

GIRLS' CRYSTAL ^{3rd}

AND "THE SCHOOLGIRL"

The MERRYMAKERS AFLOAT



Drifting Towards The College Ship Was A Canoe With Only A Monkey Aboard—And
Around Its Neck The Monkey Carried An Urgent S O S—By DAPHNE GRAYSON

THE MONKEY MESSENGER

"GOLLY! It looks like a boat—"
"Where? I can't see anything, Sally."
"I can through these binoculars. In a direct line with that island—yes, it is a boat—a canoe."

Sally Warner spoke excitedly. She was on the promenade deck of the liner Ocean Star. With her were her inseparable chums, Fay Manners, Don Weston, and Johnny Briggs.

They had been sharing the binoculars to look at the small island which loomed mistily through the heat haze. It lay many miles away to starboard of the College Ship, which was steaming southward through the Atlantic towards Rio de Janeiro, her next port of call on the long trip to Australia.

Again Sally focused her glasses on the canoe. She could see it more clearly now as it bobbed up and down in the swell of the ocean. She could see a tiny figure—

And then Sally gave a gasp of amazement.

"Well, of all the queer things!" she exclaimed. "It's a monkey—there's just a monkey in the canoe and no one else!"

At that moment the Ocean Star swung round, then slowed down. The look-out had obviously also sighted the canoe, and the captain had ordered the course to be changed. As the canoe was neared, Sally gave a surprised shout.

"That monkey's got something fastened round its neck!" she cried, craning forward over the rail. "What is it—oh, look!" she added with a delighted laugh. "He's coming on board!"

The canoe had drifted right against the side of the ship, and the quick-witted little monkey had given an agile leap and caught hold of a rope which was dangling down from that

part of the rail where Sally & Co. stood.

Amid loud cheers from everybody the monkey came swarming up that rope at incredible speed. As he gained the rail Sally & Co. saw that fastened round his neck by a cord was a sheet of paper on which had been written a dramatic message:

"S O S
"Come to island."

"Golly! The captain will have to see this!" Sally exclaimed, and made a quick grab at the monkey in case he should go darting away. "A message of distress from that island. I wonder what it means? Where's an officer—Mr. Payne!" she called, spotting the young third officer.

He took one look at the message, then tore it free of the cord and went off to make a report to the bridge.

On the deck people were surging round Sally & Co., asking questions, patting the monkey now perched on Sally's shoulder, offering him tit-bits.

"Somebody must have sent him out in the canoe in the hope that we would pick him up and find the S O S," Fay was saying.

"Yes, that's clear enough," nodded Johnny. "But why send a monkey? Couldn't they have signalled from the island, or someone come out in the boat?"

At that moment the liner began to move again, and it soon became evident that she was heading for the island. It was late afternoon before it was reached. The Ocean Star heaved-to about a quarter of a mile off-shore. A party of seamen appeared on deck, swarming up into one of the ship's boats and removing the tarpaulin cover.

"They're going to send a boat ashore," said Don eagerly. "Gee, I wish we could go!"

As the boat was lowered to deck level, First Officer Hendrick came

along, accompanied by the medical officer and Professor Willard, the headmaster of the floating college. Mr. Payne was with them, too.

Sally darted forward.

"Any chance of our coming with you, Mr. Payne?" she asked. "After all, we spotted the canoe, and we found the message, and—and someone ought to take the monkey back."

First Officer Hendrick heard the request.

"Well, we might be able to manage just four of you—great Scott, that's fast work!" he grinned, for Sally & Co. were already swarming into the boat. "No more—can't take any more!" he added, as a crowd of other students and ordinary passengers, too, came clamouring around him.

"Nice work, Sally!" smiled Fay. "That's what I call opportunism—ooo-er!" she finished breathlessly, as the boat descended with a rush and smacked down on to the water.

Two minutes later it was chugging through the swell towards the island. Sally & Co., scanning the palm-edged beach, saw two men emerge from the trees. One of them was tall and powerfully built, with blond hair and an untidy beard. The other was small and slight, with black hair and a dark, swarthy face.

They made no attempt to come forward to greet the boat party as it landed, but stood watching, hardly moving, almost statuesque.

First Officer Hendrick went up to them.

"We picked up an S O S from this island," he said. "What's the trouble?"

"S O S?" the big man repeated in a surly voice. "We know nothing about any S O S. It wasn't sent from this island. We're the only two persons here, and we didn't send it. There's no trouble here."

They stared at him in astonishment.

"No trouble at all, senor," added the other man. "And how could we send an SOS when we have no wireless here?"

"It wasn't sent by radio," said Mr. Hendrick, plainly taken aback by this unexpected development. "It was a hand-written message, and we found it round the neck of this monkey in a drifting canoe."

The two men looked at the monkey, still in Sally's arms. And suddenly she felt the animal's fur bristle, saw him bare his teeth. Then, before Sally could stop him, he had leapt out of her arms and gone scampering into the trees.

"After him!" cried Sally. The chums went running in pursuit of the little animal.

"Gosh, this is a queer business!" said Johnny, as he ran alongside Sally. "About the SOS, I mean. If you ask me, those two men weren't very pleased to see us."

"Just what I was thinking," said Sally. "Now where's that monkey—there he is! Come back, you little imp!"

But the monkey went scampering on, through the belt of trees, and then down into a big, rocky hollow. Suddenly he stopped. Sally heard him chattering shrilly. Reaching the top of the hollow, she saw the little animal pick something up.

"Come back!" she cried again. "A fine dance you're leading us—"

She broke off, staring in amazement at the object now clasped in the monkey's paw. It was a brown and white shoe—a girl's shoe.

"That's strange," murmured Sally.

"Strange?" repeated Don in surprise. "Why? Looks ordinary enough to me."

"I mean it's strange to find a girl's shoe here when those two men said that they were the only persons on the island," replied Sally.



ANOTHER STRANGE FIND

"Gosh, Sally's right!" exclaimed Johnny excitedly. "If you ask me, there's something jolly mysterious going on

here. I don't like the look of those two men, and I don't trust 'em!"

"Johnny, you shouldn't jump to conclusions." But though the words were mildly reproving, there was something in Sally's tone which suggested that she didn't altogether disagree with Johnny's verdict.

She looked at the monkey. He was tightly hugging the shoe, and kept on running away and then returning to the chums. Sally got the impression that he wanted them to follow him, wanted to lead them somewhere, and her eyes gleamed.

"Let me have a look at that shoe," she said, holding out her hand.

The shoe was new and had hardly been worn. It still had a polish to it, so it could not have been lying in this hollow for very long.

Voices sounded through the trees, and on the spur of the moment Sally quickly concealed the shoe. The big, bearded man and his companion appeared, and she was sure she saw them exchange a relieved glance as they spotted her and her chums.

"You have found the monkey, then?" The bearded man's voice was still surly and unfriendly. "I don't think he comes from this island, although we have monkeys here, and they all look very much the same to me."

Again Sally noticed that the monkey's fur was bristling, and that his little teeth were bared in a snarl. The monkey seemed to know these men, even if they professed not to know him. She felt her suspicions deepening.

Professor Willard came up then with First Officer Hendrick.

"Get back to the boat, Miss Warner," said the headmaster. "We are returning to the ship. Mr. Darrel"—he nodded across to the

bearded man—"thinks that message must have come from another island."

Sally looked dismayed. She wanted to follow up the clue of that shoe. She was sure the monkey had wanted to lead them somewhere, and she was eager to explore deeper into the island.

"But—but—Desperately she sought for an excuse to stay, and then her eyes lit up as she gazed about her. "Oh, professor, can't we stay just a short while? I've seen a fossilised strata in some limestone, and we were talking about this subject in geology lecture the other day. We'd like to examine it, if we may."

The headmaster beamed at this apparent interest in such matters. He looked across at the first officer.

Mr. Hendrick nodded.

"That's all right," he said. "I want to send a message to Captain Thorne on the Aldis lamp and get further instructions. I presume Mr. Darrel has no objections?"

The bearded man exchanged a swift glance with his companion—a startled, uneasy glance, Sally thought.

"No objection at all," he said then. "All I ask is that they should not go beyond the river, and I must insist that they keep away from a concrete hut there. We are here on research, and are making dangerous experiments. Now perhaps you gentlemen would care to come across to the bungalow for refreshments," he added more hospitably.

"You heard what Mr. Darrel said?" Professor Willard asked, looking at the chums. "Please conform to his wishes."

The men turned away, heading for a thatched bungalow which could be glimpsed through the trees. And immediately the monkey began chattering again, once more began running across the hollow and back again.

"That animal's frightened of Darrel," said Don shrewdly. "Well, what now, Sally?"

"Follow the monkey, and see where he leads us," replied Sally crisply. "And what's the odds that he goes where we've been forbidden to go?"

"You think that was just an excuse to keep us away from something we're not supposed to see—something connected with the shoe?" Fay asked.

"Maybe," Sally answered cautiously.

But inwardly she was becoming more and more sure that there was a mystery on the island.

The monkey had gone scampering ahead, penetrating deeper into the island through the lush, luxuriant tropical vegetation which was jungle-like in its density.

Despite the intense, sticky heat, which soon had them perspiring, Sally & Co. followed at a run. Then, through the trees, they saw a clearing through which ran a river.

"Gosh, you were right, Sally!" exclaimed Johnny. "The monkey's heading for that hut on the other side of the river—I say, I believe he's picked up something else. Come on!"

Ignoring the fact that they had been warned not to go beyond the river, Sally & Co. raced in single file across the wooden bridge which spanned the sparkling water.

The monkey came running back towards them, and in his paw this time was something that glittered dully in the waning afternoon sunshine.

"A bracelet!" exclaimed Sally. "Well, that ties up with the shoe. There's been a girl or a woman on this island—Golly, what's that?"

For suddenly there was a dull, booming roar. It came from farther up-river, somewhere amid the trees. The chums saw a puff of smoke billowing upwards.

In startled wonderment they regarded each other. What had caused the explosion? It looked as if Mr. Darrel had been speaking the truth when he had warned them of danger beyond the river.

And then Sally's attention became fixed on the monkey again. The little creature was hopping up and down

outside the concrete hut, chattering with shrill excitement.

"Come on!" said Sally. "We're going to have a look in there—"

"Stop!" rang out an angry voice.

The chums spun round to see the small, swarthy-faced man running towards them.

But now Sally was outside the door of the mysterious concrete hut. The bracelet had been picked up near the hut, and she was going to look inside before anybody could stop her.

Then she gave a gasp of dismay, and a baffled look came into her eyes. The door was secured with a big padlock.

"Come away!" yelled the swarthy man. "Did not Mr. Darrel tell you not to come here? Darrel—Darrel—these youngsters have disobeyed you! They have set off one of the mines and much damage will have been done to our instruments."

Sally felt an inward quail. Were they making a mistake—were they being suspicious when there was absolutely no justification for it?

Darrel came running into view, followed by Mr. Hendrick and Professor Willard.

"Come back!" roared the bearded man. "Order these youngsters back immediately—at once!"

"How dare you disobey Mr. Darrel's orders like this!" exclaimed Professor Willard angrily. "What do you mean by it?"

Sally, returning across the wooden bridge, held up the bracelet.

"We found this—and this," she added, producing the shoe. "We wondered what they meant after Mr. Darrel had said that only he and his friend were on the island."

Intently she watched the two men as she spoke. She saw the small man's swarthy face turned a sickly, sallow shade. Darrel stiffened, and for a moment he made no reply. Then he began to laugh.

"Where did you find those?" he demanded. "They were taken out of my luggage by some mischievous monkey the other night. They belong to my wife. She will be joining me here as soon as I've got things ready for her, and I brought some of her luggage with me. Isn't that so, Lorenzo?"

His swarthy-faced companion nodded. He was smiling now.

"That is so, senor. But these youngsters—I fear their wilfulness will have caused much damage."

Sally & Co., started, bewildered, were back on the other side of the river now. Darrel went to the hut, unlocked the door, and looked in. When he turned, his face was again red with fury.

"Lorenzo is right. Much damage has been done to our apparatus. It will take us days to repair the damage. These youngsters must leave the island at once—I absolutely insist. Is that understood, gentlemen? They are a menace to us all and to themselves."

"Disgraceful conduct!" said Professor Willard sternly. "Return to the boat!"

"We're all returning," put in First Officer Hendrick. "Captain's orders. That SOS must have come from another island. There's one to eastward, and another party is being sent there to investigate."



THEIR SWIM IN THE DARK

Sally's brain felt in a whirl as, silent and thoughtful, she took her place in the boat.

Had that explanation about the shoe and the bracelet been the truth? On the surface it seemed perfectly plausible.

But Sally was remembering other things. Chiefly she was thinking of the little monkey, and how excitedly it had capered about outside the mysterious concrete hut—that hut which no one had been allowed to go

(Please turn to the back page.)



The GIRL WHO PUT FLAME FIRST

By ENID BOYTEN

HER RETURN TO SCHOOL

SILVER DAWSON, whose great love was horses, was dismayed when her guardian, Mr. Graham Forsyth, told her she must leave Hawthorn Stables and go to near-by Lowchester School.

During the first morning lesson she saw her beloved pet, Flame, galloping across the heath, and, ignoring the angry protests of Miss Hatch, the stern Form-mistress, she rushed out of school.

SILVER had forgotten school, as she pushed her way through the prickly bushes that skirted the heath. She only remembered that startling vision she had seen from the class-room window—her beloved Flame galloping madly amongst the treacherous gullies of the heath.

Who had driven him there? The dangerous stretch of land was fenced in with the express purpose of keeping animals out. Who had opened the gate, and let him in?

Panting and breathless, she tore through the brambles.

Ah, there he was! A little choking cry broke from her, as she caught sight of the chestnut kicking up his heels a hundred yards away. He was without saddle or bridle, but a halter trailed from him.

"Flame!" Her voice echoed out. "Steady, old fellow! Take it quietly!"

The effect on the highly-strung chestnut was almost magical. He stopped that wild rearing and plunging, and trotted towards her, ears pricked forward, tail arching proudly. "Flame! You beauty!" she breathed.

She went to meet him. As he stopped, nuzzling her shoulder with his velvety muzzle, her practised eyes ran over him. Had he injured himself in any way, in his wild galloping over the rough ground?

Her breath caught at the thought. For she meant to ride Flame in the all-important point-to-point race next Saturday.

She walked him round, anxiously studying him, then heaved a sigh of relief. There was no sign of lameness.

Still she gave no thought to the school-room she had left behind her. No memory of Miss Hatch's sharp-featured face disturbed her as she led Flame to the gate which led from the heath.

Here she paused, lips tightened, blue eyes searching the ground.

Certainly Flame had come in this way, for his hoof-marks proved it. And the gate had been closed behind him. Whoever had driven him on to this dangerous piece of ground had meant to make sure he couldn't escape.

A surge of anger filled Silver suddenly.

"Somehow I'll find out who did this—and why," she muttered. "Now

come along, Flame—we're going home to the stables!"

She led him along the sun-dappled lane, till at last they turned into the stable yard. Everything was quiet. Silver knew that several clients had booked rides for that morning. Perhaps old Jock MacKane was out with them.

She led Flame to his loose box, and rubbed him down until his coat gleamed like red gold. She was just finishing when a well-known step made her swing round. It was Jock. "So there ye are, the two o' ye!" he cried. "Ye'll drive me crazy betwixt ye, Miss Silver, you and yon chestnut. I've been searching over hill and dale till I can scarce stand, and—"

She flew to him and grabbed his shoulders.

"Jock! Stop grumbling, you old meanie!" she exclaimed. "How did Flame get out? Who drove him on to the heath?"

But Jock could tell her nothing. Apparently Flame had been missed from the stables that morning, but who could have taken him away remained a mystery.

"Maybe 'twas someone who had a grudge against ye, Miss Silver," Jock said.

A grudge against her? But who could it be?

Silver bit her lip. At any rate no harm had been done.

"Jock, you must guard him while I'm at school," she pressed. "Just in case. And there's another thing—Saturday's point-to-point."

She went on to arrange that Jock should hand in her entry. He grumbled a little, obviously thinking that she should concentrate exclusively on her schoolwork. But at last he agreed, and said he would have Flame waiting for her at the starting point.

"It'll be Flame's first big test, Jock," she told him breathlessly. "He's got to get a place, to qualify for the Gaylord Trophy later on. Oh, Flame and I are going to do great things!"

And her thoughts were still running, as she borrowed the old stable bike, and started back for Lowchester. In fact, it wasn't until she jumped off the cycle in the school quadrangle that she remembered what she had done.

In her first day at Lowchester she had defied her Form-mistress. She had deliberately broken out of school!

Not that she regretted it for a single instant.

All the same her heart was beating more quickly as she walked into school, realising that morning lessons must be over. She had promised her guardian to do her best here, and so she would. She'd apologise to Miss Hatch. Surely, when she explained everything, the mistress would understand—

"Silver Dawson!" an acid voice

exclaimed. "So you have condescended to return to us!"

And there stood Miss Hatch. She glared at Silver through horn-rimmed glasses, her sharp-featured face pink with indignation.

"I have just come from Miss Wynford, the headmistress," she went on. "I may tell you that she herself witnessed your disgraceful departure. She was utterly scandalised, but on this first day of term she is too busy to concern herself with a mutinous new girl such as you. She has deputed me to deal with you—"

"Miss Hatch!" Silver burst out. "Let me explain. My horse—"

"I am not interested in your horse," Miss Hatch said bitingly. "I only know that you have deliberately defied me. Never, in all my school career, have I known anything so disgraceful. I suppose it is what one might expect from a girl brought up amongst horses!"

An angry gleam flashed in Silver's blue eyes.

"As a punishment," went on Miss Hatch before she could speak, "you will remain in the detention-room all next Saturday afternoon. And while there you will write three hundred lines! That is all!"

She turned and strode away, leaving Silver white and stricken.

Next Saturday afternoon. That was the afternoon of the point-to-point! The day of Flame's first big test!

And she was to spend it in detention.



SILVER'S SURPRISING SUGGESTION

Hands clenched, breath coming quickly, Silver stood in her study gazing at the picture of Flame she had hung over the

high mantelpiece.

"Flame, boy! It isn't fair!" she whispered.

It wasn't that she minded being punished. After all, she'd deserved it, for she had deliberately broken out of class.

But the mistress hadn't given her a chance to explain, and had cut her short as soon as she began to speak about her beloved Flame.

And she had fixed next Saturday afternoon for the punishment.

"But I'll race just the same!" Silver vowed, gazing with flashing eyes at the picture. "It's Flame's chance to qualify for the Gaylord, and I'm not letting him down!"

A cool, amused voice broke in on her thoughts.

"Golly! So you're still all in one piece!" it said. "I thought Miss Hatch would have torn you limb from limb by now. What did she say to you when you got back? What happened?"

It was Joan Hartnell, Silver's study-mate, her grey eyes twinkling amusedly through her spectacles.

Silver shrugged.

"Oh, she gave me three hundred lines," she replied. "And she thinks I'm going to stay in next Saturday afternoon and write them."

Joan whistled, giving her a curious look.

"Well, take my advice," she said bluntly. "Don't get in Miss Hatch's bad books—"

"But, Joan, it wasn't fair!" Silver burst out. "I don't mind the punishment, but when I tried to tell her about Flame, she—"

Laughingly, Joan put her fingers in her ears.

"Woa! Steady on! Pipe down!" she chuckled. "Don't start on about that chestnut of yours, or we'll be here for hours! There's a special meeting in the Fourth Form Common-room. Come on, old girl! Don't day-dream!"

Silver heaved a sigh, as she allowed Joan to grab her arm and pilot her along the corridor.

She liked Joan, with her blunt, friendly manner. But Joan had never owned a horse; didn't seem interested in them. If only she'd try to understand! If only she'd realise just how much the stables and the horses—and, above all, Flame—meant to Silver!

An exaggerated voice came to their ears as they halted outside the Common-room door.

"Oh, I'm so sorry, Miss Hatch," that voice said in an unmistakable imitation of Silver. "But I'm afraid I haven't done any work. You see, I've been so busy thinking about Flame, my marvellous horse!"

There was a burst of laughter and titters from inside the room.

Joan glanced quickly at Silver.

"That's Muriel Buckley," she said. "She's a bit of a dab at mimicry, and she's always trying to be funny, taking people off. Don't worry!"

She pushed open the door.

At one end of the big room black-haired Muriel Buckley was surrounded by her friends—Mavis Carruthers, Kitty Vale, and a few others. She had evidently been giving an imitation of Silver for their benefit, and they were shaking with laughter.

At the other end Dot Wainwright, the red-headed Form captain, was perched on the back of a chair, while a crowd of other girls sat around.

"Here we are!" grinned Joan. "And here's the girl who bunked away from Miss Hatch's class-room and lived to tell the tale!"

A dozen questions were shot at Silver.

"Gosh! What happened, Silver?"

"Did she haul you before the Head?"

"What about the horse, Silver? Was that really your chestnut, out there on the heath? Did you rescue him?"

Silver smiled vaguely, in answer to the buzz of questions. She wanted to think something out quietly, and she took a seat by the window, that dreamy look in her eyes again.

"Oh, don't bother her," Joan exclaimed. "She's got detention next Saturday half-hol., and three hundred lines. And hadn't we better get started on the meeting, Dot? You're in the chair, old girl. Get weaving!"

Silver half-closed her eyes.

Detention next Saturday afternoon! She'd already decided that she'd dodge it. She'd find a way, come what might, because that was the day when Flame must have his first big chance.

And that brought her to the question of Flame's training for the race.

If only she was back at the stables, to supervise it all! Or—if only Flame could be here!

But at any rate she could get up very early and take him for a practice gallop every morning before breakfast. Just half a mile or so. And later in the day Jock could exercise him on the leading rein, for he'd allow no one but Silver to ride him.

Dot Wainwright's brisk voice broke on her dreams.

"Well, Silver, you're a new chum here," the Form captain said. "What do you think? Any suggestions?"

Silver opened her eyes wide.

"Suggestions?" she echoed. "No,

I'm only suggesting that if he has three fast gallops this week he ought to be in perfect condition to—"

She was interrupted by a howl of laughter from the Fourth.

"There she goes again!" Joan grinned.

"Bring in a bag of hay and a manger, somebody!" Stella Deane giggled. "It'll make her feel more at home. She's got horses on the brain!"

Silver grinned back at them. She didn't mind being ragged.

"Golly! We've been gassing away for twenty minutes and you haven't the foggiest idea what we've been talking about," Dot chuckled. "You're a caution, if ever there was one. Now pin your ears back and listen!"

Once more Dot explained their problem.

Every term at Lowchester a special prize was offered for the Form that did best in some out-of-school activity. It was known as the sports-and-hobbies prize.

"See the idea?" Dot said. "It could be tennis, swimming—or some hobby, like photography, amateur acting—anything. Question is, what are we going to concentrate on? And I'm asking you again, Silver. Any ideas?"

Silver thought hard for a moment.

Then suddenly a plan dawned on her. It had such tremendous possibilities that it almost took her breath away. It might be of vital help in her great ambitions for Flame.

She sprang to her feet. Shining-eyed, she gazed around at the Fourth.

"I've got it!" she gasped out. "My ponies!"

There was another roar of laughter.

"Hold me up, someone!" Dot Wainwright chortled. "She's off again!"

But Silver held her ground.

"You're all laughing!" she cried.

"But why? Plenty of schools have riding as part of their programme. Why not Lowchester?"

Silver flung back her pale gold hair. There was something curiously magnetic about her as, slim, blue-eyed, she stepped forward.

"In a few weeks' time there's to be a riding carnival at Brookfield," she told them. "And one of the awards will be for the best novelty team display. Why shouldn't we enter for it? We'd use Flame, my chestnut—of course! And I've some darling forest ponies at the stables—I could teach you to ride them. And, if we carried off the award, shouldn't we stand a chance for the sports-and-hobbies prize?"

She paused for breath, cheeks glowing.

There was no laughter this time. The Fourth was impressed—or some of them were, at any rate.

"By golly! I believe you've got something there," Dot exclaimed.

"We should have to ask the Head's permission, of course—"

"And she'd never give it!" Muriel Buckley burst out. "She'd be sure to ask Miss Hatch's opinion—and you all know what she's like. She's so old-fashioned, she'd never agree to riding practice here at Lowchester. She dislikes horses—I've heard her say so. And Silver's in her bad books already. She'd turn the idea down flat! Anyway, it's a crazy idea!"

Even then Silver wondered why Muriel should be so angry at this suggestion of hers.

"Why is it crazy?" she persisted.

"Some of you must have jodhpurs and riding kit at home. We could practise in the grounds here. And, with the ponies from my stables—"

"Your stables!" Muriel scoffed.

She turned to the others.

"Silver talks a lot about her stables, as if they were the finest in the land," she cried. "It's just a ramshackle place with a few broken-down old hacks—"

Silver whirled on her.

"It's not!" she choked out. "And they're not broken-down hacks—any of them. Don't you dare say a word

against my horses, Muriel Buckley! Flame is the finest mount in the country, and the others are all as sound as a bell!"

They faced each other, Muriel with her scowling face and haughty manner, Silver quivering with indignation.

Until Dot, the Form captain, stepped between them.

"Hold on! This is a meeting, not a dog-fight," she said. "And you've no right to sneer at Silver's stables, Muriel. Some of us are taken with Silver's idea, and there's only one way to decide. We'll put it to the vote."

Silver felt her pulses throb.

Which way would the vote go? Oh, if only they'd carry out this sudden plan that had dawned on her!

She felt that so much depended on it. It might mean she would be allowed to keep the ponies at school, for there were some old stables in the grounds at Lowchester. And that might lead to her having Flame at school, too.

Oh, if only she could! If only she could have her beloved chestnut right here at Lowchester!

All her ambitions centred on Flame, for she was determined he should win fame for himself that season. If Flame became famous, then her stables would be famous, too. The worst part of being sent to school was that it meant being separated from Flame.

If only she could have him here, so that she could train him and watch over him properly! No wonder she thrilled at the thought!

"Those in favour of asking Miss Wynford if we can carry out Silver's plan," the Form captain was saying.

"Hands up!"

Hands shot up all round the room. Fourteen!

"And against?" inquired Dot.

Muriel, Mavis, Kitty, and others held up their hands.

"Thirteen," Dot said. "That means the 'ayes' have it, girls. I'll ask Miss Wynford if we can go riding for the carnival."

Silver's plan had won the day—by a single vote!

Muriel Buckley swung round on them, her face twisted with anger.

"You'll regret it, all of you!" she burst out. "If you follow Silver's crazy schemes it will mean nothing but trouble for the Fourth. Don't say I didn't warn you!"

Her dark eyes met Silver's in a glare of spite. And with an uneasy pang Silver wondered why Muriel—daughter of the wealthy client who sometimes rode at her stables—should be so bitter against her.

ALARM IN THE NIGHT



The school clock struck midnight.

There was no sound in the study except the scratching of Silver's pen. Her pale gold

head was bent over her desk, which was littered with papers, and she was writing till her fingers ached.

She looked pale and tired. With a little sigh she flung down her pen.

"Still a hundred lines to do," she whispered.

Then, as she glanced round the study walls, that tired look left her face. She wrinkled her tip-tilted nose in a gay smile as her eyes fell on the pictures of her horses that hung there.

What a comfort those pictures were!

"I ought to be in bed, Flame!" she murmured. "I ought to be getting a good night's rest before the race, but I must finish these lines—I must, boy! And even if I went to bed I don't believe I'd sleep!"

It was Friday night—or at least, now that midnight had passed, it was Saturday morning. The day of the Abbotford point-to-point! The day of Flame's first big chance!

(Please turn to page 191.)



HER STRANGE ROLE in EGYPT

By GAIL WESTERN

THE MEETING WITH AHMED

In order to help her sister Sybil, Ray Chilton assumed the name of Rene Claire and travelled to Egypt in disguise, taking with her a mysterious golden scarab that James Nolan and his daughter Norah were anxious to secure.

Ray made friends with a cheery boy named Mike and his aunt, Mrs. Van Croom.

At Alexandria the scarab was stolen by Hassan, an Arab confederate of the Nolans. When Ray was about to board the Cairo train a girl sherbet-seller gave her a message, telling her that if she intended to regain the scarab she should seek out Ahmed, the fortune-teller.

In startled wonderment Ray stared at the message written in the bottom of the paper cup.

What did it mean? How could an Arab fortune-teller in Cairo possibly help her to regain possession of the golden scarab?

"English girl finish her drink?"

The sherbet-seller's "soft, husky voice broke into her whirling thoughts, and, looking up, she saw that the veiled Arab girl was holding out her hand for the cup.

There was a strange, intense look in her eyes, and Ray caught in her breath.

Even if the sherbet-seller hadn't herself written that intriguing message, surely she must know all about it.

"I say—" she began in an eager whisper; but that was as far as she got, for her arm was playfully tugged and a laughing voice sounded in her ear.

"Hey, do you want to miss the train, Rene? Plenty of time for day-dreaming when we're safely aboard."

And next moment Mike was hustling her into the first-class compartment, where Mrs. Van Croom and the Nolans had already seated themselves.

There came the clanging of doors, the shrill screech of a whistle, and the Cairo express began to move. One last glimpse Ray had of the unknown sherbet-seller standing on the platform, then the station had been left behind.

At any other time Ray would have revelled in this romantic journey across Egypt, but now she had no thought for the varied, unusual scenery.

Engrossed in her thoughts, she sat silently in the corner. Fortunately, Mike and his aunt thought she was worn out as a result of her recent alarming experience, and so did not try to draw her into conversation. As for the Nolans they were also unusually quiet, for Norah and her father were uneasily wondering exactly how much Mike had discovered.

As the express went speeding on and on, Ray still concentrated on trying to solve the mystery of that message written in the paper cup.

Could it have been a trap? she asked herself uneasily. Was the veiled Arab girl a hireling of Hassan, the villain who had tried to hold her prisoner?

Slowly she shook her head.

"It's hardly likely," she told herself. "Hassan's got the golden scarab, so why should he want to trap me again in Cairo? No, I believe the message was genuine, but—"

She broke off, her heart thumping excitedly as another thought occurred to her. Suppose her sister had friends in Egypt, and suppose that in some mysterious way they had learnt of what had happened and were anxious to help her?

It was a thrilling possibility, and Ray decided that when Cairo was reached she would lose no time in trying to track down Ahmed, the fortune-teller.

But Mike and his aunt had other plans.

It had been decided to stay the night in Cairo and drive down to Marobshi, the village where Mrs. Van Croom had rented a house, on the following morning. So when Cairo was eventually reached Ray, of course, had to accompany the others to the hotel; and then Mike, eager to explore the Egyptian capital, seized her by the arm.

"Come on, let's see the sights!" he urged, and whirled her off in a horse-drawn carriage.

Despite her desire to get in touch with the mystery fortune-teller, Ray thoroughly enjoyed that ride. It took her through the main streets, and she was surprised to see how modern and handsome they were, lined with tall stone buildings, with great glittering stores that were the equal of any in Europe.

But, though the tree-lined boulevards were filled with motor-cars and trams, one was never allowed to forget for long that this was the strange, romantic East. Lumbering out of a side street came a string of camels. A little farther along, a couple of richly robed, dignified Arabs were jogging along astride two very small donkeys. And here and there could be seen befezzed sweet water sellers, bulging skin water containers slung around their necks.

"Well, what do you think of it?" asked Mike, as the carriage drew to a halt and helped her to descend.

"Oh, it's simply grand!" exclaimed Ray.

"But you've seen nothing yet," Mike grinned. "Wait until you've explored the native bazaars."

Having paid off the driver, he led her through a narrow archway into a side street.

It was as if they had walked into another world.

Here were few people in European dress. Instead, on every side was a bewildering mixture of strange costumes. White-robed Arabs mingled with fierce-looking Berbers; coal-black Nubians with cheeky, bright-eyed boys screaming for "back-

sheesh." And above the hubbub came the clanging of hammers as the coppersmiths and brass workers, seated cross-legged in the doorways of their shops, busied themselves with their work.

Ray and Mike wandered through a maze of bazaars, thrilled by the strangeness of it all, and then the boy gave an excited shout: "I say, look at those monkeys!" and went running across to a pet shop.

But Ray did not follow. Suddenly she thought she heard herself hailed, and, turning, she saw a bearded Arab squatting against a wall. On the pavement in front of him was a tray of sand, and with the aid of a short stick he was drawing something in the smooth, glistening sand.

"A sand-diviner!" she exclaimed. "I've read about them, but surely he—"

She broke off, catching in her breath, for suddenly the design had taken on shape. It was a scarab the Arab had drawn—a perfect representation of the golden scarab which had been stolen from her in Alexandria!

"Excuse me, but is your name Ahmed?" she whispered.

His bearded face inscrutable, he inclined his head.

"So they call me," he admitted.

"And do you tell fortunes?" she asked.

Again he nodded.

"Yea, all is known to those who consult the magic sand. Not only the past, but also the future."

Ray's heart gave a wild leap. Her last doubt had gone. This was the mystery man she had been told to seek. Her eyes gleaming with eagerness, she pointed down to the drawing in the sand-tray.

"Then what can you tell me about that?" she asked breathlessly.

ALARMING NEWS OF THE NOLANS



His brown, wrinkled face as inscrutable as ever, Ahmed gazed solemnly down at his tray of sand.

"So the white girl is interested in the golden scarab," he said softly. "She grieves because now she cannot fulfil her sister's mission; because she knows it will be useless to visit the House of Sounding Brass without that which she brought with her from across the sea."

Almost in awe, Ray gazed at him. "How can you possibly know all that about me?" she gasped.

The sand-diviner pointed to the tray with his stick.

"To those who can read, the magic sand reveals all secrets," he declared, "even the fate of the golden scarab." He shot her a queer, intense look. "Would the white girl wish to hear about the scarab?" he asked.

Eagerly she nodded. Though she did not believe Ahmed possessed any magic powers, yet there was something about his personality that made her trust and believe in him.

"Oh, please!" she gulped.

"Then wait while Ahmed consults the oracle of the tray."

As he spoke, the bearded Arab thrust his hand into the sand, then let it trickle slowly through his

fingers. As still as a graven image he squatted, his burning eyes never leaving the falling grains.

"The sands reveal a tall, gaunt white man; also a white girl," he declared softly. "They are in the grip of a feverish activity. They long for the golden scarab, yet they are fearful of being seen with he who stole it. Now they are reading a message—a message from a far-off city."

"Alexandria!" breathed Ray. "It's the Nolans and Hassan you are talking about."

The sand-diviner did not seem to heed. As though in a trance, he watched the golden grains pattering back into the tray.

"The message reveals how the gaunt white man and his daughter are to gain the scarab," he declared. "They are to go to the Museum of Ra. There, in the Room of Mummies, are four Egyptian vases. In one of them the messenger from Alexandria is to deposit the scarab. He is there now, dropping the scarab into its hiding-place."

His voice died away and Ray caught in her breath. Though she was utterly mystified as to how Ahmed knew her enemies' plans, yet some deep instinct seemed to tell her that what he was saying was true.

Not being anxious to be seen with their scoundrelly confederate, the Nolans intended to visit the museum and unobtrusively retrieve the scarab from the vase in which Hassan's messenger had hidden it.

"When do the Nolans intend going there?" she gasped.

Ahmed stared down at the sand. "Already they have left, in a carriage drawn by two black horses," he declared.

"Then I must hurry. I've got to get there first—I must get the scarab before they can. Where is this museum?"

In her eagerness, Ray caught the sand-diviner by the shoulder, and he gave a start, as if roused from a trance. Then he smiled.

"Do not worry, white girl. The Museum of Ra is not far away. Return to the street lined with trees along which run the horseless carriages that rattle and jolt. Turn right, then take the second turning on the left."

"Oh, thank you! You have helped me wonderfully. Here, take this!"

Opening her handbag, Ray took out a note and thrust it into Ahmed's hand; then she swung round with a start as she heard Mike's cheery voice. "So there you are!" cried the boy. "I couldn't think what had become of you. Been consulting a jolly old sand-diviner, eh? What did he tell you?"

Ray forced a bright laugh as she turned away.

"Oh, nothing very exciting, Mike! What's the next item on the programme?"

Actually she was wondering what excuse she could make to go off on her own. Dearly she would have liked to have confided in Mike; to have asked him to accompany her on her desperate rush to retrieve the golden scarab, but that was not possible. Mike, like his aunt, believed Sybil Chilton to be an unscrupulous thief, and if he learnt that Ray was her sister he might refuse to have anything more to do with her.

"Well, what's it to be?" Mike asked. Ray snatched at a sudden brain-wave.

"I'd like to do some shopping," she said.

"Shopping?"

Mike made a rueful grimace and Ray's eyes gleamed with satisfaction.

"But there's no need for you to come with me," she said quickly. "I know how boys hate shop-gazing. Tell you what, you amuse yourself until dinner, then this evening we'll go out together again."

He frowned doubtfully.

"I don't like leaving you on your own," he said. "This is the first time you've been abroad, and there are some queer spots in Cairo."

She laughed.

"Silly, I shall be all right. What harm can I come to in the shopping area? And I can easily get a taxi back to the hotel."

She gave his arm a friendly squeeze; then, taking his consent for granted, she made her way through the jostling crowd towards the main street, leaving him standing there, still staring doubtfully.

Once the tree-lined boulevard was reached, Ray turned right and hurried along as fast as she could.

Following Ahmed's directions, she took the second turning, to find herself in a broad, deserted street lined with handsome buildings. Doubtfully she paused and looked about her, but almost instantly her eyes lit up. For there, almost opposite, was the place she sought. Over the long line of shuttered windows was an inscription in Arabic, and underneath appeared the words in English: Museum of Ra.

The entrance was in a side-street, and eagerly she turned the corner, only to pull up dead.

For outside the doorway stood an empty carriage, to which were harnessed two black horses.

As she remembered the sand-diviner's words, the blood drained from her cheeks.

The Nolans were already inside, searching for the all-important scarab!



IN THE ROOM OF MUMMIES

Frantically Ray dashed up the entrance steps and tried to push open the double doors, but, to her dismay, they refused to budge. Evidently they were locked.

For a moment she stood there helplessly, then, a little farther on, she saw a second, smaller entrance. To her delight this door stood wide open. But as she ran up the steps into the hall she received another shock.

From a small office a uniformed Egyptian appeared, a red fez stuck on his black curly hair. He barred the way.

"Permit, plis," he said in halting English.

Ray stared in surprise. "Permit?" she stammered. "I'm—I'm afraid I haven't got one."

His frown deepened.

"Then it is not allowed for you to enter," he declared. "Did you not see that the public doors were closed? It is after hours. Only those with permits can see museum now."

In consternation Ray stood there. This was a stunning blow. She was tempted to argue with the uniformed official, but one look at his bad-tempered face warned her of the futility of that course.

She turned and slowly passed through the doorway and made her way down the steps. Out in the street, she halted, a look of desperation on her face.

She couldn't accept defeat like this. Somehow she must get into the museum; must find some way of outwitting the Nolans, for obviously they had a permit and were inside.

But what could she do?

Frowningly she regarded the ornate facade of the building, then, as her gaze turned to the closed public entrance, her eyes lit up. She noticed that to the right of the doors was a queerly designed bell-pull.

"There's just a chance," she murmured, and, racing up the wide steps, she seized the bell-pull and yanked it down with all her force, again and again.

From inside the building came the clamorous jangling of a bell, and as she heard it pealing out she darted back to the other entrance and cautiously peeped through the open doorway. She was just in time to see the uniformed official emerge from his office, a bad tempered scowl on his face, and go hurrying along a corridor, evidently to see who was ringing so imperiously at the other doorway.

Next moment the hall was empty. Ray's heart leapt with delight. Her trick had succeeded.

She entered. Before her was a steep flight of marble stairs. Up them she raced to find herself on a landing, from which a long corridor ran to right and left.

Where was the Room of Mummies? She tiptoed along the corridor, and paused before a half-open door. She peered in and her heart leapt with delight, for around three of the walls stood long lines of mummy cases.

But where were the four vases about which Ahmed had spoken?

There they were, standing on a long, copper-topped table, but—

Ray drew in her breath in dismay. For bending over the vases were two familiar figures—James Nolan and his daughter—and even as Ray saw them there came a triumphant cry from Norah's father.

"Here it is! Hassan's messenger carried out his instructions to the letter!"

And Mr. Nolan pulled his hand out of one of the large vases and jubilantly displayed something which gleamed in the electric light.

The golden scarab! Norah, who had been staring uneasily at the ancient mummies, seized her father's arm.

"All right; let's get out of here," she urged. "This place gives me the creeps."

Her father laughed. "Don't be silly. Those old mummies can't hurt you. I want to compare this scarab with the other."

And he took a small box from his pocket and opened it.

Ray, crouching in the doorway, felt her heart leap, for in that box was a second scarab, almost identical with the one which had been hidden in the vase.

"It must be the one that was stolen by Norah from Mrs. Van Croom's brother," she told herself. "The one which poor Sybil was accused of taking."

Her hands clenched. Tensely she watched and wondered.

In what way were the two scarabs connected? Why had the Nolans been so desperately anxious to secure them? What strange secret could they hold?

"Oh, if only I could get hold of them," she whispered. "If only—"

She broke off and caught in her breath as she realised that the Room of Mummies possessed no windows, and saw the electric-light switch on the wall ten or twelve paces from the door.

A daring idea in her brain, she tiptoed through the doorway and commenced to creep along the wall behind the mummy-cases.

If she could only turn out the lights perhaps in the darkness she would be able to seize the box containing the scarabs.

James Nolan, smiling with satisfaction, was packing the two scarabs in the box. Norah was still tugging at his arm, urging him to hurry up and depart. Neither had any eyes for Ray. Stealthily she tiptoed her way nearer and nearer the electric-light switch.

Crack!

It was a loose board she had stepped on, and at the sudden sound Norah gave a startled cry.

"Oh, what was that?" she gulped, and spun round, a split second after Ray had darted behind one of the mummy-cases. In her haste she knocked against the tall case, causing it to rock, and Norah screamed out again. "Look! That mummy! It's m-moving!" she gasped.

Her father looked up.

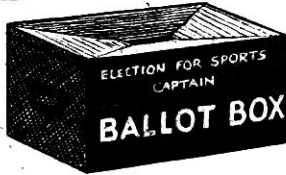
"Rubbish! Don't be silly, my dear—" He finished with a puzzled exclamation, as he also saw the rocking case. "Thunder, there must be someone there!" he roared, and, box of scarabs still clutched in one hand, he went striding across the room, heading straight for the case behind which Ray was crouching.

Further exciting chapters next week,



GLORIA-

The Sensation of The School



By HAZEL ARMITAGE

VICKY'S GREAT EFFORT

JILL HASTINGS, captain of the Fourth Form, had to win a scholarship if she was to remain at Towershill School. Her staunch chum was Vicky Clayton, the junior games captain, who was losing popularity thanks to Gloria Beverleigh-Browne, a spoilt, rich, and dazzlingly pretty new girl, who quickly proved to be a disturbing influence.

Gloria was determined to become sports captain. She was nominated, and carried on an expensive election campaign.

On the afternoon of the election the Fourth Form was to play a hockey match against Oldbridge School, but Gloria failed to turn up, and Lottie Midland declared that a note written by Vicky had been responsible for Gloria's non-appearance.

THERE was furious indignation in Jill's eyes as she heard Lottie Midland accuse her chum.

"Lottie, you awful little rotter!" she cried. "How dare you say that Vicky was—"

"This letter proves it!" cut in Lottie with a sneer. "Brenda, you read it!"

A hush fell on the crowd outside the Oldbridge hockey pavilion as Lottie handed the note to Brenda Maddox, the Towershill prefect.

Brenda took it, looking wonderingly at Vicky, whose face was flushed with anger. Brenda read the note aloud, and everybody—the reporters and press photographers from the Highdale Courier included—pressed forward to hear.

"Your pressmen from Highdale are at the school gates and want to see you—urgently," Brenda read. "It's signed—V. Clayton."

"I never wrote that!" cried Vicky. "Of course she didn't!" Jill exclaimed. "How could she—when she didn't even know that Gloria had ordered reporters to attend the match? That note is a fake—"

"Oh, chuck it, Jill!" cut in Lottie scornfully. "We know you're Vicky's pal—but Vicky, naturally, wouldn't tell you that she'd deliberately planned to decoy Gloria away so that she couldn't play in this match! And that is what she has done!" she accused. "She tricked Gloria with that note, and somehow got rid of Gloria so that Gloria shouldn't show her up in this game!"

"Lottie—you dare—" blazed Jill and took a step forward. But Vicky, pale and grim, pulled her back.

"Steady, Jill," she said. "Let it rest for now. We'll go into this later. Meantime—"

"Meantime," added Brenda curtly, as an impatient pheeep came from the Oldbridge umpire already on the field, "it's about time you got on with the match. Gloria's obviously out of it. You'll have to play your reserve, Vicky."

Chin up, Vicky led the way on to the field, Jill at her side. Muttering amongst themselves, the rest of the

Towershill team followed. They were staggered by the facts they had heard.

Had Vicky really done that despicable thing? Everyone knew that Vicky was against Gloria—that had been the talk of the Junior School ever since Gloria had put herself up for the sports captaincy against her.

And Vicky would have so much to gain if Gloria was not here to rival her on the field of play, for it was well known that the girl who did the better out of Gloria and Vicky would sway the vote of the Third Form at the election that evening.

Jill sensed what the team was thinking. She knew, from the tight-set expression on Vicky's face, that she sensed it, too.

"Vicky, forget about it for now, old thing," she pleaded anxiously. "It's the match that matters. We can clear up this Gloria business afterwards. The Third are here, watching, and they know nothing of Lottie's rotten accusation. Pecker up, Vicky!"

"Trust me, Jill," said Vicky grimly. "I'm just not going to let this put me off my game."

And she didn't. From the first, Vicky was brilliant, not only as captain, but as an individualist. But the same could not be said of her team. Their minds did not seem to be on the game. There was no doubt that the sensational events before the match were putting them off.

In such circumstances, the inevitable happened. Oldbridge got a quick goal. Ten minutes later it was followed by another.

"Oh, Towershill!" came a groan from the sidelines. "Play up!"

Vicky breathed hard. She did her best, and Jill backed her up nobly. But at half-time they were still two goals down.

In the second half Vicky played as never before. She was here, there and everywhere. Her play brought many a cheer from the onlookers, but somehow she couldn't get the team working properly together.

Once again Oldbridge scored. It seemed that Towershill weren't going to have a look in, until Vicky made a daring, brilliant run of her own, and banged in a dazzling goal.

"Vicky!" came quick applause. "Good old Vicky!"

"Vicky for sports captain!"

Mainly that cheering came from the Third, warming Vicky's otherwise heavy heart. But that goal was the only one. Full time came with the crestfallen Towershill juniors soundly beaten 3-1.

"And the real reason for it," Alpha Ainsworth said bitterly, "is because Gloria was kept away!" Vicky, what do you know about—"

"Oh, be quiet!" Jill snapped, and eyes blinked at her, a little startled by this show of anger in their popular captain.

The Towershill juniors had tea with their rivals. After it, they set out across the fields for Towershill, the Pressmen, bent on following up the mystery of Gloria, accompanying them. They were all still wondering—Vicky and Jill among them—what

had happened to Gloria, when they heard a faint shout.

That was as they were passing Fenton's Folly—a solitary tower built in the woods near the school, and entered only by one door which had a great bar dropped across it. There were no windows in the Folly—no other outlet of any description.

"Help, help, help!" cried a muffled voice from within. "Oh, let me out—please."

And in electrified amazement the girls halted and stared at each other. For that voice—

"It's Gloria—Gloria at last!" Lottie Midland gasped, and dashed forward to lift the bar from the door.



THE ELECTION

In another moment out staggered Gloria—a still glamorous-looking Gloria in spite of her tumbled hair.

"Gloria, you're hurt,"

Alpha cried anxiously. "It's nothing—my ankle." Gloria, shrugging, bit on her curving lip. "I—oh, zipee, am I pleased to see you all. But tell me—how did the match go?"

"We lost—"

"Oh, I say! What a pity. And I really felt braced up for that match, you know. But—"

And then she saw the Pressmen; she dimpled at them and they raised their hats. "It's been pretty ghastly shut up in the Tower."

"But how did you come to get shut in there?" Alpha wanted to know.

"Well—"

Gloria hesitantly looked at Vicky. "I got your note, Vicky."

"Which I never sent," Vicky said grimly.

"Didn't send?" Gloria blinked. "Well, I found it on my study table and it was signed with your name. Naturally I went out to the gate to meet the Press people—but they weren't there. Then somebody called me from the wood. I came over here, saw that the door of the Folly was open and peered in."

"And then," Alpha Ainsworth guessed, with a glance at Vicky, "somebody shoved you in and clamped the bar on the door."

"Yes?"

"Who?"

"I don't know. A girl. But I only saw a bit of her skirt as she slammed the door."

There was a dead silence. All eyes, some of them openly accusing, were on Vicky now.

"Well, doesn't that clear it all up?" Lottie Midland crowed. "Isn't it all as plain as a flagpole? Vicky sent the note—a faked one. Vicky called from the woods and Vicky did the pushing in. And why? Simply to keep Gloria out of the match—"

"Lottie, you—you fibber!" Jill

cried. "Vicky wouldn't do such an awful thing. This is a plot. Somebody faked that note. Somebody planned all this just to blame Vicky."

"Oh, draw a line," Alpha Ainsworth said in disgust. "Who would? And why? Anyway," she added finally, "I'm convinced—and that means I'd rather run a mile than vote for Vicky! Come on, let's get on with the election. Can you walk, Gloria?"

"Of course. It—it's only a slight sprain, I think."

Only with difficulty did Jill prevent herself from blurting out the increasing suspicion that was in her mind—that this was Gloria's own plot—that Gloria had got somebody to fake that note, that Gloria had got somebody else to shut her up in the Tower!

It was the sort of trick, Jill was convinced now, of which she was capable; the sort of trick which would overwhelm her with sympathy at the same time putting Vicky in the blackest of the juniors' books.

And that, she saw with angry despair, was precisely the effect that Gloria had achieved. Hostile were the looks directed at Vicky, unfriendly was the gleam in the eyes of the Third Formers present as they talked among themselves. She saw, too, that the reporters were busily writing, obviously finding entertaining copy in all this. And Gloria was shaking that lovely head of hers.

"Well, I'm sorry—especially with the election so near," she said. "But—oh, well, don't let's think about it. I say," she added to the Pressmen, "you'd better come back to the school and take your photographs there when I've cleaned up. And I'm sure paterflap would love a report of the election."

"Oh, jiminy," breathed Clarissa. "What next will the girl think of? Newspaper men reporting a junior school election! Can you beat that?"

The Pressmen grinned. With Gloria—Gloria assisted by Lottie—they went off, Jill and Vicky trailing in the rear. Vicky's face was full of despair now.

"Jill, we're done—it's no good—"

"Thanks," Jill said bitterly, "to that scheming cat. But never mind, Vicky. We'll still hope for the best."

But hope, even in her own heart, was at low ebb. Its one gleam was the Third—the Third who, until now, had been an unknown quantity. How would they react to the news that their members present at the release of Gloria would bring them?

The answer to that, obviously, would come with the result of the election and after a wash and brush up, Jill and Vicky repaired to the recreation-room, where the election was to be held. They found the Fourth and the Third already gathered.

Gloria was there, still contriving to limp and look lovely and radiant even though her face wore a serious expression.

Then Miss Wren, who was in charge, came in with Grace Garrett, the head girl, and Elsa Maddison, duty prefect for the day who carefully carried the black ballot-box in her hands.

"Good-evening," Miss Wren said. "I hope everybody is present. Gloria, Vicky, as the contestants, kindly take your seats at my table here. Jill, please remain on duty at the door. Grace, call the roll."

Grace called the roll. Jill, standing by the door, could feel tension mounting. Everybody—the thirty belonging to the Fourth and the twenty from the Upper Third—were present.

Miss Wren announced the election procedure and then declared that the ballot would take place forthwith.

A WARNING TO JILL

Jill felt her heart beating painfully as she watched Grace and Elsa hand out the voting papers. Boldly she chalked her cross



against Vicky's name, folded the

paper and walked across to the ballot-box and dropped it in.

One by one the girls rose—Fourth first, Third next. One by one the fateful slips were dropped into the box and one by one the girls returned to their seats. And then, when all was done:

"We will now take the count," Miss Wren announced. "Grace and Elsa will act as tellers. Silence, please, while the counting goes on."

There was no need to ask for silence. The tension was almost painful now. Grace and Elsa sat with their backs to the school, but the rustle of the papers as they examined the votes was almost unnaturally loud.

Tension stretched to breaking point when finally Grace quietly rose and handed over to the mistress a slip on which the result had been noted. And everybody held their breath as the mistress, with a quick glance at the two rivals, rose.

"The result—" she coughed—"the result is as follows—"

"Oh, get on," Clarissa Brentford muttered feverishly.

"Gloria Beverleigh-Browne—thirty-five votes—"

"Oh, my stars!" thought Jill, and her heart seemed to drop with a thud, while Vicky turned white.

"Vicky Clayton—ten votes!" The mistress blinked. "Which means to say," she added, "that five girls have refrained from voting—"

Her voice was drowned by a cheer. "Gloria!" In a moment the Form was on its feet, papers and hands were wildly waving. "Gloria! Good old Gloria! Gloria sports captain—whoopee!"

And Gloria, rising, laughed, while Miss Wren smiled and shook the hand of the victor and Vicky, biting her lip, rose to her feet.

"Speech, speech, Gloria!" went up a cry.

"Thank you," Gloria said. "That is all I can say. As you've elected me I'll promise to do my very best—and I hope I succeed. But meantime—" she cried, "please don't forget the gallant loser, Vicky!"

And with a beaming smile, Gloria turned to Vicky and stretched out her hand. For a moment Vicky hesitated; took it and then, suddenly bowing her head, walked to Jill's side.

"I am pleased," Miss Wren announced, "that you have made your choice. But I must confess myself amazed, Vicky, that you have been so heavily defeated. I leave you now, girls, to your own devices and your celebration."

And off she went with the seniors while the girls scrambled to congratulate Gloria, leaving Vicky looking utterly sick and humiliated and Jill quivering with anger. Thirty-five to ten—a more than three-to-1 majority. What a snub for the most loyal, the hardest-working captain Junior School had ever known! What a triumph for Gloria's subtle scheming and treachery!

For treachery and scheming had earned the new girl that ill-deserved victory, Jill was convinced of that;

"Zip-ee, and so we've arrived!" Gloria was laughing. "Didn't I say I'd be your skipper? And what times we'll have now, eh? What reforms! No more footpadding to away matches. Cars, my children—all provided by your captain. And what games—whoopee! Wait till I fix you up with a junior county team. Wait till I get you a permanent fixture with the Seniors—"

"Good old Gloria!"

"Meantime—" Gloria was on top of the world now. Her eyes were sparkling, her cheeks flushed. She was utterly carried away—so much so, Jill grimly realised, that she had utterly forgotten her limp. "Meantime," Gloria resumed, "let's hit the headlines. The Pressmen are outside. Let's get them in, give 'em the story and let's have some pictures!"

Jill looked at Vicky. Significantly she inclined her head towards the door and together she and Vicky passed out.

Not a word they spoke until they reached the study.

"Well, that's that!" said Vicky heavily. "Gloria's got there."

Jill drew a deep breath. "Let her rip," she said quietly. "Don't fret. They're mad about Gloria now but wait till they find her out." She paused a moment, a gleam in her eyes. "She won this election by sheer trickery. Exactly how she worked that stunt this afternoon I don't know—yet. But I'll find out!"

She looked up abruptly as a knock came on the door. A moment later Bertha Mumford, Clarissa, and several other of Vicky's loyal supporters appeared. They all looked very gloomy.

"Well, that's that, I suppose," said Bertha gravely. "We've come to say how sorry we are, and—Vicky—I wish you'd won. Gloria may have pots of money, but I can't help feeling there was something phoney about this election—that her support was bought."

"I know," Jill frowned; for a moment she longed to blurt out her suspicions, but somehow remained silent. It would not do to run down Gloria now.

"What are we going to do?" asked Clarissa. "I haven't the heart to go into the hockey team with Gloria as captain. She's brilliant, but she doesn't understand team spirit."

"That's nonsense," Vicky said briskly—a Vicky who though her defeat had hurt her terribly, still retained her sense of fair play. "After all," she pointed out, "you won't be playing for Gloria alone—you'll be playing for the Form."

"But does Gloria know that?" Bertha asked dryly. "Still, I suppose you are right. Come down to the tuckshop, Vicky. My treat."

Mistily smiling her thanks, Vicky declined the generous offer, and her chums left. Anxiously Jill glanced at her unhappy face.

Vicky shook her head. She was still utterly depressed. Mechanically she got out the Sports Club books, a look of pain on her face as she flipped through them. Then she turned.

"I suppose," she said slowly, "I'd better hand these over to Diana for checking before Gloria has them. I'll trot them along, Jill."

Jill nodded. Her heart ached for Vicky as her chum went out. But hardly had Vicky vanished than the door opened and Gloria, radiant and smiling, stood there.

"Zip-ee, Jill. Wondered where you were." She laughed as she came into the study. "I say, you haven't congratulated me yet!"

Straightly Jill faced her.

"It's not my habit to congratulate traitors on their trickery," she said.

"Oh," Gloria's smile vanished.

"What do you mean?"

"What I say," Jill looked at her with scorn. "You know you've just tricked your way into Vicky's captaincy, Gloria. You know you've done nothing but work in an underhand way against Vicky ever since you got the idea you'd like to be captain. You might have kidded others, but you haven't kidded me—nor Vicky! And if ever I get the opportunity to bow you out I'll jolly well do it."

A little smile followed her spirited words. Then Gloria laughed lightly.

"Dear Jill," she murmured, "you sound so angry—so determined. But—" She paused, eyeing Jill thoughtfully. "I think, Jill, you ought to be very careful what you try to do. You should remember that Vicky Clayton was junior sports captain—until she got up against me. Now I'm sports captain—"

"Thanks to your trickery!" Jill shot out bitterly.

Gloria continued as if she hadn't heard.

"You, dear Jill, are Form captain—and you talk about getting up against me, too." She paused again. Her smile was suddenly dazzling. "Jill, I really do think you must step carefully, you know, because—surely, she finished very softly, "you wouldn't like to lose your captaincy as well?"

Is the amazing Gloria now after Jill's captaincy? See next week's exciting chapters.

The Man Of Many Disguises

The ESCAPE OF The Jackdaw



THE WARNING TELEPHONE MESSAGE

"NOW for a cup of tea, June—and an evening by the fire, for a change!"

Noel Raymond glanced smilingly at his youthful partner as he took off his greatcoat.

It was good to come out of the wintry dusk after a particularly tiring quest. The housekeeper had taken the evening off, and the famous detective was not expecting any callers.

"The fog's getting thicker, nunky," declared June Gaynor, turning to pull the heavy curtains across the window. "Thank goodness we haven't got to go out again this evening—"

She broke off, listening intently as the raucous voice of a news vendor sounded faintly from the street corner.

"Paper! Late h'extra! The Jackdaw escapes! Daring bid by master-crook! Late h'extra!"

Noel stiffened, while June's attractive face turned suddenly pale.

"Nunky, did you hear?" she gasped. Noel nodded grimly.

In two strides he had reached the door, and a few moments later June heard him racing down the street.

Before long he was back again, and together they poured over the startling news boldly printed in the stop-press column:

"THE JACKDAW ESCAPES! NOTORIOUS CROOK MAKES BID FOR FREEDOM IN THE FOG!"

There could be no mistake! The elusive Jackdaw—the amazing trickster of a hundred disguises—had made a daring escape from the prison van while being conveyed to gaol.

"When did it happen?" asked June. "Three hours ago," Noel replied as he scanned the rest of the report.

"While we were on that forgery business. Possibly Rayton tried to get in touch with me. I'll ring him now."

In a moment he was speaking over the phone to the police officer who had been in charge of the case.

June heard the terse, one-sided conversation.

"How did it happen, Rayton? Feigned illness and took his guard by surprise? He's certainly up to every trick! And you haven't a clue—what? You have! Splendid! A what? A golden lizard?" Noel whistled softly. "I'll be at the station in ten minutes!"

He replaced the receiver and turned to meet June's excited, questioning glance.

"The Jackdaw dropped a clue," he

said briefly. "A card with a golden lizard painted on it—nothing else. Rayton wants me to help him follow it up right away." He glanced ruefully at the cosy fire and the tray. "You'll have to have tea on your own, I'm afraid—"

"But, hunky, aren't I coming with you?" protested June.

"Not this time, my dear. It's Rayton's case," explained Noel, "and I'll be acting under his instructions. I'll be back as soon as I can, but don't wait up for me." He paused in the doorway, hat in hand. "Better lock up securely," he added, with a meaning glance, "just in case!"

June nodded, biting back her disappointment. As the front door slammed after her uncle she picked up the crumpled newspaper and re-read the brief, dramatic report. She had just finished and was pouring out a cup of tea when the telephone bell rang shrilly. Crossing to the phone, she lifted the receiver.

"Hallo!" she called.

"Good-evening!" a deep, rather pleasant voice, speaking apparently from some distance, came over the wire. "I should like a word with Mr. Raymond."

"I'm afraid he's out," said June. "Could you leave a message?"

"Don't worry," the speaker sounded faintly amused—"I'm an old acquaintance of his—and of yours, Miss Gaynor. Surely you haven't forgotten the Jackdaw?"

June froze, staring incredulously, unbelievably, at the telephone.

"The—The Jackdaw!" she whispered, half to herself.

An amused laugh came over the wire.

"I expect you've heard of my escape. The joke is that the police are scouring London for me, while I'm safely in the country. But—business!" The suave, amused voice hardened suddenly. "I was unlucky enough to drop a little souvenir when I escaped—a golden lizard."

June stiffened, her fingers tightening on the receiver.

"Well?" she breathed.

"That little memento is dangerous to anyone who pries too closely," went on the cool voice. "I warn you and your uncle not to meddle—as you value your lives!"

There was a sharp click as the caller rang off.

Pale, her thoughts racing, June replaced the receiver and glanced at her watch. The Jackdaw's threat might be sheer bluff. On the other hand—she ought to warn Uncle Noel!

Her hand trembling, she dialled the local police station; but for some reason the phone had gone dead. She could get no reply.

By PETER LANGLEY

June thought quickly. The police station was half a mile away, and she did not want to leave the flat for long in case Noel should phone. But there was sometimes a messenger on duty in the main hall.

Hastily scribbling a note, June darted out of the flat. The messenger was not at his desk, but the bent, ragged news vendor was calling his wares on the steps.

"Paper, miss?" he wheezed. "Jackdaw escapes—"

June slipped a coin into his hand. "Have you seen the messenger go out?" she asked breathlessly.

"Just this minute, miss," replied the other. "Maybe you'll catch him if you're quick—"

June sped down the steps, but in the encircling fog she could see no sign of the messenger. Biting her lip anxiously, she returned to the block of flats. The news vendor had gone and there was nothing for it but to await a call from Noel.

The yellow fog seemed to have found its way into the flat, dimming the cheerful lights. June hastily closed and bolted the door and proceeded to inspect the windows. As Noel had said, she could not be too careful!

Only the famous detective's dressing-room remained, and June opened the door, switching on the light.

Then she stiffened, a bewildered cry escaping her lips.

"Nunky! How—when did you come back?"

A tall, familiar figure, wearing Noel's travelling-coat, with collar turned up, was inspecting himself in the dressing-table mirror.

He did not start or turn, but June, meeting his stare in the glass, felt her heart freeze slowly.

The man was not Noel!

Then, at a glance, she saw two other things. Noel's wardrobe stood open, his clothes scattered over the floor—and flung on a chair was the news vendor's ragged coat and bag of papers!

For a moment June felt too amazed to move or cry out, and suddenly the stranger whirled, covering her with a revolver.

A pair of dark eyes stared at her menacingly from a thin, handsome face.

"You returned too quickly, Miss Gaynor," came the soft, mocking voice. "I advise you not to move—or call out. You should know by now that doors and walls are no protection against the Jackdaw!"



HE INTENDED TO IMPERSONATE NOEL

June's numbed thoughts cleared as, too late, she realised how she had been tricked.

That phone message had come from no farther than the hall below—and the news vendor had been the Jackdaw himself!

Instinctively she took a step backwards, but in a single bound the crook had reached the door, slamming it, and turning the key in the lock.

"You little fool!" he breathed, turning on her menacingly. "I might have pulled the trigger if I had not been so soft-hearted."

June clenched her hands, plucking up all her courage as she tried to still the thumping of her heart.

"You—you wouldn't dare!" she retorted boldly. "There are other people in these flats, and you'd never escape. There's nothing to prevent my screaming for help now."

The Jackdaw stared at her, a hint of grudging admiration in his dark eyes.

"I admire your pluck," he drawled, "but I warn you not to try me too far. I came here for a purpose, and I'll stand no interference."

And before she could move or cry out he darted forward and clapped a hand over her mouth. Despite her struggles he gagged her with a scarf, then secured her wrists with one of Noel's own ties. That done, he thrust her into a chair.

"I'm sorry to have to do this to you," he said coolly, "but my time is precious, and you interrupted me at my work. With your permission"—he smiled mockingly—"I will continue!"

Once again he turned to the mirror, removing his ragged tie and replacing it with one of Noel's. With a satisfied nod, he set to work with a small box that he took from his pocket.

Helpless, yet fascinated, June watched. She had often seen her uncle making up and admired his skill at disguise. But this was different.

There was something uncanny—almost frightening—in the way that the Jackdaw's thin face changed beneath his deft fingers. His cheeks filled out and his sallow complexion took on a sun-tanned, healthy tinge.

Finally, with a grunt of satisfaction, he adjusted a wig and selected a hat from the wardrobe, helping himself to a packet of Noel's special cigarettes.

"I think, Miss Gaynor," he smiled, "that this should do!"

He turned, lighting a cigarette, and an incredulous cry rose to June's lips, muffled by the scarf.

For the tall, debonaire figure who stood looking down at her with an amused smile was the image of Noel himself!

She could hardly believe her eyes. The difference was so minute that even she might have been momentarily taken in; a stranger would unquestioningly accept him as the famous detective.

June struggled, endeavouring vainly to cry out. What did it mean? What dastardly purpose lay behind the Jackdaw's audacious disguise?

He seemed amused by the look of horrified amazement in her eyes.

"Not too bad," he said modestly. "But I mustn't waste time. I fancy you'll be safe here for a few hours—time enough to complete the little job I have in mind. My deepest apologies, Miss Gaynor—and au revoir!"

With a gallant gesture, he left the room, and a moment later June heard him speaking on the phone in her uncle's study. Then the front door slammed and there was silence—broken only by the pounding of her own heart.

Desperately, careless of the pain, June tugged at her bonds. The minutes dragged past—the half-hour chimed from a distant clock—before she was able to loosen those skilful

knots. At last she was free. Snatching off the muffling scarf, the girl detective staggered to her feet, pale and dishevelled, her thoughts racing.

She must act—and act quickly—if the Jackdaw's nefarious game was to be thwarted!

Her first thought was the phone. Groping her way into the study, she switched on the light and picked up the receiver. But once more the phone was dead. The trickster must again have found some way of disconnecting it.

Her glance rested on the telephone-pad, and a gleam of excitement flashed suddenly into her eyes. The Jackdaw had been careless—under-rating the girl detective's pluck and astute wits.

The faint indentation on the pad showed up clearly as June rubbed it lightly with a pencil.

An address in South-West London was revealed, jotted down in the Jackdaw's own neat writing. It was more than enough for June. Recklessly she decided to tackle the case on her own. There was no time to lose!

A few minutes later she was out in the foggy streets, hailing a crawling taxi, and half an hour later she was ringing the door bell at an old-fashioned Georgian house in a select square.

As the door was opened by a manservant June heard the strains of dance music, and caught a glimpse of a brilliantly lit ball-room with a gay crowd in fancy dress.

For a moment her heart misgave her. Had she come to the right house? Could the audacious Jackdaw possibly be here in his amazing disguise?

"Excuse me," she said breathlessly, "do you know if—if Mr. Noel Raymond, the detective, has called here this evening?"

The servant raised his eyebrows as he glanced at June's card.

"Mr. Radcliffe did mention that he was expecting a detective, miss," he replied. "If you'll wait, I'll inquire."

He returned in a few minutes with a message that Mr. Radcliffe would see Miss Gaynor in his study.

June was ushered into a book-lined room, filled with objects of art and Eastern curios. Mr. Radcliffe, grey-haired and scholarly, shook hands.

"I have heard of you and your famous uncle, of course, Miss Gaynor," he said. "You can imagine my surprise when I received Mr. Raymond's phone message less than an hour ago."

"What—what did he say?" breathed June, her hands clenched, as she remembered that the Jackdaw had used the phone in her uncle's flat.

"It was a most perplexing message," said Mr. Radcliffe, frowning. "He warned me that one of my most priceless curios was in danger of being stolen by a notorious cracksmen. He said that he was calling personally this evening and would take steps to safeguard my treasure. I am still awaiting his arrival."

June drew a quick breath, her eyes lighting up. So she was not too late to upset the Jackdaw's dastardly plot!

"Was—was this curio a golden lizard?" she asked breathlessly.

Mr. Radcliffe nodded, obviously surprised by the question.

"I see you know all about it, Miss Gaynor. No doubt your uncle told you—"

June shook her head.

"Uncle knows no more about it than I do," she declared. "He had a slender clue—that was all. It wasn't uncle who phoned you!"

"What?" ejaculated Mr. Radcliffe, staring. "What do you mean, Miss Gaynor? Who was it who phoned me?"

"A notorious crook who calls himself the Jackdaw!" declared June. Breathlessly she explained while Mr. Radcliffe listened in growing amazement and indignation.

"You mean—"

"I mean," said June, "that the man who is calling on you this even-

ing is the Jackdaw himself, in disguise!"

Barely had Mr. Radcliffe recovered from his amazement when there came a knock on the door, and the manservant entered with a card.

"The gentleman you were expecting has called, sir," he announced. "He says that it is urgent that he should see you at once. He is waiting in the hall."

June drew in her breath sharply as she took the card and looked at it.

"Noel Raymond, Detective, London."

Mr. Radcliffe looked pale and agitated as he glanced at June.

"We—we must take precautions, Miss Gaynor," he said. "If this scoundrel suspects that we have discovered his identity he may prove dangerous. I will have him shown up here and you must hide. There is a balcony overlooking the hall, and you will be able to see everything that occurs."

A few moments later June was hidden behind a palm on the balcony overlooking the hall. Eagerly she stared down. Standing aloof from the gay crowds in fancy dress was a tall, unmistakable figure—dressed like Noel Raymond!

As she watched the manservant approach him across the hall she became aware of a faint tap-tapping in the shadows behind her. She spun round, her heart in her mouth, to confront a tall figure wearing a monk's robe and hood.

As she stared at him he tapped his foot lightly on the floor as he watched her from behind the pillar, and June's heart froze suddenly. It was impossible! That curious, nervous habit was the mark of the Jackdaw—but the Jackdaw was down there in the hall—

The tall monk laughed again—an unpleasant laugh—and a stifled scream was torn from June's lips as he raised his hood.

She was staring into a handsome, cunningly disguised face unbelievably like her uncle's, but the eyes held a cold and merciless glitter.

Before she could move or cry out again he had sprung at her, and a muffling cloak choked her terrified cry.



NOEL TAKES A HAND

"Mr. Radcliffe will see you at once, sir."

Noel gave a nod of relief as he followed the manservant across the brilliant hall, with its colourful crowd of guests.

In the last hour the famous detective had been busy. The inspector's curious clue had set him on a strange quest. The golden lizard was obviously an Eastern symbol, and Noel had visited a friend of his well versed in such matters. He discovered that symbol was identical to a priceless golden curio that had been unearthed in Tibet and was now in the collection of Mr. Radcliffe.

That had been enough for Noel! It was clear that the elusive Jackdaw was after that particular curio—worth a fortune for its gold alone.

But he had no idea how the scoundrel intended to achieve his purpose.

As he followed the manservant up the stairs one of the guests jostled him clumsily—a tall man wearing a monk's robe and hood. Noel, busy with his own thoughts, heard the other's muttered apology as the manservant threw open a door.

"Mr. Noel Raymond, sir!" he announced.

"Mr. Radcliffe?" inquired Noel, holding out his hand to the grey-haired owner of the house. "My name is Raymond—Noel Raymond. I'm sorry to intrude but I have suspicions that a notorious—"

"Quite, Mr. Raymond!" said Mr. Radcliffe affably, with a glance at the burly manservant. "I'm delighted to meet you!"

He took Noel's hand in a vice-like

grip; at the same instant the manservant flung his arm round the young detective, taking him completely off his guard.

Completely bewildered, Noel gazed incredulously at the owner of the house.

"What does this mean?" he demanded, his face slightly flushed, an angry glint in his blue eyes.

"It means," said Mr. Radcliffe sternly, "that the game's up, you scoundrel! Fortunately I was warned in advance about your audacious imposture. You are the crook who escaped from the police this afternoon—the notorious Jackdaw!"

Noel started violently. "Are you mad?" he cried. "Where did you get that idea? My credentials are in my wallet, if you care to search me."

"Hold him, Saunders," said Mr. Radcliffe grimly, as he ran his hand through Noel's pockets. "I thought as much! There is no wallet here. You are lying!"

Noel paled slightly, remembering the tall monk who had jostled him on the stairs.

"This is a trick!" he exclaimed sharply. "The Jackdaw is here among your guests. Who put this idea into your head?"

"One who should know," was the reply. "Miss Gaynor—Noel Raymond's partner."

"June!" exclaimed Noel incredulously. "Is she here?"

Mr. Radcliffe opened the door that led on to the gallery.

"Miss Gaynor!" he called. But there was no reply. A cold premonition gripped Noel's heart.

"Mr. Radcliffe," he said, controlling his feeling of uneasiness with an effort, "will you please show me where you last saw Miss Gaynor?"

Mr. Radcliffe nodded to the manservant to escort Noel into the gallery. He switched on the light, and Noel drew in his breath sharply, his face paling as his worst fears were confirmed.

"Look, man!" he exclaimed. "Those marks on the polished floor—that overturned plant. There's been a struggle here! My niece is in danger and—"

"You can tell that to the police!" cut in Mr. Radcliffe sternly. "Lock him up, Saunders, while I phone the station—Ah, hold him!"

But Noel, desperate now, had applied a ju-jitsu hold on the startled manservant, sending him crashing to the floor.

Evading Mr. Radcliffe's grasp, he raced along the gallery, slamming and locking a door behind him. Whipping a torch from his pocket, he examined the flight of stairs in front

of him, stairs that seemed to lead to an attic.

His eyes glinted suddenly as he saw a faint trail, a trail of white powder. A moment later he came across June's dainty powder compact on a narrow landing outside a locked door.

It had been purposely dropped by the girl detective.

The door crashed open as Noel threw his weight against it, and a stifled ejaculation escaped his lips. In a corner among the lumber was huddled a girlish figure, securely bound and gagged.

In a moment Noel was on his knee beside her, and a sigh of relief escaped her lips as June opened her eyes dazedly.

But at the same instant he heard the faint creak of a board, and turned sharply. With an incredulous ejaculation he started to his feet, staring, apparently, at himself!

The figure in the doorway took a step forward, and a revolver glinted in his hand.

"I'm sorry, Raymond," he drawled, "but you will insist on meddling. There's only one way—"

He levelled the revolver, fitted with a silencer, at the young detective and pressed the trigger. Noel dropped like a stone. The Jackdaw's face was pale as he bent over the fallen detective.

"Stunned," he muttered huskily. "I didn't shoot to kill. He brought it on himself. Now for the golden lizard!"

Swiftly, noiselessly, he descended the stairs and opened a window. The policeman pacing his beat in the dense fog heard a faint sound but he did not see the furtive, cat-like figure who slid down a drainpipe and vanished silently round a corner.

Boldly, his nerve fully recovered, the Jackdaw rang the bell at the main entrance to the house. A few minutes later he was confronting the agitated Mr. Radcliffe.

"I understand that you have just phoned the police," the disguised Jackdaw said. "Where is this scoundrel who is masquerading in my name?"

"He's escaped, Mr. Raymond," declared Mr. Radcliffe huskily, "but he can't have left the house. What do you suggest we do?"

The Jackdaw lit one of Noel's cigarettes without a tremor.

"To start with, I suggest you hand the golden lizard into my safe keeping—while we are awaiting the police. We can't afford to take any risks."

"I have it here," declared Mr. Radcliffe, taking a case from his pocket and glancing uneasily towards the curtain behind them. "I took it from the safe as a precaution. Would you like to examine it?"

"With pleasure!" murmured the Jackdaw, his eyes glittering as he opened the case.

Then a stifled ejaculation was torn from his lips. For he was staring at—a pair of handcuffs!

"For you, Jackdaw!" exclaimed a stern voice behind him as Noel stepped from the curtained alcove, revolver in hand. "I wasn't injured or even stunned," he added with a grim smile. "I dropped one second before you fired—and June and I managed to convince Mr. Radcliffe that I was the real Noel Raymond!"

While he kept the Jackdaw covered, Mr. Radcliffe stepped forward, handcuffs outstretched. As he made to clasp them on the master-crook's wrists, he unwittingly stepped between Noel and the Jackdaw.

It was only for a couple of seconds that Mr. Radcliffe's body shielded the crook from the detective's gun, but those few short moments were enough.

Out whipped the Jackdaw's hands. Before Mr. Radcliffe could realise what was afoot he felt himself gripped and hurled backwards—straight to where Noel stood with levelled revolver.

Unable to dodge in time, the detective went reeling back as the other man bumped into him, and instantly the Jackdaw had streaked for the door.

Crack!
Recovering his balance, Noel pulled on the trigger and a bullet went whining into the corridor.

But too late. The Jackdaw was out of sight, and though the alarm was instantly sounded, no trace of him was found. Once away from the house he donned another of his amazing disguises and made good his escape.

A few days later Noel and June were informed by the authorities that they believed the master-crook had fled abroad, but neither June nor her uncle believed that the Jackdaw had gone for good.

"I've a feeling he will be back as soon as the hue and cry's died down," declared June.

Noel nodded. "I think the same, my dear," he said. "It won't be long before we're at grips with him again, and the sooner the better."

June's eyes gleamed. "Rather!" she cried. "And next time we'll take jolly good care he doesn't get away!"

(End of this week's story.)

"JUNE IN THE HOUSE OF PERIL"
—that is the title of next Friday's grand detective story.

THE GIRL WHO PUT FLAME FIRST

(Continued from page 184.)

She quivered at the thought of it. The last few days had been so busy, they'd passed almost like a dream.

So far there had been no reply from the headmistress about Silver's plan for the team display at the riding carnival. Miss Wynford had told Dot that she'd think it over and let the Fourth know in due course.

That scheme could wait, important though it was. But the point-to-point couldn't wait!

Every morning she'd been up before dawn, dodging away from school to where Jock was waiting for her, with the chestnut saddled and bridled. And she'd given Flame a fast practice gallop, thrilling to find how fit he was.

She knew Jock wouldn't let her down. He'd have Flame at the starting-point at a quarter to three tomorrow.

And she must be there, too! Even though Miss Hatch had sentenced her to an afternoon in the detention-room.

She had found out just what happened when a girl was given detention at Lowchester.

At two o'clock one of the prefects would lock her in an upstairs room with barred windows. Here she was supposed to stay and write her lines till the prefect released her at four-thirty.

Silver had made her plans. Never would they keep her in, on this vital afternoon, when Flame needed her so much!

But she meant to act warily. She mustn't be found out, for that might mean further punishment that would make it still more difficult for her to carry out her plans for Flame.

So she must get her lines done first, and smuggle them into the detention-room with her. That was why she was here in the study, half an hour after midnight.

Once again she bent over the task, her pen scratching away, adding page after page to the litter that was spread over her desk.

Quarter to one! She blinked her sleepy eyes, forcing herself to keep awake. Until at last—

"Finished!" she whispered, with a sigh of relief.

She felt too tired and sleepy to clear up the muddle to-night. That

could wait till morning; no one would come in here before breakfast-time.

She tiptoed to the door and flung it open; and then, as she stood on the threshold, her heart almost jumped into her mouth.

A brisk footstep echoed out, and round the corner stepped a figure in a black silk dressing-gown. It was Miss Hatch, the mistress of the Fourth, her face looking more sharp-featured than ever.

And before Silver had a chance to step back she'd been seen!

"Silver Dawson!" Miss Hatch fairly barked out the words as she quickened her pace. "What is the meaning of this? Why are you out of bed at this hour?"

She was only a few yards away. There would be no chance for Silver to clear up the litter of papers, with the lines written on them, that were spread all over her desk.

Yet if the mistress saw she had written all her lines beforehand, she'd guess what was afoot. She'd guess that Silver was planning to break out of detention, and she would take steps to prevent it!

You will see how Silver tries to save the day in next week's appealing instalment.

THE MERRYMAKERS AFLOAT

(Continued from page 182.)

near. Why should the intelligent creature have behaved in such a way if it contained only scientific apparatus? And why had Darrel and his companion shown such panic? Why had they been almost hostile when they had first arrived, and were now all smiles when they were leaving?

Sally's suspicions that there was something peculiar happening upon the island still persisted. Her thoughts started her. If there was someone else on the island—

If there was—the owner of that shoe and bracelet—then did it mean that she was a captive in the hut? That that was why the two men had been so desperately determined that no one should go near it?

Yet another point puzzled Sally—that explosion. Had she or one of her chums unwittingly set off a cunningly concealed mine, or had it been set off by Darrel or Lorenzo as an excuse to justify their demanding that they should leave the island?

"Cast off!" ordered First Officer Hendrick to one of the crew. The mooring rope was unfastened, and the boat swung away from the island. Darrel and Lorenzo waved farewell.

"Mr. Hendrick"—impulsively Sally spoke—"I've got a feeling that those men were concealing something from us. I'm sure we ought to have another look round."

The officer shot her a look of annoyance.

"Miss Warner, you've already caused enough trouble, without starting any more," he said sharply. "I'm perfectly satisfied that everything is in order. Darrel showed me his papers. He's a Government scientist, who has been sent to that island to carry out certain experiments. Lorenzo is his assistant. The S.O.S. did not come from that island, and there the matter ends."

"But—"
"I said the matter ends there, Miss Warner."

Sally lapsed into silence again. She glanced back at the island. The two men had disappeared from sight, and she caught a glimpse of the monkey running up and down along the beach. Then he, too, vanished amid the trees.

The boat chugged on over a reddening sea as the sun, a large, fiery ball, gradually sank below the horizon. Darkness was descending when they reached the Ocean Star, lying at anchor in a sea that was now perfectly calm.

Immediately Sally & Co. were surrounded as soon as they appeared on deck. Everybody was asking them questions about the trip. Then the chums themselves heard that a second boat party had already gone to the other island; that it was not expected back before dawn, and that the Ocean Star was anchoring in its present position overnight.

The excited questioning died away, and Sally & Co. found themselves alone by the rail. Again and again Sally looked towards the island. Then suddenly a determined glint shone in her eyes.

"Coming for a swim?" she asked abruptly.

"Eh?" Johnny stared. "Gosh, what a queer idea—"

"I'm swimming across to the island," Sally announced in a tense whisper. "I shan't be satisfied until I've had a look in that hut. I've got a hunch that there is somebody else on the island, and—and that the S.O.S. did come from there. Which would mean only one thing—"

"That—that someone is a prisoner!"

"Yes. The ship's anchoring here

all night so we've got plenty of time." went on Sally eagerly, excitedly. "Are you coming with me?"

"You bet we are!"
And so it was that a quarter of an hour later, unnoticed in the darkness, four figures lowered themselves down a rope into the water. Sally & Co. were all good swimmers, and a quarter of a mile in a calm sea would present no difficulty to them.

Breathless, but thrilling with excitement at their reckless adventure, Sally & Co. reached the island, clambered out of the water, and silently made their way up the silvery beach.

The chums found the path through the trees, and so reached the river, a twisting ribbon of silver under the now rising moon. And there on the other side, silhouetted against the night sky, was the hut. Not a chink of light showed from the door or through the small window.

They crossed the bridge and reached the hut. Sally saw that the door was still padlocked. She was about to reach out a hand to examine it when suddenly a tingling thrill ran right through her.

For from inside the hut had come the sound of a voice—a girl's voice.

"Oh, daddy, it's hopeless now! They must have left the island. They didn't know we were here, helpless prisoners—"

Sally was quivering with excitement. She had been right—she had been right! There was a girl on the island; she was a prisoner. And with her was her father—

"Who's that?" Sally cried. "We're from the ship. We've come back—"

"Daddy, did you hear that? Rescue has come! Oh, can you open the door?" I'm Phyllis Darrel, and I'm a prisoner here with my father.

"Darrel?" gasped Sally. "But—but that's the name of the man with the beard—"

"That crook?" came back the girl's voice. "His name is Mortimer. He's made us prisoners here. Oh, can't you get us free somehow—please, please!"

Sally was looking, shining-eyed, at her chums. Something of the truth was dawning on her. The man who had called himself Darrel had taken that name so that he could show the real Mr. Darrel's papers to First Officer Hendrick, and thus divert suspicion from himself.

"Johnny, you brought that file, didn't you?" Sally asked tensely. "You bet I did! And Johnny, producing the file which he had borrowed from the Ocean Star's carpenter, began to work with it on the padlock.

And while he worked Phyllis Darrel explained what had happened. It was her father who was the scientist who had come to this island to carry out a number of secret experiments. Then the two crooks, Mortimer and Lorenzo, had appeared, having chosen the island as a base for smuggling operations. They had imprisoned Phyllis and her father.

Then Phyllis, managing to escape, and seeing the Ocean Star, had thought of the idea of sending an S.O.S. fastening it round her pet monkey's neck and setting him adrift in the canoe. Phyllis herself had been recaptured, and during the struggle, as she was being dragged back to the hut, had lost her shoe and bracelet.

"How's it going, Johnny?" asked Sally eagerly.

"Almost through—it is through!" whooped Johnny as the padlock fell apart in his hands. "Merrymakers to the rescue!"

Inside the hut they found Phyllis and her father bound hand and foot. In a matter of seconds they had rescued them.

"What now?" Sally asked. "Will you stay hidden while we swim back to the ship and fetch help, or—"

There was a sudden gasp of consternation from Fay, who stood on guard by the door.

"Look out! Those men are coming!"

"Run for it—run for it!" cried Phyllis Darrel. "They shan't capture us again!"

She went running out of the hut which had been used by her father as a laboratory. Philip Darrel gave a warning shout.

"Not that way, Phyllis—"

But his daughter, frantic to escape, did not heed him. The chums rushed after her, and now there was no turning back, for Mortimer and Lorenzo had already crossed the bridge and were racing in pursuit.

"They've got a way! Those youngsters have come back!" Lorenzo shouted.

"After them!" cried Mortimer furiously. "They won't get far that way."

Sally's heart gave a jolt. She turned to Philip Darrel, running beside her.

"What's he mean?"

"This way leads to a big swamp," the scientist replied. "We could cross it in daylight, but not in the darkness. I was trying to warn you, Phyllis—"

"The swamp! Oh, daddy, I'd forgotten that. But there's the headland. If we scramble up there—"

"It's our only chance!" Philip Darrel panted.

They rushed on through a belt of trees.

A shrill, chattering sounded beside Sally, and she saw that Phyllis's monkey had joined them. While from behind came the thud of rushing footsteps as the crooks still pursued them. Mortimer flashing a torch on and off to keep them in sight.

The rocky headland loomed in view. Breathlessly they scrambled up it, and then Sally knew that her worst fears were confirmed. Beyond was a sheer drop down into the sea, and Mortimer and Lorenzo were already climbing up after them.

The monkey picked up a piece of rock and hurled it down at the men. Johnny gave a sudden roar.

"That's an idea! Keep back—keep back!" he yelled, levering a large boulder into position above the men.

Mortimer gave a snarl of rage, and then flung his torch at Johnny. It missed, and Sally caught it. And as she did so an excited gleam shot into her eyes.

"Keep them at bay!" she cried. "Don't let them come up—"

And even as she spoke she turned to face the sea—to face the Ocean Star, lying out there at anchor, lights blazing. Next moment Sally was flashing the torch—sending out a message in Morse.

"Help! Sally Warner. Prisoners on island. Rescue!"

As she signalled the others hurled rocks at the crooks, keeping them back. There was a minute or so's suspense, then came an answering flash from the steamer. As the crooks saw it they knew that the game was up.

"We've got to get away!" snarled Mortimer. "Get to the boat!"

But their fast motor-launch was on the other side of the island, and though they reached it they never succeeded in putting to sea. For by that time a party from the liner had reached the island, and the crooks were rounded up.

They were manacled and would be put in the ship's cells. First Officer Hendrick heard the whole story from Philip Darrel. He and his daughter would remain on the island, and they found it hard to express their gratitude to Sally & Co. for all they had done.

Ten minutes later the chums were speeding back to the Ocean Star, waving farewell to Phyllis and her father, and to the island which had been the scene of such an exciting adventure.

(End of this week's story.)

More fun and thrills with the Merry-makers next week.