewhere. I take my hat off to Rennie after this—but you don't get me asking for any more, thank you!"

Sally slipped eagerly down the steps as they departed to nurse their wounds.

"How did it go, Sally?" Mr. Renway asked.

"Magnificent!" beamed Sally. "I never knew Piggot and his pals learn a lesson so quickly. They always liked your brother, Mr. Renway, and now your little bit of education's made them truly respect him."

His smile had all the kindness in the world, but the eyes that twinkled upon her were not the gentle, timid eyes of the young tutor. They were the pugnaeous eyes of Steve Renway, the tutor's boxer brother!

Startled, Dorothy stared. "Yes—you! You've got red sand on your shoes!" the boy detective declared.

Dorothy looked down at her feet, then gave a start.

"Why, so I have," she confessed. "But surely—"

Her voice trailed away, and Basil, guessing her embarrassment, stepped forward.

"We've all got red sand on our shoes, chump!" he laughed. "That sand has come from Smuggler's Cove. Hundreds of people go there every week. That clue's useless."

Archie coughed a little sheepishly.

"H'm! I hadn't thought of that," he admitted. "Ahem—er—perhaps I have been a little too hasty. Still—he cheered up and the glint returned to his blue eyes—"I'm certain the thief is to be found inside this camp, and I've still got another means of identifying her."

"How?" drawled Barbara Carstairs, a look of amusement on her beautiful face.

"I'll let you into a secret," Archie declared.

"Last night the thief did more than steal two trophies. She damaged that big metal plaque which hangs over the library mantelpiece. Part of it was broken off, and as there's no sign of the broken swastika—"

"S-swastika?"

It was Dorothy who spoke, and in startled surprise she stared at Archie. With grim satisfaction he nodded.

"Yes, swastika—part of one of them is missing," he declared. "So if I find a girl who's got a broken emblem in her possession, then I'll know without a shadow of a doubt that she's the miscreant who's been causing all the trouble."

There came a derisive laugh from many of the young holiday-makers, but Dorothy did not speak, did not move. As she remembered the broken metal swastika in her pocket, she knew an awful fear.

Was it possible that this was the explanation of the uneasy feeling which had seized her earlier on? Was this the dark secret hidden in her past life?

Was it possible—she drew in her breath and the blood drained from her cheeks. Was it possible that she was the unknown thief?

What a dramatic beginning to what should be a glorious holiday for Dorothy! Is she really a thief? Be sure not to miss next Friday's splendid instalment of this new serial in the **GIRLS' CRYSTAL**.

THE MERRYMAKERS AT COLLEGE

(Continued from page 236.)

anyone tried to jape Mr. Renway in that dark and unfrequented quarter.

"Look out, chaps! Here's Rennie!" he breathed, as he heard footsteps.

Raptly he waited. The steps drew closer. He saw the youthful figure of Mr. Renway in cap and gown, outlined in the dark passage. Then with a ghostly rustling of his white robes Piggot went gliding out to meet him.

"O-o-o-oh!" And he gave an eerie groan.

Blif! Mr. Renway's fist shot out, and Piggot landed with a crash on the floor; his groan changed to a howl of pain.

IT puzzled Mr. Philip Renway how he came to miss his brother at Denver that day. But something else puzzled him more after he'd been back at Roxburgh a few hours.

Nobody japed him. Everybody accorded him a new respect. Nat Piggot & Co. were so changed that they seemed to go out of their way to keep in his good books. Before he'd been back a couple of days he actually overheard Piggot saying that he was a sport, and they were jolly well proud of him.

Those were the very words, and they left Mr. Renway thrilled, and free of all his worries about resigning.

"Sally," he confided to her happily, "I can't make out what's come over those boys. They're so different it's a pleasure to have them in my class. What is it that can have made this change in them?"

Sally knew, but Sally wasn't telling.

(End of this week's story.)

Sally & Co. will be featured in another entertaining story in next Friday's **GIRLS' CRYSTAL**.