

Released

"THE MYSTERY MESSAGE-WRITER OF THE FOURTH"

One of the 6 Exciting
Stories Inside.

No. 748. Vol. 29.

EVERY FRIDAY.

Week Ending February 18th, 1950.

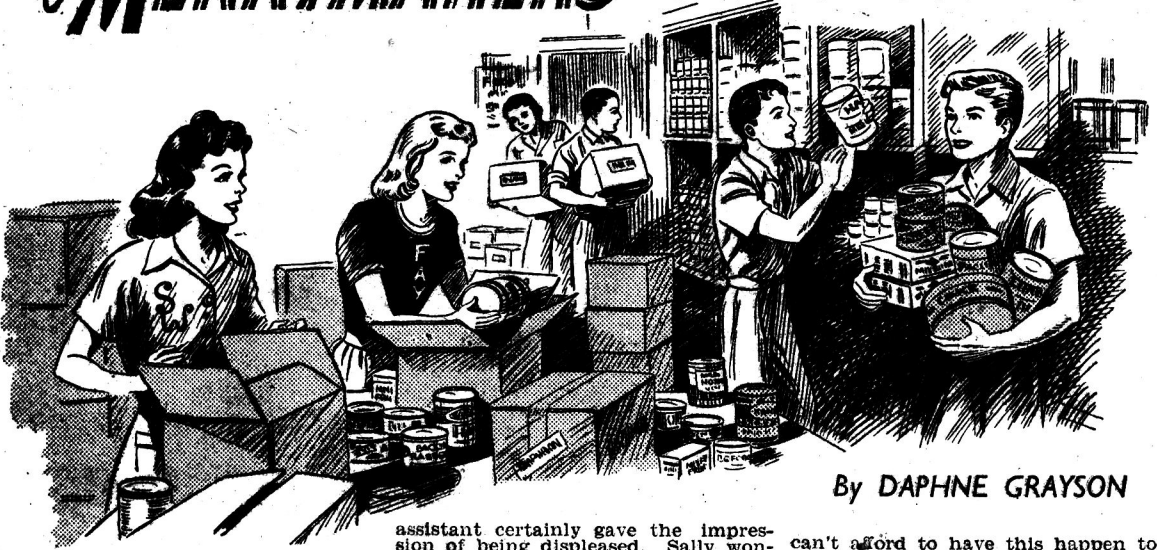
GIRLS' CRYSTAL ^{3¢}

AND "THE SCHOOLGIRL"



DETECTIVE JUNE'S
STRANGEST CASE

The MERRYMAKERS' ISLAND COLLEGE



By DAPHNE GRAYSON

SALLY & CO. LEND A HAND

"IT'S a marvellous idea—this sending food parcels to Britain!" declared Johnny Briggs. "There's only one thing I'd rather do more than send a parcel—"

"And what's that, Johnny?" asked Sally Warner, Fay Manners, and Don Weston.

"Send of a couple of hundred!" grinned Johnny.

It was a sentiment which had his chums' wholehearted agreement. The cheery quartet—known as the Merry-makers at the International College on Waloorie Island, off the Australian coast—were British themselves, and they had contributed generously to the "Gift Parcels for Britain" campaign now being organised on the island.

"Well, you'll be having the chance, Johnny," smiled Sally. "Here we are at the packing station, and there's Mrs. Holmes. Good-morning, Mrs. Holmes! Four students reporting for duty," she added brightly.

They had entered a large barn which stood back from a picturesque, white-painted house—the residence of Mrs. Augusta Holmes, district organiser of the gift-parcels campaign.

Mrs. Holmes, middle-aged, tall, and dignified, sat at a table, checking a long list of figures.

"Why, halo!" she exclaimed. "But I wasn't expecting you students until this afternoon."

"Professor Willard, our headmaster, gave us permission to come along this morning, Mrs. Holmes," Sally explained.

"Splendid!" Mrs. Holmes positively beamed. "Monica," here are some students to help us," she added, calling across to a girl working at the far end of the barn. "Isn't it kind of them to come early?"

Monica Reeves, Mrs. Holmes' assistant, was a girl in her early twenties. She was attractive, though there was a rather discontented droop to her mouth. That droop became more pronounced now.

"They needn't really have come early, Mrs. Holmes," she said. "I mean, I can easily manage, especially as Wilkes can help me part of the time."

"But, Monica, my dear, we shall now be able to get the next consignment of parcels ready for dispatch to-day instead of leaving it until to-morrow," Mrs. Holmes said eagerly.

A startled light appeared momentarily in Monica's brown eyes. Sally saw the resentful look she flashed at the chums. Mrs. Holmes had welcomed their early arrival, but her

assistant certainly gave the impression of being displeased. Sally wondered why.

The barn had the appearance of being a warehouse. Tins of food were stacked on shelves—fruit, jam, various meats, puddings, cakes, and a variety of other things. And on the floor were piles of empty cardboard boxes waiting to be filled and packed.

"Well, I'll leave you in Monica's expert hands," said Mrs. Holmes, with a smile for that girl and another beam for the chums. "I must hurry away—I have so many things to attend to."

She bustled off; and no sooner had she gone than Monica Reeves turned to the Merry-makers.

"There was no need for you to have come at all," she said, making no attempt now to hide her resentment.

Sally flushed indignantly.

"No; but now we're here, would you please show us what we have to do?"

"Oh, very well! Just as you like." Monica Reeves demonstrated how a parcel should be packed, the chums intently taking a note of which items went in and where they were placed. Then she, too, went out of the barn without another word.

"Wonder what's biting her?" grinned Don.

"Who cares?" asked Fay. "Let's get busy."

At first the chums were slow and a little unsure of themselves, but gradually they quickened up, and the pile of parcels steadily grew.

"Getting on like a house on fire!" chuckled Sally. "One pudding coming over, Johnny!" she called to that boy who, with Fay, was doing the packing.

At that moment Monica Reeves returned to the barn. A scowl crossed her features as she saw the mounting pile of finished parcels.

She hurried forward, cutting across Johnny's vision just as Sally was in the act of throwing him one of the fruit puddings. Disconcerted, Johnny made a frantic grab for the pudding, missed it, and down on the floor it dropped.

"There, look at that!" exclaimed Monica in a loud voice. "Really, Mrs. Holmes, these students shouldn't skylark about like this, should they? The pudding's squashed, and we

can't afford to have this happen too often!"

The organiser had entered the barn just then, and she frowned reprovingly at Johnny.

"Sorry!" Johnny gulped, and then glared at Monica. "But you cut in front of me just as I was going to catch it. It's the first accident, anyway, and I'll pay for another pudding, of course."

"That's not really the point," Mrs. Holmes said quietly. "No, please don't throw the things about." And then her expression changed as she saw the pile of parcels ready for dispatch, and she beamed again. "Oh, splendid!" she exclaimed. "You have been working hard. At this rate we shall be able to send the consignment to Sarneville to-day for a certainty. I'll get in touch with our volunteer van-driver and tell him to come over this afternoon. I'm delighted. And now, everybody, it's time for lunch."

They had lunch, and after the meal Sally & Co. hurried back to the barn, eager to carry on with their work. Now they were handling the parcels with even swifter efficiency, and Monica and Wilkes, Mrs. Holmes' gardener, came in to help for a little while.

Mrs. Holmes watched with smiling approval.

"My word, you have become expert!" she exclaimed. "The van-driver has told me he will be here at four o'clock."

"We'll have them finished before that, Mrs. Holmes," said Johnny confidently.

"I believe you will— Oh, my goodness!" Mrs. Holmes suddenly gave a violent start. "The peaches—the peaches!" she ejaculated.

"Peaches, Mrs. Holmes?" repeated Sally, puzzled.

"You haven't put a tin of peaches in that parcel!"

Now it was the Merry-makers who looked startled.

"But—but we weren't told to," protested Fay. "Monica said nothing about peaches—"

"That I did!" Monica Reeves came hurrying across. "Mrs. Holmes, don't say they haven't included the peaches in the parcels—"

"They haven't, my dear!" Mrs. Holmes looked horrified. "Oh, this is too bad! All these parcels will have to be reopened and repacked."

Sally quivered with indignation. Once again Monica Reeves had played a trick on them—only this one was far, far more serious.

"Monica, Fay is right!" she cried fiercely. "You said nothing about including peaches, and there wasn't a tin of peaches in the parcel you showed us how to pack."

This Week Sally & Co. Help To Pack Food Parcels For Britain—And Run Into A Queer Mystery!

"Of course there was!" Monica fashed. "And I distinctly remember telling you. Goodness me, I've packed thousands of these parcels. As if I would forget one of the items—"

"You didn't tell us!"
"I did! Oh, Mrs. Holmes, why did you have these students here? I could have managed on my own and had the parcels ready by to-morrow morning. As it is, all that's been achieved is a lot of useless work—and extra work as a result, because it's got to be done all over again!"

"I'm afraid you're right, Monica," said Mrs. Holmes. "The parcels certainly won't go off to-day. I must phone the van-driver and tell him to come to-morrow, after all."

"But, Mrs. Holmes—" began Sally desperately.

The organiser gave her a frigid look. "I appreciate your offer to come here and help, but I'm afraid the result has been far from satisfactory," she said, as much in despair as in anger. "I shall explain to your headmaster. I suggest you return to the college."

She walked out of the barn, accompanied by Monica and Wilkes, leaving the chums scarlet-faced and furious.

"Gosh, that Monica girl didn't want us here—and now she's succeeded in getting rid of us!" snorted Johnny. "But why? What's she got against us? We've never seen the girl before—"

"I say, look at this! Look at what I've just found!" And Don, who had crossed over to a pile of packing-cases to get his blazer, excitedly rejoined his chums, holding out a slip of paper. "Read this!"

"Consignment must catch ship," they read, "but delay dispatch until Friday morning."

There was no signature, but beneath the message was a small circle enclosing two dots.

"Golly, there's the answer to your question, Johnny!" Sally exclaimed, her blue eyes gleaming. "That's why Monica didn't want us here—because she didn't want us to get those parcels ready in time to be sent to Sarneville to-day!"

A SURPRISE IN SARNEVILLE

"SALLY'S right!" cried Fay. "Monica kept on saying the parcels could be sent to-morrow, and that's Friday!" Don put in. "And she must have dropped this note from somebody who signs himself with a circle and two dots. A bit of luck for us—and bad luck for her. Come on! We must show this to Mrs. Holmes!"

The chums hurried out of the barn—just in time to see that lady driving out of the gateway in her car.

"We've missed her!" groaned Johnny in dismay. "Gosh, what do we do now?"

"Get those parcels ready so that they can be sent off to-day," Sally replied firmly. "That's going to please Mrs. Holmes and get us back in her good books—and nip Monica's little scheme in the bud at the same time."

Back to the barn they went, eyes bright with determination.

The big pile of parcels they had already packed confronted them. Every one had to be opened and everything inside re-arranged to accommodate the peaches which had been left out.

Sally & Co. buckled to. Swiftly they worked, perspiring in the heat of the barn, but never pausing. An hour went by, an hour and a half, and by that time all the faulty parcels had been put right. Then on with the rest of the consignment.

"Keep it up!" gasped Sally, hastily dabbing at her moist brow. "Not many more now. I wonder when Mrs. Holmes will be back—"

She broke off as footsteps sounded outside the barn; but it was Monica, not Mrs. Holmes, who came in.

Monica stopped dead as she saw the chums; a look of rage crossed her face as she saw what they were doing.

"Mrs. Holmes told you to go!" she cried furiously. "Get out—"

"We prefer to stay," Sally cut in. "Perhaps you'd be wiser to go, Monica, before we show this to Mrs. Holmes."

She held out the slip of paper they had found. Monica gave a guilty start as she recognised it, the colour draining from her cheeks. Then suddenly her hand flashed out, making a grab at the piece of paper—so swiftly and unexpectedly that she succeeded in gaining possession of it.

"Golly, get it back!" gasped Sally. But they were behind the packing bench and parcels impeded their progress. In consternation, they saw Monica run to Mrs. Holmes' table, snatch up a cigarette-lighter, and apply a flame to the incriminating note.

Sneeringly, she faced the chums as they raced up.

"So what?" she asked, tossing away the burnt fragments. "What were you going to show Mrs. Holmes? Get out!" she ordered violently.

Sally fought down her dismay at losing the note.

"We'll still stay," she said coolly. "Sorry to upset your plans, Monica, but we've practically finished packing the whole consignment of parcels—"

The sneering expression faded from Monica's face, and now she was clearly frightened.

"You shan't—you shan't!"
"Who's going to stop us?" grinned Johnny. "Come on, Merrymakers!"

They went across to the garage, only to discover it was padlocked. Seeking another way in, they rushed round the back, and found there were doors there, too.

"And they're locked—from the inside!" Don groaned. "We can't get in!"

"Yes, we can—through the window!" Sally exclaimed in growing excitement.

She said no more, but hurried to the window. It was not quite closed, and they soon succeeded in levering it open. A few moments later Don was scrambling in through the aperture. Johnny followed him. There came the sound of bolts being shot back, and then a whir and a roar as Johnny started up the engine of the van.

"Hurrah!" cheered Sally and Fay.

The rear doors swung open, and Johnny drove out the van, steering it round to the barn and pulling up outside. There was no sign of Monica, and in a matter of minutes the sacks were loaded on to the van, and then,



Sally & Co. were busy unloading the bags of parcels when an agitated girl in a white overall came running on to the scene. "Stop! There's been an awful mistake!" she cried.

complete with tins of peaches. Back to work, Merrymakers!"

In just over a quarter of an hour the task was completed. Sally & Co. surveyed their handiwork with justifiable pride.

"They have to go into these sacks, don't they?" asked Don. "Right! We'll do that while we wait for Mrs. Holmes."

Monica watched them fill the sacks with the parcels, rage glittering in her eyes, but saying nothing.

"You'll have to wait a long time," she said now. "She's not due back until six, and the Sarneville depot closes at five!"

Sally glanced at her watch. It was now four o'clock.

"Then we won't wait for Mrs. Holmes—we'll get the parcels to Sarneville first!" Sally retorted crisply.

"Yes?" Monica sneered again. "How?" she wanted to know. "The van-driver isn't coming, and the van itself is locked away in the garage."

"It is? Good!" broke in Johnny excitedly. "Then we'll drive to Sarneville!"

"Good old Johnny!" whooped Don. "Where there's a van there's a way, even if we do have to break down the garage doors to get it out! Mrs. Holmes won't mind our taking the van as long as we get the parcels to Sarneville."

with all the chums on board as well, Johnny was speeding towards Sarneville.

He was a good driver. At thirteen minutes to five he had reached the outskirts of the little seaport from where the ferry crossed to the mainland; at ten minutes to he was braking to a skidding halt outside the gift-parcels depot in Sarneville's main street.

The chums hurried into the depot. "We've just brought in Mrs. Holmes' consignment of parcels," Sally said to the nearest person.

"Good-ho!" The man looked pleased. "Been trying to get in touch with Mrs. Holmes—thought her consignment was going to be late. The ship has advanced its sailing-time by five hours. Going to be a rush. Unload the parcels, will you, and I'll be out in a few minutes to check up."

A telephone-bell rang as the chums returned to the street.

"Gosh, we've done the right thing in getting the parcels here!" Johnny said jubilantly. "They'd have missed the boat otherwise. I think we're going to be popular with Mrs. Holmes after this."

Feeling elated, Sally & Co. began unloading the sacks from the van. As they did so a girl came hurrying agitatedly out of the depot.

"Stop!" she cried. "There's been

an awful mistake! Mrs. Holmes has been on the phone, and she says you've brought the wrong parcels!"

THE CHUMS STAGE A HOLD-UP

"THE—the wrong ones?" gasped Sally in horror, and then shook her head. "But we can't have done. We packed these parcels ourselves—"

"Well, we'll soon see," said the girl, and quickly took out one of the parcels, opening it up. "There! Just as Mrs. Holmes said. All tins of jam! Mrs. Holmes says all the parcels are the same!"

The Merry-makers were staring incredulously at the opened parcel. Sally's blue eyes blazed.

"Monica!" she cried fiercely. "Monica must have switched over the parcels while we were getting the van out of the garage. Oh golly—"

The girl from the depot looked shocked.

"If you are referring to Miss Monica Reeves—"

"We are," Don said in a grim voice. "She was the cause of it, and it was done deliberately to delay the parcels!"

"How ridiculous!" exclaimed the girl angrily. "You should be ashamed of yourself saying such a thing! Monica is one of our keenest volunteers. As if she would want to delay the parcels! Why, she is now trying to put right your own stupid mistake! She is bringing over the parcels—the right ones—in another van. She and her uncle and Mrs. Holmes are loading them as quickly as they can."

And, with a cold glance at Sally & Co., the girl hurried away.

The chums stood looking at each other—furious, baffled, bewildered.

"Jam!" snorted Johnny, glowering at the opened carton which the girl had left on top of the sack. "After all that rush and tear, Monica swops parcels and we bring a load of jam that jams up everything!"

"But what's her game?" asked Fay. "We find a note saying that the parcels must catch the ship, but mustn't reach here until to-morrow. Why? What was the difference whether they got here to-day or to-morrow? What's the difference whether we pack them or Monica packs them? And now, after all this, she's bringing them to-day—"

"Because the ship's sailing-time has been advanced," put in Sally. "Monica didn't know that any more than we did when we left the house. But I'm baffled, the same as you are, Fay. At first I thought it was just spite against us on Monica's part. But now I can't help feeling that there's something much bigger behind it all. And her uncle has suddenly appeared on the scene," Sally went on thoughtfully. "That note was written by a man—one could tell that from the writing—"

She broke off, gazing fascinatedly at the carton containing the tins of jam.

"Golly!" she breathed. "What's the matter, Sally?" Don asked in surprise.

For a moment Sally did not reply. She was gazing around her now, as if aware of the street and its bustling crowds.

"No, not here," she muttered. "We'd never be believed. We'd just be hustled away—"

"What are you talking about?" Don demanded.

"I was going to suggest," said Sally, a reckless gleam in her eyes, "that we jump in that van and drive away."

"Eh? What?"

"And find the quietest, loneliest spot on that road," Sally added.

"Gosh! Why—"

"Because," said Sally, "we're going to stage a hold-up. We're going to hold up Mrs. Holmes and the other van. Tell you all about it on the way. Quick, now—before anyone can stop us!"

"THERE'S a van coming now!" Sally's voice was tense; brows were puckered as she strained her eyes

to stare along the dusty road. "Can't see who's in it yet—"

"Sally, are you really going through with this?" broke in Fay, with an anxious look at her chum. "It's so dreadfully risky."

Sally gave Fay a fond little hug. How right her fair-haired chum was!

"I'm going through with it!" she said. "But you know you don't have to—it's them!" she added excitedly.

"Monica driving; Mrs. Holmes beside her!"

"We're with you, Sally—you know that!" breathed Fay.

"You bet!" nodded Don.

"Say when!"

Johnny sat behind the steering-wheel of the van, the engine of which had been ticking over. Now he revved up to a roar.

"Right—now!" exclaimed Sally.

The van shot forward out of the gully in which it had been standing. Across the road Johnny drove—and then pulled up dead.

The main road into Sarneville, at its narrowest, loneliest point, was now completely blocked!

There was a screech of brakes as the approaching van checked speed, slowly nosed its way towards that barrier, and then stopped.

Sally & Co. ran up to it. Mrs. Holmes, startled by this unexpected interruption to the journey, gave a cry as she recognised the students.

"Sally!" she exclaimed in a scandalised voice. "What is the meaning of this?"

"Mrs. Holmes, we want to examine some of the parcels—"

"You want to do what? This is outrageous!"

"We have a very special reason—"

"Certainly not! How dare you! Your headmaster shall hear about this—and everything else!" ranted Mrs. Holmes. "Monica, get into the other van while I drive this one."

"We have taken the ignition key so the other van cannot be moved," Sally said steadily. "I'm sorry, Mrs. Holmes, but the van stays there until we have searched—"

"Indeed, you will be sorry for this disgraceful affair! I forbid you to interfere with those parcels!"

But already Don and Johnny had dragged out one of the sacks from the back of the van.

"Mrs. Holmes, we suspect that some of those parcels have been tampered with!" Sally said desperately, and did not miss the violent start Monica Reeves gave at her words.

"Tampered with? Preposterous!" exclaimed Mrs. Holmes. "How could they have been tampered with when Monica and her uncle were there?"

"Were you there?" questioned Sally.

"I? No, no; I was too busy phoning shipping companies and other depots and goodness knows what else! But I refuse to listen!" Mrs. Holmes became almost incoherent. "This is unlawful! This is a hold-up on the highway—"

"They're opening the parcels!" came a shrill cry from Monica. "Stop them, Mrs. Holmes—stop them!"

Now Sally's heart was beating with agonising intensity. Mrs. Holmes had refused to listen to her, and so the boys were acting. And if they did not find what they were looking for—

Sally shuddered at the thought of the consequences. Unlawful—highway hold-up! It was true, but they had been driven to it!

More desperate, more frightening the situation developed then. The boys were still searching, but with no result. Mrs. Holmes and Monica had leapt down from the van with the obvious intention of grappling with Don and Johnny. And then a loud hooting was heard as another car was held up by the road block.

"What's going on here?" roared a man's voice. "Is this a hold-up—"

"A hold-up—yes!" Mrs. Holmes panted. "A hold-up by four students of the International College. Help me deal with the young villains!"

"Stone a crow!" came a startled yet eager shout from the man in the car. "I'm a reporter on the 'Courier'.

Hold-up by four students, eh? This will make a story—"

"Tampering with food parcels for Britain!" added Mrs. Holmes. "Publish it. But first help me!"

"Yessir—ma'am!"

Sally's eyes were wide with consternation; apprehension gripped her. Monica was struggling wildly with Fay.

"Don! Johnny!" she cried.

"Haven't you found anything?" And then, even as the reporter sprang forward to grapple with the boys, Johnny gave a shout.

"Look! I've found one—a tin marked with a circle and two dots! It's the first one I've seen in six parcels—Hey! Leggo!" Johnny yelled, as the reporter grabbed him.

"We know what we're doing—"

"Mrs. Holmes!" cried Sally. "Please listen—you must listen! And you must open that tin. We believe it and others have been planted in some of the parcels for a special reason. We believe the tins have been opened, something concealed in them, and then resealed—"

"It's a He! It's ridiculous—impossible!" Monica almost screamed.

But at last Mrs. Holmes did heed.

"We have no tins marked with a circle and two dots, Monica," she said. "Good gracious, this is most strange! Can it be that the students are right? Yes, yes! Open the tin!"

But Don was already doing that with an opener purchased in Sarneville. The jam was turned out on the ground. Monica fought to get to the spot, but now the reporter was holding her back. Sally & Co. hardly dared to look.

But there, amid that quivering blob of jam, something sparkled in the crimson rays of the setting sun.

"A diamond!" gasped the reporter.

"Concealed in a food parcel! Smuggling! And these four students cottoned on to it!"

"Yes, so it would seem!" Mrs. Holmes' voice had dropped almost to a whisper as she regarded Sally & Co.

"I—I am very sorry that I did not understand and heed you before," she went on. "I begin to realise many things now. You have been marvelous, all four of you—"

"I'll say they have!" whooped the reporter. "And what a marvellous story for the 'Courier'! Here, let me have your names—and all the details!"

And the Merry-makers' names and all the details were emblazoned in the "Walcourie Courier" the following morning. Monica Reeves' uncle had hit on the idea of smuggling precious stones out of the country in the food parcels. And would have succeeded had not Sally & Co. turned up at the packing depot earlier than expected.

Monica had intended substituting the special parcels containing the resealed tins of jam that night; and so the arrival of the chums had upset her plans, for she had realised that all the parcels could be sent off that same day.

Then the advance sailing-time of the ship had caused another complication; but her uncle had been able to bring the parcels containing the smuggled jewellery, and he and Monica had included them with the rest of the consignment unknown to Mrs. Holmes.

But again Sally & Co. had balked them—after Sally had spotted one of the marked tins in the carton, and so tumbled to what was happening.

It was all in the newspaper report, and, thrilled, the chums read that account of their own exploits.

"But, golly, I never want to experience another scene like that one last evening!" gasped Sally. "I thought we were booked for expulsion, prison, and everything else!"

"As it is," grinned Don. "I believe we're due to share a very useful reward."

And Fay and Johnny nodded contentedly.

(End of this week's story.)

There will be another grand comedy story featuring the popular Merry-makers in next Friday's GIRLS' CRYSTAL.



The Mystery Message-Writer of the Fourth

By JANE PRESTON

A DIFFICULT DECISION

"I've done it at last," Pamela Carr said as she dropped her much nibbled pen on the study table. "I've made out the team for tomorrow's match."

There was a smudge of ink on her cheek, and her fair curls were in disorder for she had been running her fingers through them. For a full hour she had sat poring over the team list, and all the time she had been trying to decide on the eleventh name.

She had decided at last. Audrey Brent looked up from the book she had been studying. "Good!" she exclaimed. "Am I down to play?"

Pam bit her lip. She had only been appointed Sports Captain at the beginning of term, and she had quickly learned that such a responsible post was no bed of roses. Some of the decisions she had to make were very hard ones. But a captain must show no favouritism—only the good of the school must count with her. The decision she had just made had been more than difficult.

For she was Audrey's closest chum. To an extent they had been rivals, for Audrey had been in the running for the captaincy as well. In fact, Pam had made up her mind that Audrey was bound to be appointed for she was so much cleverer in the classroom than she was. Yet she—Pamela Carr—had been appointed.

How would Audrey take the news? "I'm sorry, Audrey," Pam said quietly, "but I've had to put you down as first reserve."

She saw the quick disappointment that showed in Audrey's eyes for a moment, but she had been prepared for that. Any member of the junior hockey team was bound to feel disappointment at being dropped for an important match.

Then Audrey shrugged slightly, and at once she was smiling.

"I more or less expected it, Pam," she answered. "I've been so badly off form these last few weeks."

"I don't like dropping you," Pam said quickly. "On form you're the best forward in the team. But Janet Brewer of the Lower Fourth has come on so much I simply must give her a trial."

"I'm glad of that," Audrey said quietly. "The Lower Fourth won't be able to talk so much about favouritism now."

Pam's heart warmed to her chum. She had known all along that Audrey would be decent about it—that she would understand. And the Lower Fourth would be more than pleased that Janet Brewer was down to play. Selbury was such a big school that

the Fourth had been divided into two groups—the Upper and the Lower. As the girls were so much of an age the rivalry between the two Forms was intense.

"I've been working too hard," Audrey went on. "I can't expect to keep my form if I don't turn up for practice games. But the scholarship exam. will be over in a fortnight's time, and after that you won't be able to keep me away from the hockey field."

Pam knew her chum spoke the truth in stating that her loss of form was due to too much study. For Audrey was working desperately hard for the Fairbank Scholarship, and only Pam knew how much her future depended upon winning it. Her father's business had failed and if Audrey failed to get the scholarship she would have to leave Melbury at the end of term.

Pam picked up the team list. "I'll go and pin this on the board," she declared.

"I'll come along, too," Audrey said, gathering up a few books. "I need some fresh air before afternoon lessons."

They went down into the hall, and they found a crowd of girls gathered excitedly around the notice board.

It was Celia Mason—the gossip of the Upper Fourth—who first saw Pam and Audrey.

"There's another beastly notice on the board, Pam," she called. "Come and look at it."

Instantly Pam's eyes became rather bleak. Another anonymous notice! Ever since the beginning of term they had been appearing, and all of them had been directed against her.

The excited girls made a path for the Sports Captain.

The notice was pinned in the very centre of the board. It was printed as always in straggling capital letters and in vivid green ink. And again the notice was directed against Pam.

"THE HOCKEY TEAM WILL DO NO GOOD WITH PAMELA CARR AS CAPTAIN. SHE WORKS HER FAVOURITES INTO THE TEAM. WHY DON'T WE GET RID OF HER?—X"

Pam reached out and tore down the notice. It was yet another to add to her collection.

"I'll keep this," she said grimly. "But what nonsense it all is! I can't understand what satisfaction

anyone would get out of writing anonymous notes."

"It isn't nonsense—it's serious!" Audrey broke in hotly. "Already the writer has made trouble between the two Fourth Forms. The Lower would never have accused you of favouritism but for these notes—"

She broke off abruptly, and Pam was amazed to see the startled look that came into her chum's eyes.

"I—I must run!" Audrey gasped. "There—there's something I've forgotten!"

She darted away. "I think these anonymous notes are beastly," said slightly built Lillah Jupp, the most studious girl in the Upper Fourth. "Whoever is writing them must have a dreadful grudge against Pam."

Pam scarcely heard her. As in a daze she pinned up the team list. Instantly there were excited comments. "Janet's in! Janet Brewer is down to play."

"And Audrey Brent has been dropped!"

Lillah Jupp made her voice heard again.

"That doesn't look much like favouritism, does it?" she demanded. "Audrey is Pam's best friend."

As far as Pam was concerned the comments fell on deaf ears. Still with that dazed look in her eyes she walked away.

She remembered again the abrupt way in which Audrey had broken off. Her chum had been pointing at the anonymous letter and—suddenly—she had jerked her hand behind her back. But not before Pam had seen the smear of green ink on Audrey's fingers.

Pam's mind went back to the beginning of term. Audrey had been the favourite for the captaincy. Yet she had taken her defeat so sportingly.

Could it be that her smiling face had been a mask—that all the time she had been nursing a grudge? Was she writing anonymous notes in the hope Pam would be forced to resign. If that happened Audrey was almost bound to be appointed to the vacancy—

"I don't believe it," Pam told herself firmly. "I'll never believe it. I know Audrey as well as I know my-

This Week's Long Complete Story Features An Unknown Enemy Who Chose A Startling Way Of Stirring Up Trouble In The School

self. She's too honest ever to write anonymous letters.

For once the bell for afternoon lessons came as a welcome relief. The first lesson was Latin—an optional subject—and as only about half of each Form took it this was one of the few occasions when Lower and Upper Fourth Formers shared the same classroom.

The lesson was taken by Miss Delmont of the Lower Fourth. And nobody envied the Lower Fourth their mistress, for Miss Delmont was a strict disciplinarian.

Pam was one of the first to enter the room, but she saw that Audrey was already at her desk. And for once Audrey did not look up to greet her.

Miss Delmont swept in, called for silence, and then opened a book on her desk. A sheet of paper fluttered to the floor. Stooping, Miss Delmont picked it up, and Pam saw the sudden way her brows knitted.

"Janet Brewer!" snapped the mistress. "Stand up!"

Janet was a rather wild, impulsive girl whom everybody liked. She had come into the classroom looking as though she was on top of the world—the result of having been chosen for the hockey team. But now, as she stood up to face Miss Delmont, her expression became a little scared.

"Where were you on Thursday afternoon?" Miss Delmont demanded.

Janet looked even more scared.

"I—I went for a walk along the river," she answered.

"Did you—or did you not go to Selbury Fair?" Miss Delmont rapped.

"Yes or no, Janet!"

Pam caught her breath. Janet had been to the fair—Audrey had seen her crossing the fields out of bounds. Audrey had seen! And there had been something on that sheet of paper that had fluttered to the floor—something about Janet Brewer. That was why Miss Delmont was questioning her. That paper must be another anonymous note!

"Yes or no, Janet!" repeated the mistress.

The Lower Fourth girl bit her lip. "Yes—Miss Delmont," she admitted.

"Why? You knew the fair was out of bounds to all girls."

Reluctantly Janet answered. "I—I went to see some performing dogs."

It was the answer they might have expected, for Janet was crazy about animals of every description. But it was no excuse as far as the mistress was concerned.

"If I did my duty I should report you to the headmistress," she snapped. "But I will be lenient. As a punishment you will spend tomorrow afternoon in detention."

Gasps of consternation went up. Then a chorus of protest.

"Not detention, Miss Delmont! Janet's playing in the match tomorrow! It's her big chance, Miss Delmont!"

"Silence!"

The protests died down. "Missing the match is part of Janet's punishment," Miss Delmont snapped. "The matter is closed. Now—to work."

Pam made little progress in Latin that lesson. All the time her mind was in a whirl. There had been green ink on Audrey's fingers! Miss Delmont had received an anonymous letter. Because of it Janet Brewer was out of the team, and that meant Audrey would play in her place. Had she written an anonymous note because she wanted to play?

"I won't believe it," Pam told herself. "Audrey couldn't do such a thing. But—somehow or other—I'm going to bowl out this poison pen writer."

The lesson came to an end and the girls filed out of the room. As they did so Celia Mason's rather shrill voice came to Pam, and she saw the Fourth Form gossip was speaking to Audrey.

"Somebody saw you washing green ink off your hands, Audrey," Celia Mason said. "You're not the noisier pen writer, are you?"

The question was asked in a bantering way, but Pam saw her chum's dark and angry flush.

"I was washing some green ink off my fingers," she answered, "but I don't write anonymous letters."

"Of course she doesn't," little Lillah Jupp chipped in. "What a silly question to ask a girl like Audrey!"

She tucked her arm inside Audrey's.

Pam bit her lip. So Audrey had been seen washing her hands. That would be sufficient to set tongues wagging. And when it was realised that Audrey would take Janet Brewer's place the suspicion against Audrey would deepen.

Pam stayed behind, for it was her task to set out the books for the next lesson. And there, on the mistress' desk, was the sheet of paper Miss Delmont had picked up from the floor.

It was an anonymous note, written in green ink and in straggling capitals. Pam's lips tightened as she read:

"IT MIGHT BE WORTH YOUR WHILE TO ASK JANET BREWER IF SHE ATTENDED MELBURY FAIR LAST THURSDAY.—X"

To think that Miss Delmont had lowered herself to act upon such information! Any other mistress in the school would have ignored such a communication.

Then Pam had picked the note up and was staring at it wide-eyed. She recognised the paper only too well. It came from Audrey's writing-pad—the pad she kept for her most important letters.

More proof against Audrey! "And I still won't believe it," Pam said fiercely. "Anyone could have torn a sheet of paper from her writing-pad."

She looked about her quickly and saw she was alone in the room. Deliberately she tore the note into small pieces and let them flutter into the wastepaper basket.

This was a note she had no intention of adding to her collection.

AUDREY ACCUSED

PAM was very busy that evening. She had managed to get a number of forms duplicated, and she wanted every member of the Lower School to fill one in. The form asked for each girl's name, the names of the sports and games in which she was interested and the number of sporting prizes won if any.

Pam knew she would find this mass of information useful. But that wasn't her real purpose in putting out the forms. The main thing was they were all to be filled in in block capitals.

It was a certain way to obtain a specimen of each girl's printing. Pam intended to compare each form with all the anonymous notes she had collected, and to try to find out some similarity of printing. With luck she would obtain a clue that would lead her direct to the mystery message-writer.

When she returned to the study she had an armful of forms with her. She expected to find Audrey busy at her books, but found her seated moodily in the armchair.

"You're about the last one," Pam smiled. "You'd better fill in a form even though I know all about you."

Audrey pulled up a chair to the table, and for a while her pen scratched away. Suddenly she looked up at Pam.

"I suppose you know what some of the girls are saying," she said, with a sharp note in her voice. "They're hinting that I'm the poison pen writer!"

Pam looked at the concerned face of her chum, and all her faith in her came bubbling up to the surface.

"That's the most absurd thing I've ever heard," she answered—and meant it.

Audrey's face cleared a little. "Thanks, Pam," she said quietly. "I know I didn't have to worry about you. I think it all started because

someone saw me washing green ink off my fingers this afternoon. It may sound absurd but I've no idea how the ink came to be on my fingers."

That was a big point in Audrey's favour—that she should own up about the green ink.

"There's probably quite a lot of green ink in the school," Pam answered lightly.

But Audrey still frowned. "The Lower Fourth are upset about Janet Brewer," she went on.

"They're hinting an anonymous note was sent to Miss Delmont in order that Janet should get detained tomorrow. They haven't lost any time in pointing out that I'm the girl who takes Janet's place in the team."

"They'd better not let me hear them," Pam said. "They'll get a piece of my mind if I do."

Audrey pushed her form across the table.

"I've tried not to worry about it," she said disconsolately, "but I can't help but worry. I wanted to study to-night but I just can't concentrate."

Pam was on the point of replying when she suddenly caught her breath. She was looking at the printed words on the form. Audrey had filled in, and one letter seemed to stand out from all the rest. It was the letter y which Audrey had printed with a rather elaborate flourish. And that same flourish was a conspicuous feature of the y's in the anonymous notes!

It was yet another pointer to Audrey's guilt.

"I still don't believe it," Pam told herself. "The mystery message-writer is clever—perhaps she wants Audrey to be blamed. She could easily have found out how Audrey prints and then copied her style."

But why should the anonymous writer want to blame Audrey?

Pam knew a pronounced sinking feeling. She had been so sure the printed forms would give her a real clue. Already she had studied every one carefully. And the only clue she had found pointed to her chum—the girl she trusted above all others.

She was glad when the dormitory bell sounded. Going up the staircase with Audrey she was quick to see the glances that were cast at her chum. Some of the Lower Fourth made no attempt to disguise their suspicions.

The sound of Celia Mason's voice came to Pam.

"She'd be the one to benefit if Pam resigned," it said to someone.

Pam knew that Celia was gossiping about Audrey.

It seemed to Pam the dorm was quieter than usual, and for once everybody was in bed when Miss Carstairs, the Upper Fourth mistress appeared to switch off the lights.

The door had scarcely closed behind her when a sharp, excited voice disturbed the silence.

"Look! It exclaimed. "On the wall! Golly!"

Every girl sat up in bed. Pam looked and saw some words glowing on the wall above the door. In the darkness they could be easily read.

"WHO IS PAMELA CARR SHIELDING? ASK HER WHY SHE TORE UP MY LETTER TO MISS DELMONT.—X"

"This is something new for the poison pen writer!" Celia Mason exclaimed.

"I—I wish she hadn't done it," Lillah Jupp complained. "I—I'm beginning to feel rather scared."

Pam slid out of bed and switched on the lights. At once the message disappeared.

"She's used some kind of luminous paint," she declared. "I'm going to sponge it off."

Her sensation at that moment was one of relief. Surely this was proof that the mystery message-writer wasn't Audrey. If Audrey was, then she wouldn't want to be shown up.

But a new doubt banished the relief. All the notes—or most of them—had been directed against Pam her-

self. This notice was likely to turn the girls against her. Did the writer of these mischief-making notes want her to resign the captaincy? If so, then Audrey would be appointed. If the writer wasn't Audrey, then was she someone working on Audrey's behalf?

Lilah Jupp dragged a chair forward.

"I'll hold it while you scrub that message off," she said. "I—I'll never go to sleep if it's left on the wall."

At that moment there was a pattering of feet in the corridor, and then a crowd of dressing-gown clad girls were swarming in. Instantly there was a cry of alarm.

"Ware Lower Fourth!"

Janet Brewer spoke up.

"This isn't a raid," she said. "We've come for an explanation." And she turned to Pam. "Somebody's stuck up a notice in our dorm," she stated angrily. "It says you know the writer of these anonymous messages and that your shielding her. Whoever it is has landed me in detention to-morrow. We've come here to find out who she is."

Celia Mason spoke up with a very malicious note in her voice.

"Why did you tear up Miss Delmont's note, Pam?"

Pam bit her lip. Then someone must have seen her tear up the note—the mystery message-writer herself. Defiantly she faced the Lower Fourth.

"Miss Delmont did get an anonymous note," she answered, "and I did tear it up. It made me so angry that it should be the cause of Janet missing the match. But I'm not shielding anyone—I know no more about the poison pen writer than you do."

Was that the truth? Of course it was the truth. Nothing could make her believe that Audrey was responsible.

Celia Mason spoke again.

"You wouldn't be shielding Audrey, would you, Pam?" she demanded. "She was seen washing green ink off her fingers this afternoon."

Pam turned angrily towards her, but Mabel Webb, of the Lower Fourth, pushed her way forward.

"I think you are shielding someone, Pam," she said. "I've talked it over with the others. If you won't tell us who you're shielding then none of the Lower Fourth players will turn out for you to-morrow."

That would mean three vacancies in the team. If three reserves were played there would be no hope of beating St. Ann's.

Audrey came to Pam's side.

"I think I'd better scratch from the team," she said. "All this trouble seems to be about me. And I'm not going to deny anything—if they believe I'm the poison pen writer then they can go on thinking so."

Pam fought to keep calm. She had to strike a firm line or the whole situation would get out of hand.

"I'm the captain and I pick the team," she said. "You are down to play to-morrow, Audrey, and I expect you to play. And I'm telling the Lower Fourth once again that I know nothing about the writer of these horrid messages."

Janet Brewer suddenly smiled at her.

"That's good enough for all of us," she remarked. "If Pam says she doesn't know—then she doesn't. If you ask me the mystery writer is out to cause nothing but trouble, and now we're all playing into her hands. Mabel and the others will turn out for the team to-morrow, Pam—if they don't I'll never speak to any of them again."

Pam's heart warmed to her. Janet might be wild and impulsive but that was all. When the Lower Fourth became the Upper Fourth Janet was almost bound to be made sports captain, and a very fine captain she would make.

At that moment there came a warning hiss from the corridor.

"Cave! Miss Delmont!"

In a flash the Lower Fourth had

gone. The lights were switched out, and Pam and the others tumbled back into bed. But it was a false alarm; Miss Delmont did not come into the dormitory, so Pam climbed on a chair and sponged out the notice over the door.

Before sleep came to her Pam wondered about Celia Mason. The girl always had a jealous nature, and she had been in the running for the captaincy, too. Was Celia the writer of these anonymous notes? She had been among the first to throw suspicion on Audrey.

Poor Audrey! How all this mystery must worry her. She had been unable to work that night, and the scholarship meant so much to her. With all this suspicion hanging over her she would never be able to give of her best in the examination.

"I must bowl out the mystery writer," Pam vowed, "and I must do it before the exam. If only I could find a real clue!"

But all the clues so far pointed to Audrey.

There was no further trouble about the hockey team. It was not a very long journey to St. Ann's, but there was a delay in starting, for the motor coach turned up late.



"If you don't tell us who you're shielding," Mabel Webb said to Pam, "then none of the Lower Fourth players will turn out to-morrow."

"Had trouble with the engine," the driver excused himself.

And when they were nearing St. Ann's the speed of the coach dropped to a crawl.

"Do please hurry, driver!" Pam implored. "We're late already."

The driver shrugged his shoulders.

"Can't help it, miss," he answered.

"I'm trying to save my paintwork. This road has been freshly tarred. If they had any sense they'd close the road until the tar was dry."

However, they were only a few minutes late in starting the match, and the unexpected happened. Audrey, who had been so much off form, suddenly found herself right on top again. She was easily the most thrustful forward on the field, and the St. Ann's defence could not hold her. At half time Selbury were leading three—one, and all three goals had been scored by Audrey.

She scored another goal immediately after the interval. Then, falling awkwardly, she twisted her ankle.

"I—I think I'll have to go off for a while," she gasped painfully to Pam.

She was back at the end of quarter of an hour; but she still limped a little, and the fire had gone from her play, so that it was all Selbury could do to hang on to their lead. But they did succeed, and they ran off the field worthy winners by four goals to two.

Hot and breathless they crowded into the dressing-room. And it was

Celia Mason who pulled up, to point excitedly at the wall.

"Look!" she gasped. "It's even happening here!"

The others were already staring. A message had been written in chalk on the wall of the dressing-room—written in the straggling capitals they had come to know so well.

"I WONDER WHY PAM IS AFRAID TO TELL YOU MY NAME?—X."

The first ejaculation came from Mabel Webb.

"Golly!" she gasped. "This proves something. We're the only Selbury girls here. That means that the writer must be one of us—one of the hockey team!"

Immediately Celia Mason turned on Audrey.

"You're the only one who came in here during the match," she accused. "And I noticed that long smear of chalk on your skirt the moment you came back to the field. Are you going to deny now that you haven't been writing these beastly messages?"

Audrey stared at her for one long moment. Then with a quick catch of her breath she turned on her heels and went blindly from the room.

"That proves it, I think," Celia Mason said with satisfaction.

But Pam didn't hear her, for she was already hurrying after her chum.

PAM SETS A TRAP

PAM persuaded Audrey to go into tea with the rest of the team—it would not do for St. Ann's to suspect there was anything wrong.

"I knew that message was in the dressing-room," Audrey explained. "It was already on the wall when I went in. I started to rub it off—that's how I got chalk on my skirt. Then one of the St. Ann's girls came in to look at my ankle and I hurried her out again so that she shouldn't see the message. I didn't get a chance to explain when we left the field."

She looked at Pam.

"You believe me, don't you?"

Pam answered without any hesitation at all.

"Of course I believe you," she said positively. "It doesn't make sense you should be writing these notes. If you were you wouldn't be urging me to betray you. For that must be the meaning behind these last messages."

"But who could have chalked up the message?" asked Audrey in distress. "Who else had the chance to go into the dressing-room besides me—"

"One of the team might have left the field at half time," Pam answered. "They could have slipped away quiet

easily. That's probably what did happen."

It was a very silent journey back to Selbury. Audrey had nothing to say at all, and it says much for Pam's personality that she obtained a promise from the team to make no mention in the school of the last message.

That evening Audrey went with Lillah Jupp to Miss Carstairs' study. As both girls were entered for the scholarship they were being given extra tuition. Pam was glad, for it kept Audrey away from Celia Mason and the rest of the team.

That night Pam decided to try out another plan. She had failed with her form filling—now she must try more direct action.

The Upper Fourth went to bed at the usual time, and everybody stared at the walls when the lights were switched out. But no luminous writing blazed into life. Evidently the mystery message-writer was lying low for a while.

"All her first messages were found in the early morning," Pam reflected. "She must have left the dorm early to plant them. Well, the next time she leaves early I'm going to catch her."

The whole school was asleep when Pam slipped out of the dormitory. She went down to her study, collected several strange objects, and then for quite a while she was busy in the dormitory passage. Then she went back to bed and to sleep.

It needed an hour to rising bell when there was a sudden clatter in the dormitory passage and then a thud as though a body had fallen.

Pam heard the noise and she was up and out of bed in a flash.

"Come on!" she called. "I've caught the poison pen writer."

She ran into the passage with her form mates crowding at her heels, and she saw half a dozen old tin cans scattered over the floor and the back view of a girl sitting here.

"I rigged up a booby trap," Pam exclaimed in excitement. "Those cans were held suspended by a thin length of thread. The moment anyone left the dorm the thread would be snapped and—"

She broke off, and sheer disbelief came into her eyes. For the girl seated on the floor, who had been massaging her ankle, had turned her head.

And the girl was Audrey!

Pam had set a trap to catch the mystery message-writer and she had caught her own chum! Did this mean they were one and the same?

"These cans tumbled on my head," Audrey said. "I tripped over one of them and my ankle gave again. I— She broke off, and dull colour flooded her cheeks. "Why are you all staring at me?" she demanded.

Celia Mason gave an excited shout. "Look!" she exclaimed. "There's a sheet of paper on the floor. She must have dropped it when she fell."

She swooped upon it and snatched it up.

"It's another anonymous note," she cried, her voice sharper than ever. "She must have been going to stick it on the notice board. Just look at it—it's proof that Audrey Brent is the writer."

They crowded about her, and as Pam saw the note her heart sank.

"YOU'RE ALL CRAZY IF YOU THINK AUDREY BRENT WRITES THESE NOTES.—X."

"It's proof!" Celia Mason declared. "It's proof that she's the writer. She knows we suspected her, so she wrote this note in an attempt to put us off the track!"

Pam looked at Audrey and saw the horror in her eyes. But it was not a guilty horror—it was a kind of hopeless horror. Just as though Audrey knew she was the victim of a plot—as, of course, she was.

Pam knew then that nothing would shake her faith in her chum. Circumstantial evidence could so often be proved wrong. There and then Pam made up her mind that somehow she would prove this evidence wrong.

An unexpected voice made itself heard.

"What is the meaning of this commotion?" It demanded. "Why are you girls out of your dormitory?"

Miss Delmont had appeared upon the scene. Somebody spoke up from the back of the crowd.

"We've caught the girl who's been writing these anonymous notes. Miss Delmont!"

The mistress of the Lower Fourth read the note Celia Mason had picked up.

"You had better give me a full explanation, Pam," she snapped then.

Reluctantly Pam told of the trap she had set. As she finished explaining Miss Delmont took Audrey's arm.

"I think we had better see the headmistress," she said icily.

Audrey was led away. Before breakfast Pam was called before Miss Mortimer, the headmistress. She was compelled to give a full account of every message she had seen. At the end she tried to convince Miss Mortimer that Audrey was innocent—that her chum could not possibly have written the letters.

"Your belief does you credit, Pam," Miss Mortimer said coldly. "I only wish I could share your faith in Audrey. Unfortunately I cannot close my eyes to proof."

Breakfast was a very dismal meal for Pam. By that time the whole school was buzzing with excitement. Seniors and juniors alike were discussing the sensational news—the unmasking of Audrey as the writer of the anonymous notes.

After breakfast the Lower Fourth staged a demonstration in the quad. It was headed by Mabel Webb. Some of the girls carried crudely written placards:

"PAMELA CARR MUST RESIGN—SHE TRIED TO SHIELD AUDREY BRENT."

"NO CO-OPERATION BETWEEN LOWER FOURTH AND UPPER FOURTH UNTIL PAMELA CARR RESIGNS."

It seemed that the poison pen writer had won all along the line. Audrey was in disgrace and Pam would now have to resign. She could not stand out against popular demand. Celia Mason would probably become captain in her stead.

Was Celia Mason writer of all the anonymous notes? Over and over again Pam asked herself that question.

It was Miss Carstairs who told Pam that Audrey had been sent to the punishment room. Just before first lesson she spoke to Audrey through the locked door.

"How did you come to fall into my trap?" she inquired.

"I've tried to explain," came Audrey's hopeless voice, "but nobody will listen to me. I knew the message-writer must get up early, so I got up early hoping to catch her at work—and I walked into your booby trap. Honestly, Pam, I know nothing about the note that was picked up—it must have been thrown down by one of the other girls after they had appeared on the scene."

"I guessed that's the way it happened," Pam said, and her voice became charged with anxiety. "But what's going to happen now?"

Audrey's voice broke for a moment. "I'm being sent home in disgrace for the rest of the term," she replied.

"That means I won't be able to sit for the scholarship. As my father can't afford the fees any more it means I won't be coming back at all."

Pam caught her breath. Selbury would be a dismal place without Audrey. And her chum had done nothing wrong—that Pam was so positive. Some unknown enemy had deliberately worked to disgrace Audrey—to drive her away from the school.

But Audrey had never had a real enemy—she was far too kind hearted a girl to make an enemy of anyone. Yet somebody had worked against her. But—who? Who?

So little time was left now to solve the mystery.

"Keep your pecker up, Audrey," Pam said, and she tried to speak with confidence. "You haven't left Selbury yet. I'm not going to know a moment's peace now until I get to the bottom of this."

But unless she did something quickly, Audrey would have left Selbury for ever!

THE VITAL CLUE

Pam went into the classroom, but Miss Carstairs might never have appeared for all the notice she took of her. And the mistress left her severely alone—perhaps because she could guess at Pam's heart ache.

Who was the mystery message-writer? What had been the real reason behind the notes? They had been strange notes—they had even made Pam unpopular by insisting she was shielding the writer.

Pam tried to remember when every note had appeared and the circumstances of its discovery. The biggest mystery of all was the chalk writing on the wall of the St. Ann's dressing-room. Only a member of the hockey team could have been responsible for that. Audrey was innocent, but what of Celia Mason? Yet Pam was almost positive Celia had remained on the field the whole of half time.

What other member of the team? Pam suddenly sat bolt upright.

Need it have been a member of the team? St. Ann's wasn't so very far away and it had been a half day at Selbury. Suppose the mystery writer had cycled over to St. Ann's? She could have done it easily in the time—could have started back long before the end of the match.

Thinking of a cycle, Pam remembered something else. In her excitement she suddenly darted out of the room without the formality of asking Miss Carstairs for permission.

The Upper Fourth stared in surprise.

"Let her go!" Miss Carstairs remarked. "I think Pam is very much upset this morning."

Pam went straight to the cycle shed. One by one she examined every machine, and she paid particular attention to the underside of the mudguards. She found one cycle whose mudguards were thick with tar—tiny specks were even clinging to the spokes of the wheels.

And the road leading to St. Ann's had been freshly tarred on the day of the match!

And it was Celia Mason's bike.

Then Celia Mason had written the anonymous notes.

Pam half started to the door, and suddenly all the animation left her face. For Celia Mason had not needed to cycle to St. Ann's—she had been a member of the team and she had travelled by the coach.

Then someone else had used her bicycle.

"But its still a clue," Pam told herself. "It's the only real clue yet, and I'm going to use it to find out the truth."

She went hurrying back to the school.

It was little over half an hour later that the bell rang summoning the whole school to Big Hall. With the sound of the bell Selbury lost most of its excitement. The summons probably meant that Audrey Brent was to be publicly expelled.

Silently the girls lined up, and there was a stir of interest when Miss Mortimer appeared upon the platform followed by Miss Carstairs and Pam. Where was Audrey Brent? And what was Pam doing on the platform?

Miss Mortimer's opening announcement created another stir of surprise. "Lillah Jupp!" she called. "I want you up here."

The slightly built girl gazed at her in stark surprise for a moment. Then slowly she obeyed the summons. "Lillah," Miss Mortimer said, "I

(Please turn to the back page.)



That Dutch Holiday of Surprises

By ELISE PROBYN

VAN HAGEL IS SURPRISED

SHIRLEY BLYTHE and her chums, Tess and Dick Foley, were staying in Bootendorp, in Holland, as the guests of their Dutch chum, Jan. They were intrigued by a mysterious girl named Zella van Deen, the ward of a wealthy bulb grower.

Zella asked the chums to find a tulip bowl, shaped like a clog, which was of vital importance to her.

The chums found the clog, and from it learnt that Zella must visit the Castle of Flowers, the tulip growers' club in Amsterdam.

They had tickets for the ball which was to be held there, and in an attempt to obtain a ticket for Zella they went to help the Mayor at the Town Hall in Breukelen. Just as Jan had obtained the ticket, however, Zella's guardian arrived on the scene, and demanded to know what Jan had handed to Shirley.

"WHAT is it you have found? Give it to me, Shirley!" There was a note of menace in Mr. van Hagel's voice. "Give it to me, I say!"

But Shirley's wrist flashed behind her back before he could snatch the ticket or even see it. He did not know what it was Jan had given her. He must not know!

She ducked as he made another lunge at her. Then, with the ticket smothered desperately in her hand, she took to her heels across the mayoral hall.

"Give it to me— Ah!" Mr. van Hagel sprang after her, and she heard him gasp as he stumbled on the highly waxed floor.

"Careful, Shirley!" came a warning cry from Jan.

She nearly came to grief herself, hampered by the wooden clogs and voluminous Dutch skirt she wore. Somehow she saved herself, recovering her balance quicker than Van Hagel recovered his own.

She fled back through the side passage, back to the miniature fire-station, where Tess and Dick were hovering, alarmed, in the doorway.

"Shirley, what's happening?" But there was no time to answer their questions.

Shirley saw the polished fire-helmets hanging on their pegs. Quicker than thought, she thrust the ticket into the nearest of these helmets.

Next second Mr. van Hagel burst into the room. He was breathing fast with excitement as he cornered her there, seizing her hands.

"You have saved me a lot of trouble, Shirley. You have found a clue concerning a certain little tulip bowl that Zella mentioned to you.

What is it? I must have it. Where—"

He stopped abruptly as he discovered that her hands were empty.

"I don't know what you mean, Mr. van Hagel. Clue? Tulip bowl?" Shirley began in blank tones.

"Don't fool with me! I must have it! You've passed it to the boy!" And his hands leapt at Dick, clutching at the pockets of the baggy Dutch trousers borrowed from Jan.

"Not me, sir. You can search me!" Dick said, looking astonished. "I haven't got anything!"

"Or me!" echoed Tess, whose demure headdress and costume made her look as innocent as a Dutch doll. "What is it you're looking for, Mr. van Hagel?"

He did not answer, but began to search round, groping in every possible hiding-place. Peering into the fire-buckets, craning his lean neck under the wheels of the quaint old fire-engine, combing every corner of the little stone shed.

"What is it you've found? Where have you hidden it?" he hissed at Shirley. "I will give you one last chance—before I denounce you to the mayor," he threatened furiously. "Quick—there is someone coming now. Tell me what you have hidden, and where—"

The chums whirled round with a jump as they heard steps in the passage. The mayor's plump figure appeared in the doorway, beaming at them from under his porkpie hat, and speaking in Dutch.

"Now, my young scholars, have you not finished?"

"Your worship, they are not scholars, they are impostors!" Mr. van Hagel cried. "Three young English scamps masquerading here under false pretences!"

"English?" The mayor gaped incredulously at the trio in their Dutch garb.

"If you please, your worship, we came with a chum of ours in the school party, because we wanted to help you," Shirley said in breathless English. "We've been polishing up these firemen's helmets!"

The mayor turned. "You have polish zem most beautiful!" The mayor was delighted. "I am indeed honoured—"

"It is false—she is deceiving you,

.....
**HIDDEN INSIDE THE
 FIREMAN'S HELMET—
 The Vital Ticket For The
 Fancy Dress Ball!**

your worship! These young impostors did not come here for any honest purpose!" broke in Van Hagel harshly. "I was watching them from the café across the way, and my suspicions were aroused when I saw how furtively they were behaving. I am certain they came here to steal!"

The mayor's face went as red as his robes.

"You insult our young English visitors!" he protested. "I will vouch for their honour. You were in the café—but I have been here all morning."

"That does not alter my suspicions—" began Van Hagel.

"What are your suspicions?" Shirley challenged him.

"What are we supposed to have stolen?" questioned Dick.

"That is what I mean to find out." There was a very crafty gleam in Van Hagel's eyes. "His worship has been too busy to watch you. But I am not busy. I shall stay here and make a thorough investigation. And I shall not leave until I am proved either right or wrong—"

"You will leave instantly!" The mayor's command was like the bark of a gun. Then he turned apologetically to the chums. "I must ask you all to go, mine young friends. A meeting begins now at which I am to preside. Thank you for your help and please accept my apologies for this Dutchman who is not a Dutch gentleman!"

Shirley & Co. looked a little dismayed. How could they retrieve the precious ticket in front of Mr. van Hagel without giving the truth away? They could only file meekly out through the passage, leaving their trophy in the fireman's helmet.

Jan was anxiously waiting for them outside. His face cleared with relief when he heard what had happened.

"Dot is fine. The ticket is safe—Van Hagel does not suspect. You will get it as soon as the meeting ends—then I see you outside my school at dinner-time. Goot! Now I must fly!" And he sprinted off across the square.

The chums did not linger outside the civic hall. It was a safe bet that the meeting would last an hour or two, judging by the earnest-looking villagers who were streaming in; and it would be reckless folly to be seen dawdling there by Van Hagel, who would most certainly shadow their again.

They wended their way through the quaint little side streets leading off the square, seeking a cosy café.

"Hagel hasn't wasted much time," Shirley remarked. "We only found

the tulip bowl yesterday, and now he's like a cat on hot bricks."

"Did you notice how he gave himself away?" asked Tess. "It's the first time he's ever blurted out one word about the tulip bowl."

"I'd like to know what he thought he was looking for!" said Dick. "We shall know on Friday, when we go to the fancy dress ball at the Flower Castle in Amsterdam," Shirley replied excitedly. "Gee, aren't I glad we've got that ticket for Zella so that she can be there!"

"The more I see of Van Hagel," Tess said earnestly, "the more I'm certain that Zella's happiness, as her brother said, depends on solving the mystery of that queer little tulip bowl."

They found a snug café, overlooking a tiny harbour where the fishing-boats berthed. The genial fisher-lads made room for them round the big warm stove, and were merry company. But those lads were simply flabbergasted to find that the trio were not Dutch, as they looked, but English school-chums on holiday.

"You dress like this in England?" one of them asked wonderingly. "Well, no," laughed Shirley. "Only on fancy-dress occasions, you know."

"Which reminds me," Tess said eagerly. "What shall we wear on Friday, Shirley?"

That kept the girls busily talking for the next hour, and it gave Dick a chance to improve his Dutch, with the aid of his phrase-book and the willing fisher-lads. All three were warmed with cream-coffee, and in high spirits when they left the café at last and turned their steps back to the civic hall.

"We'll collect Zella's ticket now, and then our next problem," Dick said thoughtfully, "is how are we going to smuggle her out of her house to the dance on Friday?"

"We'll tackle that problem when Friday comes," murmured Shirley. "Yes, but how?" Van Hagel's locked her in her room, remember!"

"And it'll be our job to sneak her out. I know it's going to be tricky, but we'll manage it somehow," she broke off, staring, as they entered the village square. "Hallo, what's going on?"

There was a large crowd gathered outside the civic hall, and a gendarme was clearing a space at the gates.

"The meeting's over! They're coming out!" Tess said eagerly. "And—look, there's a band!"

"Gee! There's going to be a procession!" whooped Dick. "I'm glad we didn't miss this!"

In bright scarlet uniforms the village band stood in a ring outside the civic hall. As the chums gazed, the bass drummer raised his baton. Boom! The band struck up with clashing brass and clanging cymbals. Down the steps came the portly, red-cloaked mayor. Then the plump, blue-cloaked aldermen. Then the elders of the village, bearing scrolls and staves and solemn white beards. And then—

"Oh, my stars!" Shirley said faintly. "Look!"

Down the steps came seven portly firemen. Each wore upon his head one of those huge brass helmets so brightly polished by the chums. And inside one of those helmets reposed Zella's precious dance-ticket!

GETTING BACK THE TICKET

"SHIRLEY! Our ticket!" gasped Tess.

"It's in—it's in one of those helmets!"

"I know! Don't tell me, I know! But"—Tess swayed on her feet—"what do we do?"

"Do? Join the procession, of course! Come on!" Dick said frantically. "We mustn't let those helmets out of our sight!"

A dignified professor followed the firemen down the steps, leading a solemn-faced party of girls and youths in mortar-boards and gowns—his chosen collegians. Shirley & Co. dashed through the crowds and tailed on behind them.

The policeman gaped—then he concluded that they must be distinguished young scholars from some other village, invited here by the mayor. He saluted Shirley and Tess and Dick, and hurriedly cleared a path for them. Two gold-braided heralds, mounted on horseback, joined in the rear of the chums and closed them effectively in the ranks of the procession.

To the beat of the drum and the blare of the band, Shirley & Co. marched off across the square.

"Where are we going?" whispered Tess.

"We're going where those helmets go!" Shirley said recklessly. They could see the helmets bobbing just a few yards forward of them in the procession. But they couldn't get any nearer to them. They couldn't voice their anxious questions to the firemen, asking which of them had found a dance-ticket in his helmet and what he had done with it.

That ticket might have been lost, thrown away, destroyed, anything might have happened to it—but they couldn't know yet. They could only trail behind, in painful suspense, watching those helmets bobbing to the swing of the band.

Out through the square they marched, and along a broad avenue of elegant houses. Evidently the rich burghers of the village lived here. They came out from their doorways. They saluted the mayor and his aldermen, and the firemen, and the collegians—and then they saw Shirley & Co. clogging along in their borrowed Dutch garb.

"They don't know what to make of us," said Dick out of the side of his mouth.

The puzzlement of the burghers was obvious. Tess and Shirley looked dainty enough in their pleated skirts and clogs—but they clearly were not daughters of leading residents, because the headdresses they had borrowed were, in fact, peasants' headdresses.

Dick was still more of a puzzle to these surprised spectators. He walked with a firm and determined dignity, but Jan's baggy trousers were a bit too big for him, and the little round cap on his head was too small.

Of course, just as the chums had dreaded, the collegians in front of them began looking round, to see what was the cause of the curiosity. They looked at Shirley and Tess and Dick. Then they looked again.

"Who is it we have the honour of meeting, if you please?" an intellectual-looking girl, wearing glasses and a mortar-board, asked them, in courteous Dutch.

"What does she say, Shirley?" whispered Tess.

"I think she's asked us who we are," stammered Shirley. Dick felt that an answer was due.

"Oh—er—we're nobody special," he blurted out desperately. "Just joining, in for the exercise, you know!"

That answer fairly stupefied the collegians. After that the chums could scarcely see the firemen's helmets for the astounded faces under the mortar-boards, which kept craning round to look at them.

All three were hot to the ears, and Dick was perspiring when at last the procession stopped at the city gates. They formed a semi-circle round the stone archway, and the chums saw that one square of the stonework, by which the mayor was standing, was covered by a silken curtain.

"He's going to unveil a plaque—now's our chance!" breathed Dick. "I'll go and talk to the firemen!"

And he darted forward towards those brass helmets. But now the mayor was making a speech. There was a horrified "Sshh!" as Dick moved, and he had to shrink back into his place beside Shirley and Tess.

There they had to stand, with those helmets almost within their reach—so near and yet so far.

The mayor's speech went on for a

very long time. Then he unveiled the plaque. Then all the aldermen made speeches. Then, at last, the band struck up again.

"Now we can ask for our ticket." And Shirley made a breathless move towards the firemen. "It's all over!"

But it wasn't all over! The band wheeled round, on the march, and everyone fell solemnly into step behind, still in procession.

The chums could only stifle their suspense and follow on.

"It's all right, we're going back to the civic hall now," Dick said.

Somehow, the march back seemed longer than ever. The chums' eyes ached with watching those bobbing brass helmets. Then, just as they entered the village square, within sight of the civic hall at last, all those helmets suddenly went bobbing away in different directions.

The procession had broken up. The firemen were all dispersing in separate ways.

"Stop them, Dick! Don't lose any of them, Tess!" gasped Shirley, and she flew to the nearest fireman she could see. "Excuse me—pardon!" She clutched at the fireman's belt. "Did you, please—did you find a ticket in your helmet? A dance-ticket?"

She had to repeat the question four times before she could make him understand. Tess and Dick were having similar difficulties of language with two of his comrades. But the reply from each was a flabbergasted "No!" Why, they asked with some dignity, should a fancy dress dance-ticket be found in their fire helmets?

Desperately the chums streaked after a group of three more firemen who were departing across the square. To their relief, one of them understood a little English.

"V'ich helmet you put the ticket in?" he asked with difficulty. "V'ich peg it hang on?"

"The first peg—nearest the door," Shirley said breathlessly.

"Ah!" Slowly he pondered. "Ah! Dot would be—whose helmet? Let me see—ja! The helmet of Frans the window-cleaner."

"Where is he? Will you point him out? Which one?" cried Dick.

The fireman gazed cheerfully about him.

"I think he has gone. Frans! Where is Frans? Ah!" He pointed a plump hand. "He goes now! O! His bicycle, see? Dot is Frans!"

The chums caught one flash of a brass helmet—then it vanished as its owner cycled off down a side-street.

"Get our bikes—quick!" panted Shirley, and led a wild rush to the market enclosure.

Jan was there, hovering perplexedly by their bikes, waiting for them. He ran now to meet them.

"So you come at last! I wonder what had happened to you—"

"It's what happened to our ticket that matters, Jan!" gasped Dick. "It's gone off in the helmet! At least, we're hoping it's still inside it, but the helmet's gone. After it!"

Jan gleaned the story from them in jerks as they all went cycling frantically down that side-street, in chase of Frans the window-cleaner.

It was a winding, twisting street, and Frans was a nimble rider. He was a far speck in the distance when they sighted him again—just a dwarf figure on wheels surmounted by a gleaming brass helmet. The chums gave a feverish shout:

"There he goes!"

But no sooner did they glimpse him than he was gone again, flashing round the next bend.

Three times they spotted him. Three times he vanished.

They cycled on frantically, scorching round the swerving twists, past shops and cafés, houses and gardens—then all at once the road straightened to a line of cottages and the open countryside, and this time their helmeted quarry had vanished completely.

All Holland lay flat and deserted before them. Not a soul in sight!

"Ach, he is here somewhere!" gasped Jan.

"Then he's gone invisible. I can't see him!" Tess panted, swaying over her handlebars.

But Jan was swivelling his gaze left and right at the cottages they passed. So was Shirley. Suddenly she spotted one with windows that were dazzlingly polished, even for Holland. Over the door was a painted sign, a window-cleaner's sign, and the name: Frans Hofweg.

The chums sprang from their bikes and knocked at the door. It was opened, and beaming at them stood a burly figure in fireman's tunic, minus his helmet.

He had seen through the mirror suspended outside the door for the purpose of spotting callers in advance according to Dutch custom.

"Come in!" he said hospitably, and held open the door.

The first thing Shirley spotted, in that speckless kitchen, was the shining brass helmet. It hung by its strap on the back of a chair. Her steps sidled towards it as if drawn by a magnet. Tess and Dick peered over her shoulder as she took one palpitating look inside that helmet—and then a cold tremor went through them.

There was nothing inside it except its black leather lining! Nothing else—no sign of the precious ticket!

Jan was talking in Dutch to the fireman. A smile spread over Frans Hofweg's large jolly face.

"English?" he said, and turned in laughing astonishment to the chums. "I think someone play little joke on me. But this is what you look for—yes?"

His hand went to his pocket and he drew out the dance-ticket.

"Cheers! We've found it!"

Shirley and Tess could almost have hugged him. Their excitement delighted Frans, though he did not understand the real reason for it. With true Dutch hospitality he was pouring out coffee for them from the big pot steaming on the stove.

"You is staying at Bootendorp?" he asked them brightly.

"Ja. At my poppa's farm. They is my friends from England," Jan told him with pride.

"Me, I know Bootendorp," chatted Frans. "I goes there sometimes to clean the windows for Heer van Hagel." He grimaced with dislike as he uttered that name. "He wants me to go this week. But I think I not go. He is mean skinflint, is Heer van Hagel."

"That's nothing to what we think of him, is it, Shirley?" grinned Dick, and then paused, staring at her.

"What are you looking like that for? What's come over her, Tess?"

Shirley was looking excited.

"Mr. Hofweg," she asked eagerly, "do you clean the top windows when you work at Mr. van Hagel's house? And do you take long ladders with you?"

"Ja," said Frans. "My ladders is plenty long, and I do not mind ze high windows, but—"

"I was just thinking," Shirley said in a thrilled voice, "that it would oblige us very much if you could manage to do Mr. van Hagel's windows—on Friday!"

DANGER THREATENS

"GEE!" Dick looked at her in awed admiration. "Our Shirley's got something here!"

"It's a brainwave!" exclaimed Tess. "I do believe she's solved our problem for us!"

Frans beamed, deciding this must be some sort of joke against Van Hagel whom he disliked, and therefore only too willing to oblige the chums.

"Friday?" He nodded. "Ja, I could come to Van Hagel's on Friday—but it would have to be early. Nine o'clock in ze morning."

"As long as it suits you, Mr. Hofweg, that'll suit us fine," Shirley smiled. "We'll look forward to seeing you in Bootendorp. I know Jan would love you to call in at the farm, before you finish, and have coffee with us."

She whispered her plan to Jan, and

he added a few more words to Frans, in Dutch, arranging certain important details of that plan. It was all settled, smoothly and happily, by the time they wished their host good-bye—until Friday.

"It was worth chasing that jolly old helmet all over Breukelen," laughed Shirley, as they mounted their bikes. "We've found the ticket—and it's brought us luck. If only our luck holds out on Friday—"

"Then we'll have Zella away with us before Van Hagel's got the sleep out of his eyes!" breathed Dick.

Fancy dress preparations were in full swing that evening when they returned to the farmhouse with Jan. The three gairymaids were breathlessly turning out trunksful of costumes in the kitchen, and Jan's mother was posing a little anxiously in front of the mirror, wearing a beautifully embroidered Eastern robe, spangled with beads.

"Shirley—Tess! You think I look funny?" she asked hesitantly.

"You look lovely, Mrs. de Voort," Shirley assured her. "Doesn't she, Tess?"

"It's perfect," said Tess. "The colours are gorgeous, and that blue sash is a dream. You'll outshine Shirley and me absolutely."



Climbing in through the window, Shirley smiled at the surprised Zella. "You're coming with us to Amsterdam," she said. "We've got everything fixed."

"What are you going to wear, you and Shirley?" asked Mrs. de Voort.

Tess left Shirley to answer that question very carefully.

"Well, we thought we'd go into Amsterdam early on Friday and choose something there. You see, Mrs. de Voort, there's just a possibility that we shall be bringing a friend along with us to the ball."

"Dot is fine! We shall be a big happy party indeed, ja!" And Jan's mother was as pleased as the chums themselves.

During the next day or two Shirley & Co. forgot both the fancy dress and the mystery of the tulip bowl. They concentrated all their energies on enjoying themselves.

They made several memorable trips to near-by historic places, and never had they enjoyed themselves more. The more they saw of Holland the more they liked it.

It was on Friday morning, soon after nine, that a cheerful knock sounded at the kitchen door. Jan and the chums had the room to themselves, and they were waiting, very eagerly, for that knock.

"Ah, it is Heer Hofweg!"

Jan opened the door, and into the kitchen stepped Fireman Frans, wearing his window-cleaning overalls.

"I smell goot coffee," said Frans, winking at them all.

"Sorry we can't stay to enjoy it with you, Mr. Hofweg—but Jan will look after you," Shirley told him. "Sit down and make yourself at home."

Then breathlessly she sped out through the back door, accompanied by Tess and Dick. They took the path through the bulb fields until they reached the hedge behind Mr. van Hagel's garden. There they stopped, crouching down in hiding, while they spied out the land.

A tall red ladder, with a window-cleaner's bucket and swabs attached to it, stretched right up to the sill of one of the upper windows. Frans had made no mistake. It was the window of Zella's room.

The garden was deserted. There was no sound from the house.

"The coast seems to be clear," whispered Dick. "But, Shirley, I think you'd better let me go—"

"I'm going. You stay where you are. Wish me luck!" smiled Shirley. And silent as a shadow she glided in through the gateway, straight across the lawn to the ladder.

Her limbs trembled, her feet seemed to quiver beneath her as she noiselessly climbed the rungs. It took only a few seconds to reach that upper window, but it was like a long eternity. She drew the window open without a sound, clambered softly over the sill and into the room.

"Shirley!" came an incredulous whisper.

Zella stood in the middle of the room. She had seen that window mysteriously opening, and she had not yet had time to recover from her surprise.

"Zella, you're coming with us to Amsterdam—you're coming now—we've got everything fixed!" Shirley told her breathlessly. "We've got a ticket for you for the fancy dress ball to-night at the Flower Castle. We'll explore together—we'll find that tulip bowl clue—"

She broke off, smothering the rest of the sentence as she heard heavy, ominous steps coming up the stairs.

"It's my guardian," Zella whispered in stifled panic. "Shirley, it's Mr. van Hagel—he's coming here now!"

Does this mean Zella will be unable to go with the chums to the fancy dress ball? Look out for surprising developments in next week's exciting chapters.



DETECTIVE JUNE'S STRANGEST CASE

By PETER LANGLEY

A SURPRISE FOR JUNE

JUNE GAYNOR, niece of Noel Raymond, the famous detective, went to Folkestone to meet her uncle, who was returning after a long stay abroad.

While there she was amazed to see a man closely resembling Noel break into a museum and smash a porcelain statuette of the Green Archer, a legendary figure who was supposed to haunt Knoll Castle whenever anyone dared live there.

When June met Noel he denied he had been the person she had seen, and she assumed her uncle had a double.

Later, June was asked by Ronald Garth, an author whose story about the Green Archer was to be filmed at Knoll Castle, to go there under an assumed name, as he believed an attempt was to be made to prevent the film being made.

June managed to secure a part in the film and travelled to lonely Knoll Castle. On arriving there, she heard a scream and, looking up, saw on the battlements a figure dressed as the Green Archer.

THE Green Archer!

The legendary figure whose appearance at Knoll Castle was always supposed to be the forerunner of disaster!

Though June was not superstitious, she could not suppress a shiver as she gazed up at the battlements.

There was something very ghostly about that green-clad form silhouetted against the black, stormy clouds of night, and the moment was made all the more awe-inspiring because of the memory of that girlish scream which had shrilled out.

A long bow clutched in one hand, the Green Archer leapt on to the flat roof of a tower at the back of the castle. For a moment he remained poised there, and the girl detective caught in her breath.

She was thinking of that statuette she had seen in the Folkestone museum—the statuette which for some mysterious reason had been deliberately smashed by Noel Raymond.

It was just as if that fragile porcelain figure had come to life.

Even as the fanciful thought came, the Green Archer disappeared down a winding flight of stone steps. A moment later the great double doors of the castle were flung open and out into the courtyard came streaming a motley crowd of people—film actors and actresses, technicians and servants.

"Where is he?"

"Where's that Green Archer?"

"We'll teach him to try and scare us!"

The air throbbled with shouts, some angry, some frightened, and, leaving the more nervous girls huddled by the doorway, the rest of

the crowd split up and went dashing off in every direction.

What exactly had happened? June did not know, and for the moment did not attempt to find out. The excitement was infectious. She felt the same burning eagerness to track down the spectral visitor whose advent had created such alarm. Impulsively she went running forward.

Some of the men had made for the arched entrance to the road—they evidently believed the eerie intruder had made his escape that way. Others were searching the out-buildings at the foot of the stone walls.

But June made straight for the rear of the ancient castle. The battlements were high, and it would take the Green Archer quite a time to descend those winding steps. With luck, she might catch him before he could make good his escape.

Heart thumping, she sprinted recklessly on—through a narrow archway, down a stone-flagged passage, eventually to find herself in a dark, gloomy courtyard, smaller than the one she had left and enclosed by walls which seemed to tower right to the sky.

She stared around her, then stiffened as she saw a tall tower jutting out from the main building, a flight of stone stairs winding round it. And on the bottom step stood a tall, shadowy figure—a figure whose right hand grasped a long, curved bow.

"The Green Archer!" the girl detective whispered and recklessly leapt forward, fumbling for her torch as she ran.

"Got you!" she panted, seizing the unknown by the arm. "Caught you red-handed!"

And swiftly she switched on the torch. But as its beam cleaved through the darkness she got the shock of her life.

The first thing the torchlight revealed was that her captive was not clad in the green costume of the Green Archer. He wore ordinary, modern clothes. But for the six-foot bow he had there was nothing different about him from any of the other male occupants of the castle.

But it was not his clothes—not the great, deadly looking bow—that made the girl detective gasp.

It was his face.

Incredulously June stared, hardly able to believe her own eyes.

June Believed The Man With The Bow Was The Green Archer—But What A Shock Was In Store For Her!

Surely there must be some mistake. This couldn't possibly be— But it was.

Illumined by the dazzling torch, there could be no denying those sun-bronzed, handsome features.

"Nunky!" she exclaimed. "Uncle Noel!"

And Noel Raymond it was who stood there on the bottom step, grasping the bow.

"June!" came an equally astounded ejaculation, but the girl detective was too dazed to hear it. Her brain was in a whirl.

What did it mean?

Her uncle was supposed to be in the South of France. He had left by the boat train yesterday, stating he would be away for an indefinite period. What then could he be doing here, hundreds of miles from his declared destination? And how had he come into possession of that sinister-looking bow?

Involuntarily June found herself shivering.

She could not help remembering how strangely the famous detective had acted ever since that never-to-be-forgotten morning when she had seen him smash the statuette of the Green Archer in the Folkestone museum.

Suddenly she felt her hand seized, and the torch was pushed round so that the light fell on her face.

"June! So it really is you! But how amazing! What ever has brought you to Knoll Castle?"

At the sound of that familiar voice all her troubled thoughts evaporated like magic. How grand it was to see again the uncle she admired so much! Her eyes danced with delight and her pent-up feelings found relief in a laugh.

"That's just what I was going to ask you, Nunky!" she declared. "Actually, I'm up here to work."

"To—to work?" he exclaimed, in surprise.

She nodded.

"Yes; I'm a budding film star. You see—"

And eagerly she related all about her interview with Ronald Garth, the screen writer, now on his way to Hollywood, and how at his suggestion she had obtained a job with the film unit, under the assumed name of Carolyn Stuart.

"I'd just arrived when the alarm went up, so—" She stopped, unable to keep her curiosity bottled up any longer. "But what are you doing here, Nunky?" she asked.

He smiled.

"Like you, I'm up here to work. This film Cronberg is producing is a thriller, and when I learnt they wanted someone to advise them regarding the crime and police technicalities—well, I jumped at the chance!"

June gasped.

"But, Nunky, you're supposed to be on the Riviera!" she protested. "You told Parker—"

He flushed, as if suddenly conscious of his deception.

"I feel rather guilty about that, my dear," he said apologetically. "It wasn't fair to deceive you and Parker, but—well, there was just no other way. It was imperative that certain people in London should think I was going abroad. I knew that if I was to catch the Green Archer—"

"The Green Archer?" cut in June excitedly.

He nodded. "Yes. It was that scoundrel who was really responsible for me taking on this job as technical adviser. And I knew I'd stand a better chance of unmasking him if my real destination was kept a secret, if only for a few hours. Actually, I nearly did nab him just now, my dear."

June caught in her breath. "You saw him racing down the steps?" she asked.

He grinned a trifle ruefully. "Yes. But I am afraid he was too smart for me. He managed to wriggle free and escape just before you turned up on the scene, my dear—though he did leave a rather interesting souvenir behind him!"

And he held up the six-foot bow. So that was it! June gave a sigh of relief. As she had expected, there was a simple explanation for her uncle being here in such mysterious circumstances. Then, as she remembered what he had told her, her eyes began to dance again.

"Oh, isn't it grand, Nunky?" she cried. "The fact that we are partners again—working on the same case! Golly, but aren't I glad that I decided to—" She paused, her heart leaping uneasily as she saw the strange look on his face. "Why, Nunky, what ever's the matter?" she asked.

He did not reply at once, but stood regarding her silently. Then slowly he began to shake his head.

"No, June, this time we're not partners," he said.

She gave a startled cry. "Not partners, Nunky? Why, what ever do you mean?"

"I mean that you must leave this case to me, my dear—that you must return to London!"

IMPORTANT DISCOVERIES

IT was the biggest shock June had ever received.

The news that Noel Raymond had also come to Knoll Castle in order to investigate the strange mystery of the Green Archer had filled her with delirious delight, and she had been certain that he would be just as pleased as she was at the prospect of them resuming their old partnership. Instead of which—

The tears gathered in her eyes, and it was almost incredulously that she stared up at him.

"Give up my film job—go back to London!" she gasped, and clutched agitatedly at his arm. "Oh, Nunky, you can't mean it!"

He gave her an understanding squeeze, but his mood did not change.

"I'm afraid I do, June," he said. "But why must I go?" she gulped. He shook his head.

"Sorry, but I can't explain, my dear. I can only say that our happiness—yours as well as mine—depends on us parting for a while. There is more involved in this Green Archer mystery than you think, and if I'm to get to the bottom of it—well, it's essential that I should work entirely on my own!"

It was impossible not to be impressed by his grave, earnest manner, and the girl detective's eyes filled with wonder.

What did Noel's cryptic words mean? How could his—and her—future happiness possibly be at stake? And why was he so reluctant about taking her into his confidence? Never before had she known him to be so secretive.

Noticing how wan and unhappy she looked, he gave her hand another fond squeeze.

"I know just how you feel, my dear," he said softly, "and I can't begin to tell you how sorry I am. I'd love you to stay at the castle, but there's nothing you can do to help, and"—he shook his head sadly—"for both our sakes you must leave at once!"

Despite the fact that she was beginning to accept the inevitable, his words startled her.

"At—at once, Nunky?" she faltered.

"Yes. No one knows you've arrived, so the simplest way is for you to collect your bags and steal off before anyone sees you. In the morning you can easily send Cronberg a wire, stating that you have changed your mind—"

He broke off, and his whole body tensed as from the far side of the dark courtyard came the sound of voices and approaching footsteps.

"The rest of the search-party!" he exclaimed. "And they're heading this way. Quick! Nip up the stairs out of sight. We mustn't be seen together!"

Swiftly June obeyed, and it was

from behind the clouds, and its titful light disclosed that the two garments were dyed green.

Even before she shook them out she guessed what they were.

The Green Archer's ghostly costume!

He must have ripped it off and flung it down on the stairs when escaping from Noel Raymond.

With that thought came another one, and June's heart gave an excited leap.

Why should the mystery man have wasted time in taking off his legendary costume? Surely it would have been much simpler to have escaped still wearing it? Unless—

June caught in her breath. "Unless he's staying here at the castle," she whispered. "Unless he's one of the film party!"

It was a startling possibility, and one which made the mystery seem all the more strange.

Why should anyone try to ruin the film in which he himself was taking part?

June shook her head, and again stared down at the silken garments which glowed in the moonlight with a ghostly sheen. They were so thin that they could be screwed up into



Excitedly June turned to Noel Raymond. "Nunky, are you game to put our two theories to the test?" she asked.

not until she was round a bend in the stairs that she realised they had not said good-bye to one another. She pulled up, turned, but it was too late. Noel Raymond, still grasping the Green Archer's bow, was already striding to meet the oncoming film crowd.

Hurriedly the girl detective darted back out of sight, and there she stood, unhappy and troubled. For Noel's cryptic hints about their being personally involved in the case had deepened the sense of uneasiness which, on and off, had nagged at her brain ever since that day when the statuette had been broken. She hated the idea of returning to London—of leaving Noel to grapple with the mysterious Green Archer on his own.

"I'm certain there's something I could do," she told herself. "And there's no need for anyone to know I'm connected with Nunky. I'm here under an assumed name, so—"

She finished with a surprised gasp. She had begun to climb more of the winding stairs, and suddenly one foot had become entangled in something that lay on one of the stone steps.

Stooping, she picked it up and peered at it. The object was a rolled-up bundle of cloth, as slippery as silk.

"It looks like a garment!" she exclaimed, then cried out again as she unrolled the bundle. "Why, there's are two of them! But what—"

Once again she broke off, for at that moment a watery moon emerged

a ball small enough to go into one's pocket, and she was about to stow them away in her coat when suddenly the crackle of paper caught her ear.

"There's something hidden in the jacket!" she cried, and with quivering fingers explored.

From one of the pockets she drew a folded strip of parchment. Eagerly she smoothed it out, then again she caught in her breath, for written in green ink were two words:

"RAINBOW CAVE."

What did they mean? Why had the Green Archer so carefully hidden away a piece of paper containing that name?

June did not attempt to answer the question, for suddenly she realised that she had seen that ill-formed, scrawling writing before.

On the threatening note which had been sent to Ronald GARTH, the screen writer.

Then this was proof that the Green Archer and the writer of that anonymous letter were one and the same person!

She straightened up, flushing as she remembered what Uncle Noel had said a few minutes earlier.

"So there's nothing I can do to help isn't there?" she breathed.

"Golly, just wait until Nunky sees these! And hears my theory that the Green Archer may live in the castle!"

Slipping the piece of parchment into a pocket of her mac, June bundled up the two flimsy garments

and pushed them into the other pocket.

She must find some means of getting into touch with Noel. When he learnt of her discoveries he might alter his mind and let her stay on.

"Oh, if only he would!" she murmured with a wistful sigh. "It would be simply wizard if—"

A sudden clatter of feet cut her short. She whirled, just in time to see three or four excited figures dash round a bend in the stairs. Though she did not know it, they were youthful members of the film unit who had banded themselves into a search-party of their own.

"There he is!" arose the shout. "There's the Green Archer!"

Next moment the girl detective found herself surrounded. One of the group seized her by the arms, while another switched on a powerful torch.

"Why, it's a girl!" declared the snub-nosed, curly-headed youth who held June by the arms.

One of his companions—a slender, elegantly dressed girl with black hair brushed straight back—gave a sniff.

"What of it?" she said. "For all we know the Green Archer may be a girl." With suspicious eyes she regarded June. "What are you doing up here?" she demanded. "What have you been up to?"

THE GREEN ARCHER'S WARNING

IT was a novel experience for the girl detective to be an object of suspicion, but the knowledge amused rather than worried her. She laughed.

"I expect I came here for the same reason as you did—to look for the Green Archer," she said.

"What do you know about the Green Archer?" demanded the black-haired girl. "You don't belong here, so why—"

"Hey, pipe down, Rose!" chipped in the curly-headed youth. "You don't give her a chance to explain. She looks all right to me!"

June flashed him a grateful smile, though she could not help wondering whether he would still think so if he knew what she had stuffed in his coat pocket.

"Actually, I do belong here," she said. "You see, I am—"

But the curly-headed youth held up an interrupting hand.

"Don't tell me. Let me guess," he bade. For a moment he stared at her hard, then he chuckled. "You'll be Carolyn Stuart—the last of the Tweenies," he declared. "Does that ring the bell?"

June echoed his laugh. "It does as far as the name is concerned," she admitted: "but I don't know about being the last of the Tweenies."

"Ah, of course, you haven't heard our nickname," said the boy. "Tweenies is what everyone calls us youngsters. We're all to play parts in the film, you know. At least, that's Cronberg's idea at the moment, but when he sees us on the set—"

"Stop talking so much, Bob," cut in one of the girls. "and let's introduce ourselves!" She flashed pearly teeth in a friendly smile. "I'm Kaye Turner," she added.

"And I'm Bob Staines," put in the curly-headed youth. "And that"—pointing to the black-haired girl who was still regarding June a little doubtfully—is Rose Summers. Those other two chumps over there are Vera March and her brother Dick, while the fat girl is Tilly Norton.

June smiled around. "Pleased to meet you all," she said.

She genuinely meant it, for the young film players seemed to be a jolly crowd. Nevertheless, she sighed as she spoke, for suddenly she remembered she was not to become one of them after all.

"But what was all the excitement about?" she asked. "I only just arrived when the scream went up and, though I joined in the general

search, I don't know exactly what happened!"

"It was our own private ghost," said Dick March.

"The Green Archer," added his sister, and gave a little shiver.

"He suddenly appeared at one of the windows and shot an arrow into the Banqueting Hall—just as we were having supper," explained Bob. "Come along, I'll tell you all about it on the way down."

And he linked his arm with June's, but the girl detective resisted his cheery pull, and she flushed with embarrassment as she remembered her uncle's order.

"I'm afraid I'm not staying," she stammered.

"Not staying?" They all regarded her in astonishment. June's flush became more pronounced.

"No. I may have to give up my job here," she added awkwardly. "In fact, I ought to be on my way to the station now!"

"But there are no trains to-night—and none to-morrow, as it's Sunday!" protested Dick March.

"Besides, you can't give up your job before you've even started it!" cried Bob, and then laughed. "Gee, but you must be pulling our legs! Come along, my girl, and no more sprucing!"

And once again he gave her arm a friendly pull.

This time June allowed herself to be half-led, half-dragged forward. Now that her presence here had been discovered, she felt she could hardly leave the castle without making some excuse to the film producer herself. Besides, it was vital that she should see Noel Raymond and tell him what she had discovered.

"I'm sure Nunky will understand," she told herself; and, when her luggage had been collected, she followed the laughing, joking Tweenies through the great doorway into the Banqueting Hall.

Around the huge fireplace, in which two oak logs crackled and burnt, other members of the film unit stood discussing the evening's excitement, but Noel Raymond was not amongst them.

"Look, that's the jolly old memento the Green Archer left behind," said Bob Staines suddenly, and he pointed to a panelled wall, opposite a high, mullioned window.

Wonderingly June looked at it, and she gasped as she saw an arrow sticking in the woodwork. Tied to it was a sheet of parchment paper, similar to the strip she had found in the pocket of the Green Archer's jacket.

In glaring red capital letters a message had been printed on it, and though they had seen it before, Vera March and the other girls exchanged uneasy glances at sight of it.

**"THIS IS MY LAST WARNING.
NEXT TIME I SHALL ACT. CLEAR
OUT OF MY CASTLE WHILE YET
THERE IS TIME.**

"(Signed) THE GREEN ARCHER."

Dick March glowered across at the threatening notice.

"His castle! Of all the cheek!" he snorted. "I only wish I could lay hands on him! I'd soon teach him that that kind of a practical joke isn't appreciated!"

"But do you really think it is a practical joke?" asked June. They all stared.

"What else can it be?" demanded Bob Staines.

Before the girl detective could attempt a reply, she was hailed by a grey-haired, dignified man whom she discovered to be James Weatherly, the business manager of the unit.

"You must be Miss Stuart," he said. "We've been expecting you. Come and be introduced, then we must see about getting you some supper."

June's head whirled with the names which were tossed at her—there were so many of them. But she had no difficulty in recognising Cecilia Selwyn, the glamorous blonde

star—Cecilia had long been her favourite film actress—and Lionel Kerr, the suave, thin-lipped villain who in private life was modest and friendly.

A quick supper by the fire, then a plump, smiling housekeeper took charge of her. On the way upstairs, the housekeeper explained that though the stars and other important people had rooms to themselves, the majority of the unit would sleep in dormitories.

When the housekeeper had guided her to the long dormitory which she was to share with five other girls and had departed, June's first task was to lock the Green Archer's costume in one of her suitcases. Then she undressed and got into bed, for the long journey up from London had tired her out.

She was fast asleep before Rose, Kaye, Vera, and the other girls came upstairs; and the following morning she was up long before her fellow occupants of the dormitory were awake.

Noel was an early riser, so now was her chance to have a private word with him.

Going downstairs, she found the Banqueting Hall deserted, and she was about to set off in search of her uncle when her attention was attracted by neat piles of manuscript arranged on an oak refectory table.

Crossing over, she saw that they were film scripts, ready for distribution to the various members of the caste, and at sight of them her heart leapt.

Here was another reason for wishing to stay on. It would be a big thrill to take part in a film.

And then, as she picked up the script which bore the name "Carolyn Stuart," she gave an excited gasp, for as she fingered the paper she made a startling discovery—a discovery which made her feel more certain than ever that the Green Archer really was a resident in the castle.

"Golly, this proves—" she began, only to break off as a surprised, shocked voice rang out from behind her.

"June! What does this mean? I thought it was agreed that you should return to London last night."

And there was Noel Raymond descending the stairs.

June flushed at the look of stern disapproval on his face.

"I'm sorry, Nunky, but I didn't mean to disobey you!" she cried. "For one thing, there wasn't a train. For another, the Tweenies discovered me on the stairs after we'd parted. Besides, I couldn't leave until I'd told you about the big discoveries I've made!"

"Discoveries!" exclaimed the famous detective. "What discoveries?"

"Well, first of all, the fact that the Green Archer is a member of the film unit."

"What!" Noel Raymond stared at her in amazement. "You really think the rascal is living here—in the castle?" he ejaculated. "But it's impossible!"

"It isn't, Nunky. I'm certain I'm right!" June paused, her heart leaping as a thrilling idea occurred to her. "Are you game to put our two theories to the test, Nunky?" she asked.

"What exactly do you mean, my dear?" he asked.

Her cheeks flushed, her pulses racing, June regarded him earnestly.

"You know I want to stay on here and help you with this case!" she gulped. "Well if I can prove beyond all doubt that I'm right, prove that the Green Archer really does live in the castle—will you let me stay?"

He did not reply, but continued to survey her frowningly.

"Will you, Nunky?" she cried. "Oh, will you?"

Will Noel Raymond agree—or will June have to return to London? Be sure to read next week's chapters of this thrilling new detective serial.

HELEN

and Her Comical Pets



MOLLIE FINDS A NECKLACE

"YOU'RE sure you'll be all right, granddad?"

Helen put her head out of the railway compartment window as she asked her grandfather that anxious question; but she was looking at Mollie, her chimpanzee, whom granddad held by a lead on a red harness, together with her pup, Jinx. They were all three seeing her off at the station—only Popsy, the parrot, was missing, she having remained behind on her perch at the Honeydew Cafe.

This afternoon Helen was going into the near-by market town for shopping, and wisely she was not taking Mollie or Jinx with her; but they were sorry about it.

"Yowp!" said Jinx, wagging his tail and looking up at her.

Mollie, the chimp, waved granddad's handkerchief, which had a moment before peeped temptingly from his pocket.

"Will they be all right?" said granddad. "I hope so, Helen. It certainly won't be my fault if they're not."

Helen didn't think it was silly, as she explained.

"Now, be good, Mollie," Helen urged the chimp. "No naughtiness. That goes for you, too, Jinx."

She shook paws with Mollie, patted Jinx's head, and settled back as the guard's whistle went, and granddad pulled Mollie and Jinx clear of the train.

"I'll have to change at the junction," said Helen. "But I'll have plenty of time for the connection. Don't forget to change Jinx's drinking bowl, granddad—and don't let Mollie have that gong."

The train began to move. Mollie waved granddad's pipe, which he was groping for in his pocket, and, with Jinx giving a farewell bark, Helen went on her way in the train.

Granddad, waving for the last time, snatched his pipe from Mollie, picked up his handkerchief and regarded the chimp sternly.

"No nonsense," he said.

He watched the train go, and then led the pets to the exit through the booking hall.

Mollie and Jinx were quite decent about granddad; they gave him very little trouble, and they put up with his crossness. In fact, they liked him. But they hadn't quite the same respect for him that they had for Helen; they could diddle him.

Mollie, for instance, walking with Helen, wouldn't have dreamed of picking up a diamond necklace merely because it glittered and looked pretty. She would have drawn Helen's attention to it and chattered, and either have been given permission to touch it or else have been ordered to let it stay and glitter.

With granddad in charge, the situation was quite different. Granddad, for one thing, was lighting his pipe. So he didn't notice the diamond

necklace lying on the floor of the booking office.

Mollie saw the necklace, but she hesitated for a moment between it and a piece of screwed-up silver paper, and then picked it up.

Her idea was to transfer the necklet to her satchel, which she carried in imitation of a handbag and in which she stored banana skins, broken lead pencils, rusty keys, stones, and anything else of interest and value.

Unfortunately, to get the satchel round from her back she had to pull at her harness, thus attracting granddad's attention and making him burn his finger with the match.

"Tsha! Mollie, stop tugging, and—"

He broke off, and stared at that glittering, flashing necklet in Mollie's paw. The pipe slipped from his jaws and fell unheeded.

"Mollie, wherever did you get that?" he gasped. "Give it to me."

He made a snatch at Mollie, but she dodged him indignantly. It was hers—she'd found it!

"Mollie, you idiot," snapped granddad, who spoke to her at times as though she understood, "you've no right to that. It's valuable. Who on earth can have dropped it?" he wondered.

Diddling Mollie by reaching for it with his left hand, he hooked his right round her neck and seized it.

"Now," he said, "now we've got to find the owner—"

As he hesitated, perplexed, a sudden exclamation from a man who strode up behind him made granddad turn.

"So you've got it, have you, you thief!" snapped the man in fury.

Granddad went pale as he met the man's angry face.

"I—er—the chimp found it," he faltered.

"Found it! H'm! More likely you trained the creature to steal it!"

The man snatched the necklet as granddad held it out, and there was no hint of gratitude in his scowling expression.

Jinx growled warningly. He didn't like men who spoke in this rough, challenging tone, and he didn't like the man's stealing Mollie's toy.

"Take better care of your animals," the man added to granddad, who was too confused to argue.

Then he strode out of the station, with Jinx straining at the leash to go after him.

Granddad, reining Jinx in and hauling at Mollie, went red now, deeply embarrassed, even though there had been no witnesses.

He looked at the chimp crossly. "You scamp! Nearly got me into bad trouble," he said. "Suppose you

By IDA MELBOURNE

had hidden that in your bag with the rubbish, and we had got it home without knowing it? How could I prove I hadn't stolen it? I might have been branded a thief and sent to prison."

Mollie clapped her paws. When granddad declaimed like an orator she thought he was fun.

But he stopped declaiming, for a pale-faced girl came hurrying into the booking-hall. She had tears streaming down her cheeks and looked quite frantic.

"Hallo, hallo!" said granddad kindly. "What has happened? Can I help?"

The girl gulped, and for a moment could not speak.

"Oh, please! Have you seen a diamond necklet?" she cried in agonised appeal.

Granddad drew in a breath. "Yes, yes—it's all right," he assured her. "It's been found. Don't worry, my dear," he added kindly.

The girl's relief was amazing. Her face cleared; she smiled.

"Oh, thank goodness! I should have been sacked otherwise. Is—is it in the booking office?" she asked, pointing.

"No. I gave it to the man," said granddad.

"The man?"

"The girl's eyes widened at that, and fear returned.

"Yes—the tall man with the blue overcoat and the red scarf," said granddad. "He said it was his."

"But—but it's nothing to do with him!" wailed the girl. "Oh, dear, I saw him hurrying off as I came in. I've never seen him before in my life."

Granddad, more agitated than ever before, asked her a few terse, anxious questions. In a moment he learned that she was employed by a jeweller, and that she had been given the task of taking the extremely valuable necklet to another shop.

For fear of thieves, who might snatch it, she had not carried it in her handbag but had put it in her pocket—not knowing that there was a small hole there—a hole small, yet large enough for the necklet to slither through it.

"Then that rascal was a thief!" groaned granddad. "He heard me ask whose necklet it was—and seized the chance on the spur of the moment. He can't be a professional—just an opportunist, but a rascal, all the same. Quick, hold these animals for me, while I give chase!"

Jinx The Pup, And Mollie The Chimp, On The
Trail Of A Stolen Necklace

Giving the leads to the girl, he hurried from the station. And so did Jinx. By a quick tug, Jinx easily freed his lead from the girl's grasp. Then he went racing after granddad—but not to the car park, where granddad meant to make inquiries. Jinx's keen sense of smell told him that the man had not gone on to the car park, but had turned right and crossed the line by the footbridge. So after him Jinx went.

JINX JOINS IN

THE man judged himself to be perfectly safe. A train had come in on the far side platform, where his wife waited for him.

"The chimp picked the necklet up just before I could," he muttered, "but I managed to bluff the animal's owner. We'll be all right. I've taken the red scarf off. I'll dump my overcoat, and any description the old man is likely to be able to give won't fit. We'll be in the train travelling in the opposite direction, while he's chasing cars or wasting time with the police."

He showed his wife the necklet, and they stared at it, amazed, for it was worth at least a thousand pounds. She had seen it on the floor of the booking office only a moment after the girl, arriving by train, had dropped it.

"What luck!" he breathed. "And we've got right away—no one following us."

They settled down in the compartment of the train, and both smiled as it pulled away from the station, their own dishonest good luck blotting out from their minds any thought of the agonised distress of the girl who had lost the necklet.

Giving the necklet to his wife to hold, the man now crossed to close the sliding door that led into the train corridor; but as he reached it a dog rushed into the compartment.

"Great Scott!" he gasped. "It's the old man's dog!"

Jinx it was. The pup jumped straight on to the seat opposite the woman, and then barked. He had seen the necklet in her hand.

The man, suddenly alarmed, looked hurriedly into the corridor; but there was no sign of granddad. Then, happening to glance through the window, he was just in time to catch a glimpse of Helen's grandfather on the platform before the station vanished from view as the train gathered speed.

"The dog must have followed me," he said, and scowled across at Jinx. "We've got to get rid of it—push it out at the next station or shut it in another compartment."

But now the shadow of someone else fell on the door, and into the compartment came a man in uniform. "Tickets, please," he said.

The man showed their tickets; then the inspector looked at Jinx.

"And one for the dog?" "It's not my dog!" snapped the man.

"Well, it's travelling with you. If it's not yours—it's name'll be on the collar."

Alarmed, because he did not want inquiries made, the man made a muttered exclamation, then held out some silver to the collector.

"He's my wife's dog—dispute between my wife and me as to who should pay. I'll pay," he said gruffly. "All right, Fido!"

"Nice dog," said the inspector, making out a ticket form.

Jinx wagged his tail with pleasure. But he did not take his attention from the woman, who had hurriedly placed the necklet in her handbag.

As soon as the ticket collector had gone the man reached out for Jinx's lead.

"I'll take his collar and lead off and throw them out of the window," he said. "Then he'll be a stray dog, with no clue to tell anyone whose he is or where he comes from."

It was a cunning idea, and he made a grab at Jinx's collar.

But why should Jinx let a stranger steal his collar?

The man hadn't thought of that. Jinx didn't see why at all. He seized the man's shirt cuff, held on to it, and growled, his ears back, his eyes glinting.

"Careful—it's savage!" exclaimed the woman in alarm.

The man eased his arm back and glared at Jinx furiously.

"We'll get out at the next station," he snapped, "and let the dog go on in the train. That'll lose him until we've got time to get clear."

The train presently stopped at the next station, but the man and woman did not get out until the last minute for fear Jinx might follow.

Jinx, meanwhile, watched them suspiciously.

Suddenly, at the last moment, the man sprang up and made for the corridor door. By arrangement, the woman stepped on to the platform by the other door, and as Jinx turned back, too late, to follow her, the man slipped out into the corridor.

Both doors slammed, and Jinx was trapped in the compartment.

"Diddled him," said the man, joining the woman on the platform. "We'll double on our trail, catch the next train back, and go to the junction."

They went over to the other platform, the train they had just left steaming out as one in the opposite direction pulled in with a roar and a clatter.

It stopped, and the man and his wife were about to board it when he felt a touch on the arm, and, turning sharply, saw the ticket collector behind him.

"Your dog, sir!" he said.

"Mum—my dog?"

The horrified man glanced down—and there on his lead, panting and dusty, stood Jinx!

Jinx had escaped by scrambling through the partly open window. But jumping from a moving train had been no fun, and he had rolled over and over along the platform. Getting up dazed, he had been seized by a porter, and now here he was after being taken along the subway by the ticket collector.

"Thought you'd lost him, eh?" the collector asked, smiling. "Ah—dogs are faithful creatures!"

The man fumed—but he had to pretend to be grateful.

"Er—er—thank you—thank you," he said. "Good old Spot!"

"Spot? I thought his name was Fido."

"My wife calls him one name and I another," snarled the man.

He gave the ticket inspector half-a-

BOOK-LENGTH STORIES YOU WILL ENJOY

No. 81.—"KAY'S FEUD WITH THE SKATING STAR."

By Renee Frazer.

No. 82.—"ASSISTANT TO THE SECRET AGENT."

By Dorothy Page.

Both of these grand February volumes of the

SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN LIBRARY

are now on sale.

Price 7d. each.

crowd, and then snatched at Jinx's lead.

The train stood waiting; the guard was about to flag it away.

"Well?" said the woman. "What now?"

"Let the dog travel alone!"

The man opened a door, making certain that it was one with a closed window.

"In you go!" ordered the woman.

She swung her handbag at Jinx and hit him with it.

Quick as a flash, Jinx seized it between his teeth and tugged, then leaped into the train.

"My handbag—the necklet is inside it!" cried the woman in a panic. "Do something! Get it back—"

"Stand away!" yelled the guard.

For a moment the man stood gaping at Jinx, sitting perkily on the seat with the woman's handbag between his teeth. Then, heedless of the risk, the man hurled himself at the moving train, and climbed aboard it. He had to get back that handbag from Jinx!

EXCITEMENT ON THE TRAIN

GRANDDAD was almost distraught. He did not know what to do for the best, he really didn't. It was alarming, worrying, heart-breaking. He had done his best to console the unhappy girl; but he himself needed some consolation, too. Not only was the necklet lost, but Jinx was lost.

And that was not the end of the sorry story. A few minutes later Mollie was also missing!

Granddad had left Mollie in the charge of the parcels office so that he could continue the search for Jinx and the necklet.

"I'll keep an eye on her," the man had said; but when he had looked round a minute later the chimp had gone.

She had gone under his counter, but he did not know that and rushed out of the office, thinking she had got through a window into the booking office.

Then the chase for Mollie began, which Mollie watched from amongst a pile of letter sacks, until the hunt took another course and she was able to borrow a porter's cap and lamp from the little room near by.

Into the station roared a train, and Mollie became excited. She had seen Helen step into a train, and thought this was the same one.

But not immediately did Mollie climb aboard, because she was watching granddad, who was rushing up and down the platform in a great state of agitation.

The guard was now blowing his whistle and waving his flag. He assured granddad positively that no chimpanzee had got on the train.

"Well, where is she?" demanded granddad, muttering.

The train got under way; and as it gathered speed a figure wearing a porter's cap rushed forward, swinging a lamp.

"Mollie!" yelled granddad.

Mollie it was. She swarmed on to the moving train and climbed in through a window, still wearing her porter's cap, although she had had to abandon the lantern.

Chattering amiably to the man whose head she had trod on entering, Mollie passed into the corridor, leaving him with staring eyes and hair standing on end.

Looking into one compartment after another, and once pulling down a newspaper that prevented her seeing the reader's face, Mollie looked for Helen. Naturally she didn't know that the sight of her homely face was startlingly seen unexpectedly over a newspaper.

The commotion on board the train increased.

Then Mollie quickened her pace; for she had heard a familiar sound. Jinx—barking and snarling threateningly.

Mollie hurried to the compartment

(Please turn to the back page.)



Colin Forrest— That Amazing New Master

THE HEAD'S DECISION

VICKY MARLOW & CO. wished to enter for the Local Schools Drama Festival, but owing to the scheming of Miss Appleby, their tyrannical Form-mistress, permission was refused by the headmistress.

However, with the help of Colin Forrest, the nephew of the headmistress, and new languages master, they held rehearsals in secret.

Mr. Forrest told them that the contents of an envelope in Miss Appleby's study would expose the mistress' trickery. Vicky secured it and hid it beneath a pile of costumes in their secret meeting place. Later, when she and her chums went there, they found Miss Appleby, with the vital envelope tucked in her shoulder-bag. In desperation the chums tried to wrest it from her; and just then came a scandalised cry from behind them. It was the headmistress!

A STUNNED silence greeted the headmistress' appearance in the secret vault. Vicky and her chums stood horrified, amid the forbidden costumes and make-up material scattered around by their desperate struggle.

Miss Appleby was breathing hard, but there was a gleam of vindictive triumph in her eyes as she turned to face the newcomer.

"Miss Vernon, thank goodness you've come!" she gasped. "You have seen, now, something of what I have had to contend with during the past weeks. You will realise that my complaints have not been unjustified."

Her voice shook in well-assumed emotion, and the headmistress turned a stern, bewildered gaze upon the tongue-tied chums.

"Vicky—Merle—Karen!" Miss Vernon spoke in tones of distress and anger. "I am hardly able to believe my eyes! What is the meaning of this scandalous scene? Answer me—at once!"

Vicky tried to reply, but she felt suddenly choked. The dramatic exposure, following the strain and excitement of the past hour, had numbed her thoughts. Before she could find words—before her chums could come to her aid—Miss Appleby was launched on a malicious tirade against them.

"Miss Vernon—forgive me—but the time has come to speak out!" exclaimed the senior mistress harshly. "For weeks I have suffered the reckless behaviour of these girls—but, fearing that it might worry you, I have tried not to complain unduly. You are aware that, since you so wisely banned their play, I have had cause to suspect they have been rehearsing it in secret—in defiance of your orders—"

"So you informed me, Miss Appleby," interrupted the headmistress, her face grim as she turned her gaze on the scattered costumes. "At the time I thought that you must have been mistaken. I could scarcely believe that the juniors would behave in such a way behind my back. But it seems"—she looked scathingly at the white-faced chums—"that you were correct in your surmise."

"I was, indeed!" declared Miss Appleby, her manner more confident. "I realised that they were deceiving you—and I kept tireless watch. This evening I managed to trail them to their secret place of rehearsal—a cellar which, I have since discovered, was closed by the orders of the school governors some years ago. I caught them here red-handed—"

"Miss Vernon—" Vicky burst out desperately.

But the headmistress' stern gesture silenced her.

"Proceed, Miss Appleby," went on Miss Appleby, with barely concealed triumph, "in the act of removing the incriminating costumes. When I challenged them, they tried to escape. I sought to detain them, and they set about me like—like young hooligans in their effort to get away."

"Miss Vernon, that isn't true!" gasped Vicky indignantly.

"She's twisted everything to suit her own story!" Merle interjected bitterly.

"Hear, hear!" echoed Karen. "Girls—how dare you!" The headmistress' voice rose sharply, ominously. "Have you the effrontery to accuse your Form-mistress of inventing the charge—in the face of this evidence?"

She pointed to the trampled costumes—the scattered grease-paints and wigs.

Vicky's face was very pale as she replied.

"Miss Vernon, I admit we have rehearsed secretly," she faltered. "We desperately wanted to keep in practice, in the hope that you would raise the ban—"

"So!" exclaimed the headmistress sharply. "You admit defying my orders? What reason had you to suppose that I would reconsider my decision?"

Vicky took her courage in both hands.

"Because—because we hoped to prove to you that it was unfair. Because we knew that Miss Appleby had been trying to wreck our play from the first, for reasons of her own—"

"Stop!" cried the headmistress, her usually kindly features darkening with incredulous anger. "Have you taken leave of your senses, girl? What foundation have you for your outrageous statement?"

She looked at the senior mistress, whose face was almost as white as the chums'.

"Miss Vernon, I protest!" she exclaimed brokenly. "This is intolerable. It is not the first time these girls have accused me of ulterior motives in my efforts to maintain discipline. I have no doubt"—her tone became venomous—"that the idea was put up to them by another—someone who has been aiding them in their reckless folly."

The headmistress was looking searchingly at the chums, as though seeking some enlightenment in their expressions. It was clear that she was deeply upset, as well as angry.

"Vicky" she said, his voice grimly restrained, "you have made a most serious and unbelievable charge against Miss Appleby—a mistress for whom I have the greatest respect. I demand to know from what source you obtained your information."

Vicky's hands were tightly clenched as she exchanged a swift glance with her chums. It was plain to her—to all of them—what Miss Appleby was driving at. She was endeavouring to get them into a corner where they would be forced to disclose the identity of their helper—Colin Forrest, the young master who had so staunchly aided them in their fight against tyranny!

"I am, waiting, Vicky!" said Miss Vernon.

Vicky remained silent, and Miss Appleby's sneer became unmistakable.

"It is unfortunate, Miss Vernon," she said, "that your nephew is not here to speak for himself!"

Vicky bit back the cry that rose to her lips. She saw the headmistress change colour, her figure stiffening.

"Girls," she said—and this time her voice shook—"if you have been misled by—by someone older than yourselves, it may possibly mitigate your behaviour in the eyes of the school governors. I wish you to give me a frank answer. It has been suggested to me, not for the first time, that my nephew, Mr. Forrest, has been the instigator of your disgraceful conduct towards Miss Appleby—and has led you to rebel against my wishes. Is this true?"

There was a sudden, deathly silence in the vault. Miss Appleby thrust her head forward, hardly able to conceal her spiteful anticipation.

The three chums stood there, very pale. Vicky looked up suddenly, meeting the headmistress' searching gaze without a tremor.

Concluding Chapters Of
RENEE FRAZER'S
Exciting School Serial

"Miss Vernon, I don't understand!" she exclaimed boldly. "Mr. Forrest has helped us with our play, as you know, but he has never, never suggested that we should defy you. As for our conduct towards Miss Appleby, I still say that we were in the right, and it was I who led the girls—"

"I, too!" interrupted Karen loyally. "We were all in it!" declared Merle in a low voice.

There was a moment's silence before the headmistress spoke; it was clear that she was suffering from deep emotion.

"I am sorry, girls," she said unsteadily, "but in the face of your admission—and the fact that you appear quite unrepentant—there is only one course open to me. I shall report your conduct to the school governors, and I leave it to their discretion whether you shall be expelled from the school!" She paused. "Have you anything to say to me, Vicky—or you, Merle—or Karen?"

The headmistress' gaze was fastened on the white-faced trio, as though to give them a last chance.

But, silent and unflinching, they stared back. Even the threat of expulsion could not persuade them to implicate the young master they all adored.

"Very well!" The headmistress' words came with an obvious effort. "I shall contact the governors tomorrow. In the meantime, you girls will be confined to the detention-room—and not allowed any communication with your Form-fellows. Miss Appleby, will you kindly see to this?"

Miss Appleby turned to the girls, scarcely able to conceal a smile of malicious satisfaction.

"Come!" she ordered sharply. In heartbroken silence the three chums followed the tyrannical mistress out of the vault. It was Miss Appleby's moment of triumph!

A LAST DESPERATE BID

THE tantalising afternoon sunshine streamed through the barred windows of the detention-room at St. Gwynn's School.

It was Saturday—the day following the dramatic scene in the vault. Three forlorn figures sat gazing at their cold, untouched lunch that had been brought to them on a tray by the duty-prefect.

"It's two o'clock, girls," Vicky sighed unsteadily. "The drama festival will start in an hour's time." "Don't!" Merle groaned, pushing back her chair from the table. "Don't rub it in, Vicky. I bet Crabby's in her glory! Even Mr. Forrest won't be able to do anything for us now—"

"But, thank goodness," put in Karen, "he's in the clear, at any rate."

The chums' faces cleared a little at the thought. Even at the moment of their deepest despair under the grim shadow of expulsion, it was good to feel that they had been able to screen the young master who had risked so much to help them.

Vicky rose suddenly and commenced to pace the narrow room.

"I wonder what's going on?" she murmured. "It's awful being kept in the dark like this. And Doris and the others—What on earth can they be thinking? They were all so keen on the play."

She broke off with a start, for there had come a gentle tapping from the direction of the window.

Vicky whirled, and her chums started to their feet.

A face was peering through the barred window—a cheery, familiar face.

"Colin—Mr. Forrest!" Vicky gasped in incredulous delight.

The young master raised his hand warningly. He was holding a screwdriver, and the dumbfounded chums could see the top of a ladder protruding above the window-sill.

The next moment they were crowding round the window, while Vicky

feverishly unfastened it and pushed up the lower sash.

"Chins up, girls!" breathed Mr. Forrest, grasping the bars and staring into the room. "Leave all the talking to me—and obey orders! One of you stand by the door and give the alarm if you hear footsteps. But we shouldn't be disturbed. Most of the school have gone to watch the hockey match with Layford College. The worthy Miss Appleby is in close conference with my respected aunt and Major Dashwood—and that reminds me!"

He regarded the chums shrewdly, the while he busied himself with the screwdriver on the bars of the window.

"It seems that you girls got yourself into the soup—by trying to get me out of a jam. Own up!"

Despite their anxiety, the chums could not help smiling at the young master's way of expressing the situation.

"Well," said Vicky staunchly, "we jolly well weren't going to give you away—after what you've done for us!"

Mr. Forrest grinned, but there was an expression in his blue eyes that the chums would not easily forget.

"Thanks, girls," he said nuzzily. "I won't forget that. By the way, how are you feeling? Pretty fit?"

"Why—why, yes," Vicky faltered, completely mystified by his surprising manner. "But I don't understand—"

"You will!" said Mr. Forrest. "Ah—screw number one! The second one seems a little easier. I hope you girls are ready for anything?"

"Anything you say, Mr. Forrest!" came the eager chorus.

"Splendid! Because I've a surprise for you; but don't ask a lot of questions now. While I'm removing these bars, there are one or two things you should know. To start with—Hester Wayne!"

Vicky's heart jumped at the mention of the mysterious author of their play, "The Gay Pretender."

"What about her, Mr. Forrest?"

"I've found out, Vicky, that she was your father's youngest sister—and she ran away from this school some twelve years ago, to try her fortune on the stage!"

Vicky could only gasp, her mind in a whirl at this startling news.

"You mean—Hester Wayne was Vicky's aunt?" exclaimed Merle.

"Exactly," agreed Mr. Forrest.

"Her name, too, was Victoria Marlow—and no doubt Vicky was named after her. Wait—don't interrupt," he added, as Vicky tried to speak.

"Though Miss Appleby got away with the papers I particularly wanted, I found some other documents when I paid a visit to her study late last night."

Still busy with the screwdriver, he went on to explain to the amazed chums that Hester Wayne, after writing the play that caused a minor sensation in the neighbourhood, decided to take up acting as a career.

Her family strongly opposed her—but as she was eighteen at the time, and within a few months of leaving school, she determined to take matters into her own hands.

Always headstrong, she accepted an offer to join a touring company about to go abroad, and when her project was forbidden by a harsh guardian, she secretly left the school to join the company.

"In those days," explained Mr. Forrest, while Vicky and her chums listened enthralled, "such an action brought far graver consequences than would have been the case to-day. Her guardian refused to forgive her—though she wrote some appealing letters, several of which came later into Miss Appleby's hands."

"Your father and mother, Vicky, were the only members of the family who stood by her, and after your parents' death your Uncle Peter tried to contact her in vain."

"But what—what has all this to do with Miss Appleby's efforts to ruin our play—Hester Wayne's play, I mean?" Vicky gasped.

"Ah!" said Mr. Forrest mysteriously. "That is what we're going to find out for certain, Vicky—when your play is put on at the drama festival this afternoon!"

Vicky's incredulous gasp was echoed by her chums; but at that instant there was a sudden clatter, and Mr. Forrest gave a satisfied ejaculation as two of the window-bars swung clear.

"No time for questions now, girls," he jerked. "Follow me—and not a sound. One at a time!"

With a cautioning gesture, he descended the ladder, and held it steady while the three excited girls climbed down to join him. The young master removed the ladder, lowering it into the shrubbery, then, raising a finger to his lips, he led the way through the rose arbour and over the fence into the paddock adjoining the lane.

Only then did the girls breathe freely.

"But, Mr. Forrest, what about Doris Norton and the other girls?" Vicky asked, finding her voice. "We—we can't put on our play without them."

Colin Forrest grinned, pointing towards the lane. The chums gasped—for there stood the young master's promised surprise.

Drawn up in the narrow lane was a single-decker bus; and from the window peered a dozen excited, girlish faces!

"Why—there's Doris!" gasped Vicky. "And Terry—and all the others!"

"And look," Karen interjected excitedly, "Doris is holding up a costume—the blue velvet mantle!"

Colin Forrest chuckled, meeting their excited, puzzled stares.

"Don't worry, girls," he said. "Everything's been arranged—I regret to say without my aunt's knowledge. I might have won her round if it hadn't been for Miss Appleby. But we'll just have to hope they won't suspect—till we have succeeded in our purpose. Now, on to the bus with you!"

The thrilled chums raced across the paddock to join their equally excited Form-fellows in the bus. Colin Forrest signalled to the driver, and the laden vehicle started on its journey to the neighbouring town.

It had barely reached the corner when a breathless figure, white with fury, came hurrying from the direction of the school, to glare after the vehicle as it disappeared in a cloud of dust.

Miss Appleby's hands were clenched, and there was a vindictive glitter in her eyes as she turned back towards the school.

"YOUR turn next, girls!"

Vicky & Co., waiting anxiously in the wings of the Town Hall theatre, looked round eagerly as Mr. Forrest hurried towards them. From the crowded auditorium a burst of clapping greeted the conclusion of the first one-act play in the festival—and St. Gwynn's was second on the programme.

"Do you—do you think we stand a chance, Mr. Forrest?"

Vicky, a slender, charming figure in her blue velvet mantle, looked appealingly at the young master, trying to stifle her fears.

More than a chance, Vicky—judging by your recent rehearsals!" Colin Forrest declared. "As you know, Paul Drayton—the chief adjudicator—is particularly keen to see this play, and I'm hoping that he'll be able to help solve your mystery!"

Vicky took a quick peep through the curtains, while Mr. Forrest pointed out the grey-haired gentleman seated in the front row.

But at that moment Karen came racing from the wings, her face very white.

"Mr. Forrest—Vicky—"

"Karen—what is it?" gasped Vicky, with a sudden, uneasy tightening of her heart.

Karen gulped. "I—I just went out for a breath

of air—and saw a car pull up at the corner. It—it's Major Dashwood's car, and I'm almost certain the headmistress is with him—and Miss Appleby!"

VICKY LEARNS THE TRUTH

VICKY'S heart froze, and there came a horrified murmur from the other girls.

"Oh goodness!" Merle groaned. "Then—then it's all up! They'll forbid our play to go on. We—we'll be marched back to the school in disgrace!"

Somewhere a bell trilled, and the voice of the stage-manager came impatiently from the wings.

"Come along, young ladies, you're holding the curtain!"

Colin Forrest turned to them suddenly, a gleam in his blue eyes.

"Carry on with the good work, girls!" he said tersely. "And don't worry! I'll handle this!"

With a reassuring smile, he watched them as they trooped on to the stage; then, turning swiftly, he hurried through the stage door and out into the street. Only in the nick of time.

From the big limousine drawn up outside the entrance of the Town Hall three people were alighting. The burly figure standing on the pavement was Major Dashwood, the chairman of the school governors, and his companions were Miss Appleby and the headmistress herself!

Miss Appleby was the first to catch sight of the young master.

"Mr. Forrest," she snapped, "we have reason to believe that those audacious girls are here—"

"Girls?" echoed Colin, raising his eyebrows. "Oh, rather! Scores of 'em! Boys, too—"

"Colin!" Miss Vernon interrupted. "A very disgraceful thing has happened. The three girls who were detained last night for reckless, disobedient conduct have broken out of the school, and Miss Appleby has information that they were seen to arrive here, accompanied by other Fourth-Formers."

"No!" exclaimed Colin in apparent amazement. "I must look into this at once, aunt. I say—if you and Miss Appleby would like to take a cup of tea with the major in the café next door, I'll slip round to the stage door and make inquiries. You can leave this to me—"

"Thank you, Mr. Forrest," snapped Miss Appleby, "but I should prefer to accompany you."

"As you please, of course." The young master's eyes hardened, though his manner was perfectly cool. "This is the nearest way."

He set out with a brisk, determined step, followed closely by Miss Appleby, while his aunt and Major Dashwood brought up the rear.

Halting at length in the narrow side street, he opened a door, gallantly motioning Miss Appleby to precede him.

"Mind the steps," he said. "These stage door entrances are always pretty gloomy—"

Miss Appleby swept past him, descending the steps. The headmistress followed, and then the major.

"I'm sorry, aunt," called Colin, "but this is the only way. You'll see what I mean—later on!"

With a swift, determined movement, he slammed the door behind them, sliding a heavy bar into place.

"Had to do it!" he muttered with a wry grimace. "Hope aunt will forgive me when she knows the truth."

He looked at the inscription painted on the door.

"Store Room—Private—No Admittance."

There came a muffled thumping from within—the sound of voices raised in protest. But the young master hoped fervently that the noise would not attract attention till his purpose was achieved!

THE final curtain of "The Gay Pretender" fell amid a tense hush—a hush that was broken by a roar of applause.

Slowly the curtain rose again, to reveal the members of the youthful cast standing hand in hand, smiling at the wildly enthusiastic audience.

But as the curtain rose for a second time there was a sudden commotion at the back of the hall. A harsh voice rang out:

"Stop! Those girls have no right here! Their entry into the contest was forbidden!"

Vicky's face turned chalkily white under her make-up.

"It's Crabby!" she groaned. "And Miss Vernon is with her!"

Amid a tense, startled hush, Miss Appleby strode towards the stage, followed by the headmistress, Major Dashwood, and an agitated official.

They had almost reached the stage when someone rose in the front row of the audience.

"Just a minute, Miss Appleby!" said Colin Forrest, smiling grimly. "Before we go any further, may I introduce my friend, Mr. Paul Drayton?"

Miss Appleby gave a violent start. Her hands clenched, she drew back.

"Colin!" gasped the headmistress, her face angrily flushed. "What—what does this mean? I should have thought you had done harm enough—"

Drayton grimly, "introduced me to a certain girl whom he declared was Vicky Marlow, but whom I now realise was his own daughter whom he wished to inherit my wife's legacy and the opportunity of appearing in my films."

There came a gasp from her chums. Vicky, her heart beating quickly, her eyes wide with amazement, encountered Mr. Forrest's smile.

"You see the idea, aunt?" said Colin, turning to the astounded headmistress. "The whole thing was a plot hatched by Miss Appleby and her brother. Their one fear was that Mr. Drayton, as adjudicator at the drama festival, might recognise Vicky—who happens to be strikingly like her aunt, especially in the costume she is wearing at the moment."

"So that—that's why she tried to wreck our play!" Vicky burst out.

Miss Appleby had risen to her feet. Pale and trembling, her eyes gleamed with hatred as she stared towards the young master.

With a questioning glance at Miss Vernon and the famous producer, Colin stepped to the door and opened it gallantly.

"I suggest that you need a holiday, Miss Appleby," he said, smiling gravely. "A long holiday! I'm sure my aunt will not be requiring your services any longer at St. Gwynn's."

With a defiant glare, Miss Appleby



Joyfully Vicky & Co. watched Colin Forrest unscrew the window bars. With his help they might after all take part in the Drama Festival.

"Pardon me, Miss Vernon," put in the famous producer, his voice gruff with emotion. "I think perhaps we should adjourn to the manager's office—together with the young members of the cast. I have much to explain."

The excited, bewildered chums were summoned to the manager's office, still in their stage attire. The headmistress was there, together with Major Dashwood and Mr. Paul Drayton. Miss Appleby, looking as though she would gladly have made her escape, was escorted firmly by Colin Forrest.

Addressing Miss Vernon, the famous producer outlined the story of Hester Wayne—the story that Colin had already told the chums.

Then, very simply, in tones of deep emotion, he added:

"Hester Wayne died last year, in Australia—after honouring me by becoming my wife."

A little whisper went round the group, quickly hushed as Paul Drayton turned to Vicky.

"Before my wife died, she asked me to trace her young namesake—the daughter of the two people who had been so kind to her at the time she left England. When I arrived here, a complete stranger, I was approached by a rascally solicitor named Appleby—"

Miss Appleby half-started to her feet, but Colin gripped her arm.

"This—er—gentleman," said Mr.

walked out of the office—and out of the lives of the chums.

There were tears in Miss Vernon's eyes as she shook hands with Vicky, Merle, and Karen, assuring them that their innocence was more than proved.

The festival came to an end with St. Gwynn's being judged the winners. Prizes were presented, and after that there was the celebration supper back at the school.

It was a happy gathering, with Vicky in the place of honour, and with Colin Forrest seated next to her. There were speeches, congratulations, and then Vicky rose to give a toast.

"Ladies and gentlemen," she said, "this is a very proud moment for me and for the Fourth Form Dramatic Society. But there is someone here to whom we owe everything—someone who coached us and encouraged us from the first. Without him our play would not have been a success—not even produced. I raise my glass to the toast of—"

Smilingly she held out her hand.

Mr. Colin Forrest—the best friend and most sporting master in the world!

THE END.

It's goodbye to Vicky and Co. and Colin Forrest, but next week you will meet a grand new set of characters in the first instalment of a magnificent new serial entitled "The Worst Boy at the Co-Ed School."

THE MYSTERY MESSAGE- WRITER OF THE FOURTH

(Continued from page 388.)

have one or two questions to ask you. I expect truthful answers."

"Of course, Miss Mortimer," the girl answered.

Miss Mortimer stared at her. "First of all," she said, "I want you to tell me what you did on the afternoon of the St. Ann's hockey match."

Lilah Jupp returned the steady gaze.

"I stayed most of the time in my study," she answered. "I've been working very hard lately."

"Celia Mason!" Miss Mortimer commanded.

Celia Mason hurried up to the platform.

"Perhaps you can prompt Lilah's memory about the afternoon of the match," Miss Mortimer said to Celia.

"She borrowed my bicycle for the afternoon," Celia answered clearly. "I had been back from St. Ann's some time before she returned it."

Lilah Jupp smiled.

"I remember now," she said. "I borrowed the cycle to go down to the river. I thought it would be better to study in the open air."

Miss Mortimer's glance hardened.

"It was far too cold a day for open air study," she remarked. "Perhaps you'll explain how so much tar came to be on Celia's cycle."

For the first time Lilah Jupp looked uneasy.

"There—there must have been tar on the river road," she answered.

"I traveled over the road yesterday," Miss Mortimer said sternly.

"There is no tar upon it at all. So

I'm very much afraid, Lilah, you have not told me the truth after all."

Her voice became sterner still.

"There is no longer any need to waste time," she said. "I have to thank Pamela Carr I've not been guilty of a terrible injustice to an innocent girl. It was Pamela who discovered the tar on the bicycle, and she who prompted Miss Carstairs discreetly to question Celia about her bicycle. Apart from lending the cycle to Lilah, Celia says it has not been used for weeks. Acting upon my instructions, Miss Carstairs searched your study, Lilah. She discovered that one of the drawers in your writing-desk was locked. I want you to give me the key to it!"

There was sensation in Big Hall. They had all been wrong about Audrey! Lilah Jupp was the culprit—she must be. But quiet, brainy Lilah of all girls! Why—why?

"I've lost the key to that drawer," Lilah said. But her voice trembled and her face was ashen.

"I think you had better find it," Miss Mortimer said more sternly still.

"We are going to your study now and, if you do not produce the key, I shall break open the drawer."

Lilah Jupp and the headmistress were accompanied by Miss Carstairs and Pam. When they were inside the study Lilah took a small key out of her pocket.

Miss Mortimer slid the drawer open, and Pam saw the proof she had sought for so long. Inside the drawer was a large bottle of green ink, a pen with a broad nib, a wad of paper similar to that usually used by the message-writer, and a small pot of luminous paint.

Lilah Jupp was the writer of the anonymous notes.

Confession came then. The messages had not been directly aimed at Pam—they had been framed in such a way eventually to make the school believe Audrey was the writer.

The scholarship was the cause of it all. Lilah had wanted to win the scholarship—her parents had promised her a holiday abroad if she succeeded—and she had been afraid that Audrey would beat her. The whole campaign had been designed to worry Audrey so much that her studies would suffer. If it succeeded in getting Audrey expelled so much the better.

Lilah Jupp left Selbury that afternoon.

That evening Audrey's study was crowded with members of the two Fourth's as one by one they came to apologise for having blamed her.

"I'm a very lucky girl in having such a wonderful chum as Pam," Audrey said time and time again. "She's going to be the best captain Selbury has ever known. You wait until she gets into the Sixth—you'll see!"

That seemed to be the general opinion.

And Audrey went on to win the scholarship by the highest percentage of marks ever scored.

"That's that!" Pam said when the result was made known. "And now we're getting down to making the hockey team the strongest junior side in the country. What a wonderful term it's going to be now!"

THE END.

Another thrilling long complete story next week entitled "The Clue of the Black Cat"—be sure to read it.

HELEN AND HER COMICAL PETS

(Continued from page 390.)

and, as the door was partly open, she pulled it wider and entered.

In a corner seat, guarding the handbag, crouched Jinx, facing him, threatening, furious, was the thief.

"Stand away. Let me have that handbag!"

Grrrr! growled Jinx.

He flashed a look of appeal at Mollie, and she did not fail him. Climbing on to the luggage rack, Mollie leaned down and took the man's hair in her right, strong paw, and pulled.

"Owowowowowoo!" yelped the man.

Instantly Jinx, seizing the bag, bolted into the corridor, hustling amongst the feet of passengers who now were clustered there, amazed by the sight of a chimpanzee roaming through the train.

"The dog's got my wife's handbag!" yelled the man.

In the confusion Jinx got away, and so did Mollie. There was talk of stopping the train, but no one cared to take the responsibility for pulling the cord, and in any case the train would soon arrive at the junction.

Meanwhile, at the junction, Helen was waiting on one of the platforms. She was imagining her pets safely back at the Honeydew Cafe in granddad's care. Nothing was farther from her mind than any fear that they might be getting into serious mischief.

"Standing in Platform 3," boomed a voice through the loud-speaker "is the train for Battingsholm, Wallingsnorth, and stations beyond—"

Not being interested in that train, which had come from her own village, Helen hardly listened. But her calm and her indifference suffered a rude shock a moment later.

"Will the owner of the chimpanzee and the dog with the red lead please take charge of them. They are on Platform 3—"

When Helen, very agitated, reached the platform, she saw Mollie holding Jinx by the lead and still wearing her porter's cap, surrounded by a merry, amused crowd of people.

But one person was not amused—a man in a blue overcoat whose face was pale with rage.

"Hold the train. My wife's handbag is on it—this wretched dog stole it."

Helen went forward at once, and claimed her pets.

"Did you say that my dog stole your wife's handbag?" she asked.

"Yes—the brute! Are you the owner of these creatures?" he asked, amazed, for he had not seen Helen before.

"I am, yes, and—"

But the train was moving, and the man in desperation jumped for it. He could not afford to lose that handbag, or, at least, the diamond necklet inside it.

The argument ended abruptly, therefore, and Helen had now only to face the station-master.

"Perhaps you'll come into my office," he said. "I've had a call from the next station along the line to say that the chimp escaped; the gentleman will be here at any minute. He was taking a taxi, I understand."

In fact, granddad was there within a minute or two. He arrived gasping and nearly frantic.

"Helen, thank goodness you're here," he said.

Helen told him briefly.

"And apparently they stole a woman's handbag—wife of a man in a blue overcoat—"

"What sort of man?" asked granddad excitedly. "Lean, with long nose, hollow cheeks?"

"Yes!"

"It's the rascal, the thief. I know why he was so keen to get that handbag. I bet the necklet was in it."

"What necklet?" asked Helen.

"The diamond necklet," said granddad, and told her about it.

"Helen, when I looked down and saw Mollie with the diamond necklet—"

He looked down now as he spoke; and then he reeled back.

This was where he had come in—for there stood Mollie with the diamond necklet in her paw.

"Mollie, where did you get it?" breathed Helen. "You—what—granddad!" she gasped with enlightenment. "Of course. Her little satchel. That's where it was—in the woman's handbag!"

She took Mollie's satchel and from it pulled a handbag, at sight of which Jinx barked excitedly.

It was the woman's. But, although Helen was amazed, and granddad almost stupefied, and the station-master quite blank, neither Mollie nor Jinx batted an eyelid with astonishment. After all, they knew! Jinx had dropped it for Mollie to pick up and hide.

Granddad held up the necklet and laughed in relief.

"Well done, Mollie, well done, Jinx! They got it back!" he chirped.

"My word, will that girl be pleased, eh?"

"She will indeed," said Helen. "Oh, let's go and see her. Never mind my shopping."

There wasn't a happier girl anywhere than the jeweller's assistant when that necklet was returned to her.

As for the woman's handbag—Helen took it to the police station in case the couple should decide to claim it!

"Another time," said granddad, mopping his brow, when they were back at the cafe, "I won't take charge of them—I just won't."

"But think—granddad, suppose Mollie hadn't picked up the necklet—that girl would have been sacked!"

"Um," admitted granddad.

He looked down at Mollie, peeling a banana, and Jinx, gnawing a bone, and smiled.

"What fun—what fun!" chirped Popsy, the parrot, and Helen thought that summed it up very well indeed.

(End of this week's story.)

There will be another amusing story featuring Helen and her pets in next Friday's **GIRLS' CRYSTAL**. And a splendid new serial will also begin next week. Look out for "THE WORST BOY AT THE CO-ED SCHOOL."