

"THE SECRET OF THE TEMPLE" Marjorie Stanton's Fine Complete  
Moreove Holiday Story Inside

# The SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN 2<sup>d</sup>



**At the Temple  
of the Moon!**

See this week's grand  
Moreove holiday tale,  
complete within.

# The SECRET of the TEMPLE



Dramatic, Long Complete Holiday Tale, Featuring Betty Barton and Co. and the Grangemoor Trio

**H**IGH up in the hills above the mighty Indian jungle, remote and aloof, stand the ruins of the Temple of the Moon, that mystic edifice which Betty and Co. have faced untold perils to find. And the long-guarded secret of the Temple, when it is finally revealed, proves to be no less thrilling than the many adventures of the long and arduous journey.

## Out For Adventure

"**G**IRLS! We're to be off now—" "Oh, hooray, Betty! Well, we're all ready!"

"Yes, wather, bai Jove!"

"And have you heard? We're to stay the night up there at the ruins!"

"Splendid!"

"Just what we have been hoping for—yes!"

It was from one of the tents forming an encampment on high ground in one of the hilly parts of India that Betty Barton had come to give the latest news to Polly Linton and other chums of Morcove School, who had been in talk outside their tent.

A tremendous distance for Betty and Co to have come, upon a holiday expedition from the Homeland—to India!

But it was going to be quite all right about the girls getting back in time for the new term at Morcove. They and those in whose care they were had come out to India by boat, but they would be returning by air—a great saving of time.

"Where's Naomer?"

"Question to ask, Betty!" chuckled madcap Polly Linton. "In fear of not getting enough to eat during the day, Naomer is packing a

few extra snacks—for Paula to carry, of course!" "On the contrary," said that elegant member of the Morcove "chummery," "I have no intention of acting as Naomer's portah; wather not, bai Jove! I find the climate of India quite twying enough as it is!"

"Brown as a berry, Paula!" commented Betty admiringly.

"And bitten all over by the wretched mosquitoes, yes, wather! Gwreat dwawback to the tropics, geals, the howwid insects and weptiles, and—owch!" gasped Paula suddenly trying to climb up one of the tent ropes because of a spider running across the ground. "Just look at that monstuous creature—urr!"

"A harmless specimen—"

"I am not going to take any harmlessness for granted, thanks! I'm off!"

Aud Paula darted away, to run full tilt into that excitable imp, Naomer Nakara.

"Ooo, just ze person I was wanting to find, Paula. Bekas—"

"Er—you must excuse me, Naomer, but—"

"Queek, you can find room in your haversack for these—"

"Sowwy, Naomer; but weally—"

"Ah, bah, be ze sport, Paula! What ze diggings, ze time may come when you will be glad that I have serounded some extra snacks! Bekas, you never know!"

"Twue," the amiable duffer conceded. "In

BY MARJORIE STANTON

India one never knows. We have certainly had a whole series of upsets since we set out for the Temple of the Moon. All the same—"

"Catch hold, queek!"

"Er—"

"Don't drop them!" commanded Naomer shrilly as she forced sundry packages into Paula's unwilling hands. "Zere are hard-boiled eggs in one of them!"

"Howwows!"

"And a cold roast fowl—"

"Wha-a-at!"

"A gorjus fowl! Ze native cook, over at ze cockhouse, he is a sport! So take care of everything, and I shall see you later!"

"Heah—"

But Naomer had whisked into the tent, and after some hesitation Paula Creel drifted away, looking so perplexed that Pam Willoughby, encountering her, asked serenely:

"Hallo, Paula darling! What's your trouble?"

"Er—you don't happen to want a cold roast fowl?"

"A what!"

"To mind—not to eat, Pam deah! And some hard-boiled eggs, yes, wather! Weally, I can't find woom for such things in my haversack! Haow can I, bai Jove?"

Pam laughed, understanding how Paula's perplexity had arisen.

"Here's Jack," she remarked as Polly's frowning brother came running up. "He'll come to the rescue, Paula."

"Bai Jove, gweat welief! Er—Jack!"

"Jello, jello!" said Jack, thinking that this was the native "lingo" for getting the jerk on. "Sorry I can't stop," but he was stopping as he said it. "Having been appointed colonel of the native supply column—but what's the trouble, then?"

"A woast fowl, Jack—"

"Oh, thanks!" And he accepted it, quite gladly.

"Also, I understand, a few hawd-boiled eggs—"

"This is awfully good of you, Paula," said Jack, shaking her by the hand. "As a matter of fact, there's enough stuff going forward to the ruins to keep us all for days! Still, a toothsome morsel, en route—very welcome! Corporal Cherrol!" he shouted.

Whereupon, up ran Dicky Cherrol, to keep the joke of his military title going by saluting.

"Here, my man!" said Jack, handing over the eatables. "Just take charge of these!"

"Yessir!"

"Put a 'Wanted on voyage' label on them!"

"Yessir!"

And away went Dicky.

"Absurd fellah!" Paula beamed at Jack. "Howevah, it is a gweat welief to be welieved of the burden, yes, wather!"

"We are starting at once, Jack?" Pam remarked.

"Like a lift, or do you prefer to walk?" he inquired of both girls. "The driver wallahs are taking a couple of the bullock-carts up the track to the temple."

"Oh, I shall much prefer to walk!" smiled Pam.

"Yes, wather! I hev the most painful wecollections of those bullock-carts," said Paula. "Dweadful, dweadful!"

"Then I'll see you later, boys!"

Jack always addressed the Morcove girls as if they were so many of his chums of Grangemoor

School. He nipped away, making for an outlying part of the camping-ground where all the transport was parked.

"My word, Paula, what a difference since yesterday!" Pam exclaimed, gazing around. "We hadn't a single native servant of any sort to help us. And now—we've swarms of them! Case of good coming out of evil!"

"Yes, wather! Yesterday's revolt against that wotah of a wajah has bwrought gweat blessings in its twain, Pam!"

Paula's flowery sentence bore allusion to the sensational downfall of a local tyrant, within the last twenty-four hours.

He, the Rajah of Chodopore, had caused the expedition great trouble. But the unexpected revolt of his people as the result of tyranny that had goaded them to frenzied action, had given him his "quietus." And, within a few hours of his overthrow, Morcove and Co., had obtained all the native assistance that it needed.

So now the camp teemed with fine, turbaned men to whom it was a new and joyful experience to be in the pay of the Britishers.

It was not the pay that so delighted the men, it was the kindness! As the boys and girls had been saying amongst themselves, you had only to smile at one of the natives and he would do anything for you.

Betty, Polly, Naomer, and one or two more came up at that moment, to rejoin Pam and Paula in the blazing sunshine.

Then other girls came up, completing the happy batch. There was Madge Minden, there was Tess Trelawney, with her camera and sketching materials, there were jolly Helen Craig and Judy Cardew—the latter, the only sister of Dave Cardew, a third boy-member of the expedition.

Suddenly a pocket-whistle was blown by one of the grown-ups, a little distance away. It was the father of Polly and Jack, giving the signal for the juniors to gather round.

"Fall in!" dinned Polly, who liked to give things a military flavour, as did her brother.

"Kid," she said to Naomer witheringly, "you've got your helmet on the wrong way round!"

"Eet not matter! Bekas—"

"It DOES matter!" Polly mock sternly insisted, and she promptly took hold of Naomer's pith helmet, to put it the right way on.

The helmet being raised out fell two packets of chocolate.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, I'm bothered!" cried Polly.

"No wonder she had to ask Paula to carry part of the rest," smiled Pam.

"But what ze diggings! Bekas, Paula is not carrying them!" Naomer now realised. "You say, Paula, queek! What have you done with my chicken—queek?"

"Paula's eaten it!" was the explanation which Polly offered, causing another peal of merriment as they all romped away, to "fall in" for the march to—the Temple of the Moon!

### "To the Temple!"

THE tropic sun blazed fiercely upon that stony wilderness through which the marchers had to make their way.

There was roasting heat coming down from the cloudless sky, and there was the same heat thrown back at them all, from the sun-scorched track.

But old and young alike were in the mood to put up with discomfort to-day. In any case,

it was only a short distance to go, and then—the goal would have been reached, at last!

Some members of the party had already obtained a hasty glimpse of the Temple of the Moon. But there was to be all the difference between that flying visit by a section of the expedition, a day or two ago, and the arrival of the entire party to-day.

Only now and at long last, was Professor Donkin to have the chance to put all his knowledge and his theories to the test.

Thrilling developments were expected. And to the juniors those thrills were going to be all the greater, for the simple reason that they had not the faintest idea what the famous professor's theories were. He had never told them anything.

Those fathers and mothers who were members of the expedition—even they knew nothing!

"Whew!" panted Polly, tramping the rising track with all her chums. "Hottest time we've had!"

"Woasting, bai Jove!"

But Paula's adoring schoolmates, glancing at her, failed to see any signs of wishing she had never come, such as she so often displayed during any strenuous outing at home.

Excitement and enthusiasm had got the better of even the languid one's dislike of being "fagged about."

"I can feel the ground burning the soles of my shoes," was Helen Craig's exaggeration.

"Yes, talk about ze cat on ze hot bricks!" And Naomer capered, as if to keep off the heated earth as much as possible.

A little later:

"How far now?" one of them wondered.

"Oh, only a mile, if that," said Tess cheerily.

Loud groans! But this again was only Morcove's fun.

Had it been an all-day march to the ruins, Morcove would have been ready to go on and on.

The thought was in the minds of all. This was the last lap—the last mile—in that tremendous journey of thousands of miles, by land and sea, which had used up so many weeks of the holidays.

The Temple of the Moon! With their own eyes they were to see it, before this day was out, after thinking and talking about it incessantly for weeks on end.

"D'you remember our last evening in Study 12, the night before school broke up?" Betty suddenly recalled. "When we knew that we were to go out to India on this expedition—how excited we were?"

"The strange thing is," murmured Polly, "that Professor Donkin was staying close to Morcove at the time he translated all those ancient documents that relate to the temple."

"Good job for us that he was," said Judy. "Or we wouldn't be with him now. I

wonder how HE feels about it all at this moment!"

She said it, giving her eyes to the professor as he stepped along with other grown-ups, slightly in advance of the junior section.

The genial old professor looked taller and thinner than ever, in his white cotton suit. That small but noble head of his seemed to be swamped by a pith helmet that was much too big for him.

"He's a dear!" declared Betty, and the others agreed heartily.

"And here's another strange thing!" came from Madge, of a sudden. "What we were told, last night, by Naina Khan about her father—"

"Goodness, yes!" cried Polly. "That was just marvellous, girls! Fancy her and her mother having gone on for months in the belief that Hunda Khan must be dead, because that rotter of a rajah had told them that it was so. And then they hear a whisper that Hunda Khan was spirited away from the palace and may be alive after all!"

"Kept prisoner, somewhere, so the rumour goes, out this way!" Judy carried on the thrilling topic.

"Perhaps—at the temple itself!" added Polly.

"Yet I don't see how that can be," demurred Tess. "The temple is simply a tremendous ruin, covering acres of ground. Not a soul in there—at least, one supposes not. So how could that rajah have sort of interned Naina's father at the ruins?"

"I zink we better dig up all ze ruins, to try



To the amusement of the others Paula Creel did a sudden scramble up the nearest guide rope. "Oh, gwacious!" squealed the elegant one. "Just look at that monst'wous cweature!"

and find a secret cell." was Naomer's brilliant suggestion. "Bekas, you never know!"

"Right!" Polly said derisively. "And perhaps you'll help to shift some of those stones that weigh a few tons each?"

"Thirsty work!" chuckled Betty. "Hallo, dropping out of the march, Paula?"

"Bai Jove—pouf!" puffed the adored duffer, in surprise at having had to sit down for a rest. "Sowwy, geals, but—"

"What she wants—that we all want—is a refresher," Naomer promptly stated. And she tugged round her own water-bottle, slung by a strap, and uncorked it—pop!

"Well!" said Polly, eyeing Paula as she sat upon a weather-worn stone fanning a heated face, "if I did have to sit down, I wouldn't sit there. I believe in being kind to animals, even snakes!"

"Wha-a-at!" And Paula jumped up, almost a yard high.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"A mother snake and all its little ones, just hatched," Polly said, pointing.

"Howwows! You know, I felt something sting me!"

"Snakes don't sting, stupe!"

"Then it bit me!" wailed Paula, almost swooning.

"Ow, healp!"

"Here you are, drink zis, queek! Bekas, you never know!"

"Do you feel yourself swelling up?" Polly mock-seriously asked Paula, feeling quite certain—as did the others—that the snake-bite was pure imagination.

"Ye-yes, wuw-wather!"

"Swelling up all over?"

"Yes!" wailed Paula.

"Then you're all right," the madcap comforted the oft-teased one. "When you're bitten you dry up—"

"Bai Jove, but I feel that that is just what I am gug-going to do!"

"Shrive! up to nothing—that's what happens to you," Polly lectured on, to the great hilarity of all except Paula.

"But not cef you take a good pull of my patent quencher!" insisted Naomer hopefully.

"Sold in the market-place for fifty years!" chuckled Helen. "Ha, ha, ha!"

"I do believe you geals are wotting," Paula belatedly beamed. "Haow can you be, so fivulous!"

The next thing was, of course, to be considerate to Paula, in the old Study 12 manner. So it was proposed to give her a "flying angel," enabling her to enjoy a rest without having to halt.

Polly and Naomer were the two volunteers, and those who waited to see the compassionate act carried out must have wondered where the real rest for Paula came in.

She certainly did not sit at ease upon the crossed arms of the madcap and the imp.

But Pam and one or two others had taken it into their heads to sprint away, seeking Naina, and they only heard Paula's squeals, and the shrieks of laughter from actual onlookers, ending when the beloved duffer was set down with more abruptness than care.

Naina was walking beside a native cart that had been turned into a comfortable litter for her mother, who was too weak for the march. The pair of them, having incurred the enmity of the heartless rajah some time back, had endured

great hardships at his hands of late. Now, however, mother and daughter were in good hands.

Medicines carried by the expedition had already done wonders with the ill-fated native lady, who had been down with a touch of fever. She was improving rapidly, but for the present she was being spared all fatigue.

Curtains to keep out the sun were hung all round the make-shift "ambulance," and nothing could be seen of its occupant. Yet these two or three Morcovians found Naina plodding along beside the cart, in silent devotion to her mother.

At first Pam and her chums had nothing to say to the native girl. They merely let her see, by their friendly smiles, that they felt they would like to walk with her.

She understood, and the dark eyes set in her thin, dark-skinned face returned a look of fervent gratitude.

Then, presently, the British girls offered a few heartening remarks, in subdued tones. Naina, like her mother, could speak English fluently, having been taught by Hunda Khan himself, who had been an admirer of all things British. So there was no language difficulty.

Inevitably the quiet conversation turned upon that hope which had come to mother and daughter alike, such a short while back. The sudden and thrilling hope that one who had been so dear to them was not dead after all, but—**STILL ALIVE!**

And as they talked they knew—they knew that every step along this rough road might be taking them nearer to the place where he was to be found!

"Look!" said Pam, of a sudden, pointing ahead.

For the ruins were in sight.

### Journey's End

**T**HE hillside track, grown so rough and narrow since those far-off times when pilgrims teemed upon it, ended at a lofty plateau.

In a region where the mountains were ranged so high that some were crested with eternal snow, this comparatively low hill had offered an unique site for the temple.

Here, thousands of years ago, stone upon stone had been laid by followers of a heathen religion about which nothing was known to-day. Or—did Professor Donkin, alone amongst men, know all?

Moreover, often asking itself that question of late, had been forced to go on wondering! But now—at last, perhaps, the girls were soon to find out how much the great scholar DID know.

The long, long journey was at an end. They, pilgrims of a very different kind from those of prehistoric times, had reached their goal. Before their awed eyes, at this moment, was all that remained of the Temple of the Moon.

Those who had not been here before, on that flying visit, stood spellbound, enraptured. They had tried to imagine what the ruins would be like, and imagination was put to shame.

"It must be one of the wonders of the world," Madge Minden whispered, standing with the rest of the juniors just short of the ruinous walls and crumbled columns.

"Bai Jove, most impressive!"

Other murmurs came, to similar effect, then silence reigned again.

Moreover the boys could not shake off the spell-binding effect of what their eyes had to see.

They gazed, and as they gazed they felt their

minds reeling back, as it were, through all the ages that had come and gone, since the last mystic rites were performed at this spot.

Suddenly a faint pop! That was Naomer uncorking her water-bottle again. The spell was broken! And very wretchedly the madcap turned her eyes upon the dusky one, as the "refresher" was raised once more to thirsty lips.

"Bai Jove!" drawled Paula disdainfully. "The geal is simply a—"

"What am I then? You say, queek!"

"Er—no, Naomer! I pwefer not to entah into any atlowcation," Paula hastily pleaded. "One feels that this is sawced gwound."

"Oh, I don't know about that!" Polly exclaimed. "I suppose these ruins are no more sacred than, say, Stonehenge at home?"

"Ask the professor!" Helen Craig suggested, with a sly smile.

"No good asking him," grimaced Polly. "We've got to wait and see. Although that doesn't mean that we aren't entitled to explore a bit on our own!"

"Should hope not!" cried Betty. "But first of all—"

"Yes, wather!"

Paula, now that Betty was off-slinging a haversack, had no intention of being the last to follow that example.

"Gee, boys, but it's fine not to have to bother about tents and things," exulted Jack. "Got nothing to do now but just enjoy ourselves!"

"And keep out of danger!"

They all turned round, whilst piling the discarded haversacks. It was Mr. Linton who had sauntered up, just in time to make that rejoinder to his son's jovial remark.

"Don't forget, you youngsters, that first time some of us were here, a day or two ago, a bit of the ruins came tumbling down, without the slightest warning!"

"Oh, daddy, don't say you're going to put the ruins out of bounds?"

"No, bekas—what ze diggings, zat would be a sweeidle!" shrilled Naomer. "Out of bounds has nothing to do with ze holidays!"

"It's all right!" laughed Mr. Linton. "We older ones have discussed that, and we feel you can be trusted to be careful. As for what happened the other day—"

He shrugged.

"As we said at the time, that ruined archway must have been ready to fall. But it's a million to one chance that anything like that will happen again."

"And even if it does," put in Dick Cherrol. "it doesn't follow that it would come down on us!"

"Pretty bad job for you, if it did," said Mr. Linton. "Anyhow, mind how you go!"



Both girls saw the head and shoulders of a native among the ruins. With wonderful presence of mind Polly Linton focused the camera, and a second later she voiced a delighted: "Got him!"

His wife came up, along with Pam's father and mother, and Mrs. Cardew. The professor, it seemed, was already starting upon his own prow through the ruins, but these other grown-ups had to consider where best to make the temporary camp.

Some tenting would turn up by-an-by, and also sufficient stores for the time being.

The juniors got involved in the discussion, but this only detained them a few minutes. Then they were off.

Tess had handed over her camera to Betty, and was now saddled with sketching materials. It wouldn't be Tess if she did not take back colourful records of this wonderful place.

"Can I hold your sketching tackle for you, Tess?"

"Oh, thanks, Dicky!"

And they changed hands. Dick Cherrol had turned back to make the offer, and now he walked with Tess and Pam.

"Snaps are all right," said Tess! "but they don't give you this blinding sunlight, and the blue shade. Everything quivers. I want to get that."

She stopped still, her artistic eye gazing fixedly, walked on again—side-stopped, to see some part of the ruins at a better angle—then went still farther aside. Pam and Dick kept with her: they felt they must do so, especially as he held the paintbox and other "gear." But it meant their getting detached from the rest of the ramblers.

"Yes," Tess presently exclaimed, as if she had been making up her mind about something. And she turned to Dick to take over her things

from him. "I shall be here, but don't you two stay around unless you prefer."

"Perhaps you'd better not be left to yourself, Tess," said Pam.

"Why ever not?"

"Oh, I don't know! But I'd just as soon sit here, and watch you get to work."

"Shall I be in the way?" Dick asked, a little shyly. A certain liking to be with Pam in particular made him as shy as this at times. Yet Pam herself could never understand why it should do that. She was always serene and self, and he and she got on especially well together.

"If you don't talk too much!" was the condition imposed by temperamental Tess.

Pam sideglanced Dicky then, and smiled. Of course, he knew by now how severe Tess could be when in a painting mood.

He and Pam watched the others for as long as they were in sight. But very soon figures that had looked so strangely dwarfed amongst the towering ruins, were lost to view. Occasional cries of wonderment over some fresh relic of the past came to Dick and the two girls, telling them which way the others were "exploring."

Pam started talking. She knew that Tess would rather hear some quiet conversation going on than have her progress watched in silence.

"Some of these walls and columns that still stand must be enormously high, Dicky!"

"Rather, Pam! You noticed how tiny Betty and the rest looked, just now, walking amongst them?"

A sudden fuming sigh from Tess, whilst she used the indiarubber.

"It's all right," she said. "That wasn't because of you two! Oh, but this is going to be a terrible job; that series of arches—talk about a study in perspective!"

"Then why do it?" said Dick, meaning well.

Tess frowned at him—almost pityingly.

Then she continued with her pencil, sketching in the extremely difficult outline of the mighty ruins—the broken arches, and the white columns and bits of wall that still stood up, amidst mounds of fallen masonry.

Suddenly, whilst holding her pencil at arm's length to get a measurement, Tess gave a startled gasp. She dropped her arm and twitched round to Pam and Dicky.

"Did you see?" she jerked out.

"No, Tess—what, what?"

"A man!" she whispered tensely. "A native—not one of those who has come with us as a camp servant. He looked—oh, so strange. Horrid!"

"How do you mean?" her startled listeners asked. "And where was he, Tess?"

She pointed into the ruins.

"Do you know," she whispered, whilst Dicky and Pam now looked with her in that direction, "he seemed to me to be one's idea of a native priest. So old and gaunt—a living skeleton!"

"And his dress, Tess? Was it like we've seen some of these holy men wearing?"

"I didn't have time to notice," was the low-spoken answer. "I just caught sight of him, right back there between those two columns—peering out at us, I thought."

Dick rose to his feet.

"I'll go and see."

At that instant a startled outcry came from those juniors who, out of sight of these three, were wandering amongst the ruins.

Up jumped Pam and Tess. They could not sit calmly there after such a "turn" as they had received.

They put themselves in step with Dicky, who had instantly changed his mind about going to investigate at the spot where Tess had glimpsed that mysterious figure.

"We'll find the others," he muttered.

"Yes!"

Amidst such a jumble of fallen masonry and portions of the ancient temple that were still standing, it took the three a good half-minute to come in sight of their chums.

Even then, it was only a couple of them who were espied, obviously searching around in the very heart of the ruins.

"Betty and Polly," commented Pam. "I wonder what has caused them to—"

She got no farther with that remark, but changed to a loud warning cry:

"Oh, look out, there—Betty, Polly!"

And Tess and Dick were yelling to the same effect.

To their horror, the three of them could see a great stone column, almost as tall as a factory chimney, toppling before it would break and then come crashing to ground. With Betty and Polly close under it!

But those two girls, instantly alive to the appalling danger, had already made their scrambling rush for safety.

They were wildly floundering over the boulder-bestrewn ground as that ponderous stone column swayed again.

Then it broke into several sections and the whole thing came to earth with a rumbling crash like thunder.

Clouds of dust arose, and the blinding smother intensified the beholders' sense of utter chaos, of being in a world that had fallen to pieces, and of two chums at least being badly injured—if nothing worse!

### What Does It Mean?

"IT'S all right—we're safe!"

That cry, from Betty and Polly both, coming to all the others from out the blinding pall of dust!

"What an escape for them!" Pam gasped.

"What a thing to happen!"

"And why did it happen?" Dick exclaimed,

breathlessly. "Can't make it out!"

"Uncanny!" ejaculated Tess.

She and Pam were as pale as ghosts. Wanting to move, they found themselves unable to do so. So terrible had it been for them, to be eyewitnesses of the sinister happening.

A moment more, and out of the smother came Betty and Polly, laughing in an overwrought way. At the same instant, other members of the expedition came from this direction and that, in twos and threes. It was a general rush to rejoin Betty and Polly, whose quickest way out of any further danger had brought them running towards Pam, Tess and Dick.

"Ha, ha, ha!" Polly was laughing, as she got to them with Betty. "Did you see?"

"Did we see!" Pam shuddered. "We thought you would be killed!"

"Wasn't there any warning?" Dick jerked out.

"Why, as a matter of fact—there was!"

Betty had almost the entire party listening to her, as she said that. She and Polly had now become the centre of a small crowd, everyone in it looking astounded, if not "scared stiff."

"You see," Betty panted on, "we were all together when several of us thought we saw a strange man—a native—lurking amongst the ruins."

"That's quite right!" interposed Helen Craig excitedly. "And we wondered!"

"Bekas, he vanished like a ghost!"

"So we decided to hunt around after him," Jack now carried on the explanation. "Got separated—"

"And Polly and I were together," Betty resumed. "We were picking our way about most carefully. I'm sure, when suddenly we heard a curious sound—a kind of screech, close at hand. Then we looked and saw that that enormous stone column was rocking—was going to come down right upon us!"

"So we hopped it," Polly laughed. "Just in time!"

A puzzled silence followed.

"Strange," Judy's mother exclaimed at last. "The same thing that happened on the flying visit. Then it was a bit of an old archway that came down."

"Only there was not the slightest warning that time," Betty broke out. "This time, there was that peculiar noise, just before the fall."

"It was as if something were starting the fall," said Polly.

"Ah, you heard a kind of screech, you say?" remarked her father. "Would it be the sort of noise an iron crowbar, or something like that, would make, when used to lever a stone?"

"If the crowbar slipped—yes!" cried Betty and Polly together.

"I've got it!" burst out Jack, but he was not the only one to whom enlightenment had come. Excited exclamations followed hard upon one another.

"That mystery-man caused the column to fall!"

"Find him, then—catch him!"

"Yes, let's!"

"Only—one thing," demurred Betty. "Could he have been near enough to the spot where the column fell? He was a good way off when we noticed him."

This caused another puzzled pause. But the impetuosity of Polly, Jack, and the others got the upper hand of them. No use standing about in talk!

So, in a few moments, there was a very wary prowling back into the ruins, the grown-ups going first.

The whole party ventured to the spot where a great mound of fallen masonry replaced the tall column of a few minutes since.

There was no danger, at that place, of any other portions of the ruins falling upon them.

Suddenly Tess Trelawney gave a thrilled: "Hallo, look! Just look there!"

She was pointing to the heaped blocks of stones in front of her.

Then the others saw—a yard or so of coarse rope. It came from under the block of stone and another, as if there were much more of it lying buried beneath the general mass. It formed a kind of loose loop, no end showing.

"Gee!" shouted Jack. "Then there it is—the whole jolly artful trick! See? That native had a long rope to pull on—"

"He at one end, and some implement at the other," nodded Professor Donkin. "This is interesting."

Interesting! Moreover's word for it was "thrilling!"

Quickly a number of them set to work, clearing away some of the blocks of stone. As usual, in the case of very ancient ruins, the stone blocks were never too big for a strong man to tackle single-handed. The girls found that they, for

their part, could lift them away easily, by working in pairs.

As fast as everybody worked, so more and more of the coarse rope was exposed.

Then suddenly they came upon one end of it, tied to a small but very powerful "jack"—a modern implement. It was, in fact, very like one of those used for lifting cars in garages.

The sensational discovery brought a pause in the activities.

"That settles it," Polly's father expressed the general opinion. "And so it really was foul play!"

"Donc, to scare us away!" one of the girls interferred.

"Without a doubt," said Mr. Willoughby. "Then was that native put on to do it—by the rajah?" questioned Betty tensely. "Perhaps that native hasn't heard that the rajah has come to grief down there at the palace!"

"Again, you've got it, for a certainty," nodded Mr. Linton. "The rajah gave instructions, and they've never been cancelled. It's why that other bit of masonry collapsed."

"But that's not good enough!" cried Jack. "Seems to me our next job—catch that chap!"

"If we can!" grinned Dicky. "I guess he bolted off and is still running!"

That seemed to be the case, for they did not have sight or sound of him again.

With extreme caution they searched in and around the ruins, and all in vain.

There was one alternative, borne in mind by all, that he had some very secret hiding-place amongst the ruins.

Covering acres as they did, it had to be realised that anybody with an intimate knowledge of the ruins could play hide and seek very easily, baffling even a large party of people on the look out.

"Yes, it is a possibility we have to reckon with," the juniors heard Mr. Linton remark, during a meal-time debate later on. "Even so, can there be any risk of his getting up to more monkey-tricks?"

"I should say no," murmured Mr. Willoughby. "Your opinion, professor?"

Moreover was noticing that Professor Denkin looked very deep in thought.

"If I may make a suggestion," he said quietly, "it would be better if we did not make a camp here for the night after all. The stuff has not all come up from the other camp. It can be easily sent back. We ourselves would retire—"

"As a kind of ruse?" murmured one of the girls.

"But come back, after dark, of course, sir?" broke from Betty. "Oh, please, we must do that!"

"Yes, bekas, sweendle, eef we are not to—"

A laugh from Mr. Linton interrupted Naomer. "The youngsters mean to be in the thick of any excitement that is going!"

"Oh, daddy, and don't we deserve to be?" Polly roguishly protested. "After coming all this way!"

"I see no reason why the youngsters shouldn't be here, to-night," Professor Donkin said, his brown forehead still heavily furrowed with the stress of hard thinking. "Even we grown-ups will not have to go amongst the ruins!"

"You mean—we shall all watch from outside?" Betty caught him up eagerly. "Thrilling!"

"And you expect something to happen then, Professor Donkin?" was Helen Craig's joyful guess.



"I am not going to say, my dears!"

"Zen you are not ze sport we took you for!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Naomer had lot it be seen that the protest was only a playful one. The professor's present reticence was only in keeping with his cautious attitude of the last few weeks.

But there was this difference. Unless Morcove and the boys were greatly mistaken, this morning's happenings had given Professor Donkin furiously to think!

It seemed to the juniors that he, primed with knowledge about the Temple's origin and long-lost history, had been able to form a certain theory which could never have occurred to anybody else.

Later, they saw him in close talk with the other grown-ups, who seemed to find in what he was imparting cause for great excitement.

Polly tried "pumping" her mother and father; Judy questioned her mother; Pam skirmished with her parents. Nothing doing! Evidently the juniors had got to wait and see!

"Oh, well!" shrugged Polly. "One comfort, it will be all the more exciting when it does happen—whatever it is that is going to happen!"

And with that consoling reflection they all had to remain content.

Late in the afternoon everything that had come up from the other camp was sent back.

It was part of the ruse to have this done as openly as possible, in case that mysterious native should be hiding within earshot of all that went on. So the expedition was all the more pleased at the hubbub which the native porters created as a result of the changed plans.

Not that there was any discontent, but the natives were an excitable lot, and their very happiness in the employ of the British party made them very noisy.

At last they and all the equipment were off the scene, and the comparative silence at the ruins was very impressive.

"Goodness," said Polly. "It's like our school-house must be after we've all cleared out on breaking-up day!"

"And in a few minutes, we've got to clear out," said Betty. "Look at Tess, making good use of the little time that's left!"

At it again, with her colour-box, was Tess. She and the other juniors had been under orders to rest during the last two hours. No talking, and if possible a siesta—that had been the wise command. But now the rest-period had expired, leaving them all certainly much the better for it.

Polly picked up the camera.

"I'm going to get a snap or two of the ruins, before we go. Shan't be able to photograph them in the moonlight."

She drifted away, thinking it not worth while to ask any of her chums to go with her. But Judy and Betty came running after her in a few moments, for company's sake.

Polly turned to them with a glad smile.

"Oh, you two had better be in the picture, then! We'll find a good background—a bit of the ruins of course! Something to show all the girls when we get back next term!"

"Think of them all, seasing and motor-touring, whilst we are—out here in India!" Betty exclaimed, with a musing smile. "It's pretty wonderful!"

"No mistake, we'll have something to tell them when we do get back to Morcove," nodded Judy.

"There's a fine bit, Polly!"

"Yes!"

They all three halted, confronted with one of

the more impressive portions of the vast ruins. Polly sighted the camera at crumbling arches and crudely-carved walls, with supporting columns. From niches in the ancient masonry grew tufts of grass and wild flowers.

She was just going to tell her two chums to go forward and stand to be taken, and then—she made the very quickest sign to them to keep quite still, close beside her.

"I say," she said, under her breath, "I saw that man just then!"

Betty and Judy put a check upon their tongues. Polly still fiddling with the camera, was side-glancing the entreaty:

"Don't breathe!"

They guessed her intention. If possible, she was going to "snap" that mysterious native!

So the pair of them stood mute and silent at her elbow.

It so happened that a great quietude reigned everywhere at this moment, and the three girls hoped fervently that it would last. For it was this silence, after the recent hubbub of the "evacuation," that must have tempted the mysterious native to venture from his secret lair.

Suddenly, Betty's heart gave a big leap. So did Judy's.

Both girls saw the head and shoulders of the man, as he stood erect to peer over a low, broken-down wall.

He could not have known that they were there and looking his way. At sight of them, he dashed away—instantly. But quick as he had been, the camera had been quicker.

Click!

And Polly shouted:

"Got him!"

### Naina's Dream

THE tense silence was broken, not simply by Polly's triumphant cry, but by shouts from Betty and Judy.

"After him!"

But they had sense enough not to dash alone towards the spot where the man had shown himself for just that second.

The narrow escape of the morning had taught Morcove a lesson!

Up dashed all three boys and some of the other girls, followed by the grown-ups. Excitement reigned again, and again the ruins were hunted through—in vain!

"Well, fancy!" Morcove was saying presently. "We still can't find him!"

"And we shan't—not by looking for him now, that's my belief," said Dick Cherrol. "He goes to ground, that's about it."

"Dicky's right," Jack had no hesitation in agreeing. "Chap's got some burrow that he pops down. A stone covers the entrance—and how are you going to tell where, in a place like this?"

"But I got a snapshot of him—a perfect one, I'm sure!" Polly exulted. "You see, I happened to be ready when he bobbed up. He was so taken by surprise at our being there, he stared for just a half-second. You wait till the snap is developed."

They did not have to wait long. The expedition carried a daylight developer. Back at last night's camp, an hour later, they soon got that lucky snapshot developed and printed off.

The first print passed from hand to hand quickly. It was in an unfixed state, and could not stand exposure to light. But there was opportunity for all to have a hasty glance at it, and the chorus of comment flowed steadily.

"Perfect!"  
 "Dravo, Polly!"  
 "Bekas, good enough to put in 2d Barncombe Herald!"  
 "It goes into the Study 12 album, anyhow!"

"Yes, wather. But, good gwacious, what a howwible man!"

"He's not exactly handsome!"

"No turban, did you notice?"

Finally, the print came back into the hand of Professor Donkin, who had now produced a magnifying glass.

Surrounded by the rest of the party, he examined the shapshot through the glass.

"As I thought," he announced at last; "a priest! Polly, my dear, you did better than you imagined even! You got him almost full-length as he darted away."

"Yes! I thought I was only getting his head and shoulders, but—"

"All the better, for this gives one some idea of his clothing."

The print passed from hand to hand again. Once more the juniors felt inclined to shudder as they looked at the photograph of such a repellent man.

He was almost vulture-like with his beaky nose and skinny neck. His raiment had come out white in the snap, and there was not much doubt that the colour of what he wore gave him a better chance of creeping about the grey old ruins unobserved.

Betty and others looked at the professor so beseechingly that he smiled.

"Very well, I will tell you this much! That man's raiment tallies with the garments worn by the priests of the temple two thousand years ago. Those documents I translated at home in England contained a description of the priests' dress, habits and so on. In fact, I obtained a full account of the life lived by the Temple of the Moon sect at that time. The manuscripts described the rites and ceremonies—"

"Oh, tell us some—queek, queek!" shrilled Naomer. "Bekas, eef cet was a kind of secret society—gorjus!"

But the professor, with a smiling shake of the head, refused to divulge anything further.

"Shame!" jested the madcap. "You tell us just enough to get us worked up and then you switch off!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But even that little which the learned man had imparted helped their imaginations.

Amongst themselves, a little later, they gave free play to fancies born of what had been said. They remembered that the ruins were those of the Temple of the Moon. And Professor Donkin had planned to be at the ruins at dead of night.

Could it be that some of those ancient rites and ceremonies had been connected with, say, a full moon?

Moreover was inclined to believe that it must be so. This very night the moon would be at the full.

"And we shall be there—hip, hip!" Polly cheered softly in the privacy of that tent which she shared with Betty and a few others. "I wonder if we are going to be shown something!"

"Yes, bekas—you never know!"

But Betty said:

"How do you mean—something? The sect is as dead as the dodo. That man, dressed up like



"Last night," Naina spoke tensely, "I dreamed a dream. I was at the Temple of the Moon, and I saw my father—alive!"

one of the priests of long ago—he was just a fraud. Someone in the pay of the rajah, that's all."

"Still!" Polly persisted. "Oh, I can't explain, but I sort of feel it in my bones, anyhow—we shall be shown something!"

"Bai Jove, that's wather extwaordinawy," drawled Paula, putting away her pocket-comb and mirror. "For, do you know, I feel a kind of cweepiness, too!"

"You would!" laughed Betty. "Hallo, Naina—come in!"

All levity was gone in an instant, now that the native girl had shyly appeared. It was not that she herself was a wet blanket—far from it; all day she had been in splendid spirits, finding that every hour her mother was improving.

But Betty and Co. were girls of quick sympathy, and they had only to find Naina in their midst again to feel serious. She had gone through so much—poor Naina!

"My mother is asleep, so I say to myself, I will come and talk to you," she explained prettily. "Have you been told? This night, when you go to the ruins again—she goes with you!"

"Is that so?" gaped Betty. "We were supposing that she would have to remain here in camp." Naina shook her head, showing all her pure white teeth in a smile of great happiness.

"Not so, dear ones, for my mother, when she awakes, will be strong for the walk. She knows it will be so, and— Oh,!" Naina sighed blissfully. "I have so much joy I feel it is a dream!"

"Not 2d bit of ect, bekas—"

And Naomer administered a playful pinch, to convince Naina that she really was awake.

"I know one thing that could make you even happier, Naina," exclaimed Betty. "If only—ah, if only you could see your father again! And you may do so even yet, you know!"

"Yes, Naina; there must be something in that

belief amongst those who were servants at the palace, that your father is still alive."

Helen's comment kept Naina nodding, as if in passionate assent.

"And perhaps," said Polly, "perhaps something will come about to-night—at the temple!"

A strange look had come into Naina's dark face. Now, like one who has learned to be in dread of spies and listeners, she instinctively glanced behind.

"It is not a dream, all this—I know," came her deep whisper, next moment. "But I have dreamed a dream—shall I tell you? It was last night. In my dream, I was at the temple, and I saw my father."

"Alive?" some of her awed listeners asked eagerly.

And Naina answered:

"Alive!"

### The Ghost-Man

NIGHT, once again!

The moon was not yet up, but such thousands of stars as there were, all of diamond brightness, saved this wild and desolate hill-country from total darkness.

By the light of those stars there filed, along the rough track leading to the fascinating ruins of the Temple of the Moon, every member of the expedition.

Naina and her mother—they were of the party. But of other Indians there were none.

The professor had advised that it would be a big mistake to bring any of the hired men, and so the various "wallahs" were all at the camp.

It was Professor Donkin who led this long-drawn-out line of marchers, all treading softly. Behind him were the fathers and mothers. Then came Morcove, making friendly company for Naina and her mother. The latter's cautious step seemed to be full of energy—perhaps because hope itself can be such a wonderful medicine.

Last of all came the three boys; those staunch and sturdy chums, their expression of expectant excitement rivaling the girls' eager looks.

"No talking" was the order, but that, as was often the case in the class-room at school, did not prevent a good deal being conveyed by means of nudges and lip-reading.

Slowly, silently, the rising track was traversed, whilst the owls hooted off and on and from some jungle place far below came the whine or howl of a savage creature, seeking its prey.

In the cool of night-time, the short journey was no toilsome one. Naina's mother never lagged—nor did Paula!

Quite suddenly the starlight dimmed. Now the moon was coming up—just as the ruins were looming into view, upon their own grand plateau.

It proved to be the time and place for a halt. As the juniors realised, directly the check came about, it had been safe to come as far as this, without risk of being discerned in the darkness by anybody lurking amongst the ruins. But to go farther, except on hands and knees, would mean incurring that risk.

There was a gather round to hear what Professor Donkin had to say in deep whispers.

"We are well before our time. But I am sure that you boys and girls, like the rest of us, can be trusted to keep perfect silence whilst we wait."

Wait for what?

They wondered!

"We shall creep on hands and knees just another couple of hundred yards," the professor whispered on. "Then we must lie low. Take

advantage of every bit of cover, but keep the ruins in sight. Any danger will come from there—from that native who bothered us to-day. If it had not been for him I would have had no misgivings."

"Any idea how long we shall have to wait?" Pam's father asked softly.

"I can tell you precisely," was the startling answer. "Until ten-twenty-five."

"Whew!" breathed Jack. "Like waiting for a train at Barncombe Junction!"

"Something to do with the moon's time-table," the girls heard shrewd Dave mutter.

It was a helpful comment. In the minds of Betty and the rest, things flew together now like the pieces in a puzzle. The Temple of the Moon; the moon itself at the full!

Professor Donkin had no more to say. They only wished he had! He got down upon his bony knees, to start crawling forwards—a rather comical thing for one so old a man to be doing, Morcove thought.

Another moment, and the entire party was on hands and knees. Like a band of Redskins on the war-path, the expedition snaked over the rough ground, getting that two hundred yards nearer the ruins.

The rising moon was changing the night to wonderful effect. Stars everywhere in the cloudless heavens were paling, and the sky itself lost its look of velvety darkness.

The ruins were between the watchers and the moon, as it climbed the sky with what seemed, to the juniors at any rate, extraordinary swiftness.

And so, as that golden disc rose high, shedding a stronger light as it did so, the mammoth piers of ancient masonry and crumbling arches were silhouetted blackly.

An added beauty was all the play of light and shade everywhere amongst the ruins. Broken columns cast bars of darkest shadow upon the boulder-bestrewn ground.

It seemed to the juniors, watching now in their crouched positions, that the professor had brought the whole party to the very finest point for observing the effect of moonlight upon the ruins.

Directly in front of the watchers there was a most wonderful vista, formed by the remains of what had once corresponded to the nave of a cathedral. Some of those stupendous columns of stone—so grand a feature of the temple—were ranged on either side.

Presently, Betty nudged Polly to take a look at Tess.

Morcove's Fourth Form artist was feeling worked up by all that the eye had to take in!

Pam glanced at her wrist-watch. She could read the time quite easily in the moonlight.

"Five-past ten," she whispered.

Some signs of impatience followed this remark. Polly, denied speech, made eager gestures that amused her chums.

Twenty minutes still to wait!

So they were all saying to themselves, going by what the professor had stated.

Of a sudden, however, the monotony of this waiting and watching was dramatically ended.

It could have been only ten-past the hour, when every watcher thrilled at the sight of a figure, ghostly in the bright moonlight, gliding amongst the ruins.

A tall, thin figure it looked to be—that of an old and skinny man. His whitish raiment, although it flowed freely about him like a priestly garment, was yet like so much sheeting hung upon a clothes-prop.

Polly jabbed in the ribs those chums who were to fight and left of her. She was as excited as all that.

"I say, our priest!" she breathed.

"Yes, believe—"

"St!"

Fortunately, even Naomer had confined her excitable outburst to a whisper. But there had got to be complete silence.

The ghost-man, as some of them were now calling him in their minds, advanced like one taking the centre of the stage at the theatre.

There was that grand vista, bathed in moonlight, and in the centre of that he took his stand. Just as if he were going to perform before all these thrilled watchers!

But they felt certain that he had not the slightest knowledge of their presence. At this safe distance they were safely concealed.

They watched him, and suddenly they realised that he had half turned from them. He was turned towards the risen moon, now peeping over the jagged, window-slit walls, at the far end of the "nave."

Professor Donkin looked round, to make sure that excitement had not tempted any of the juniors to move.

Finding them keeping perfectly still, he nodded and smiled. No excitement about him! thought Morcove.

Had he, then, expected the ghost-man to appear like this?

If so, the professor had been out in his time-table, surely!

And now, suddenly, the watchers saw the ghost-man hold both arms upwards and outwards—towards the moon.

At the same instant, on the intense silence of the night, came a murmurous sound, made by a human voice.

It was the ghost-man, going through some weird incantation.

Thrill after thrill went through the juniors as they watched and listened.

They were present, it seemed to them, at the performance of rites that had been peculiar to a certain sect when civilisation was in its infancy.

The droning voice went on. A wildness crept into the movements of the man's arms. It was apparent that he was merely getting worked up to a frenzy of fervour.

Some of the girls saw the professor pass a whisper to Mr. Linton, who passed it on to Mr. Willoughby. In a few moments, Mrs. Cardew had got the whisper from Mrs. Linton, and, being near enough to the girls, was ready to convey it to them.

"He says he didn't expect this, girls." She meant, of course, the professor. "Thinks the man, after all, must be a survivor of that long-lost sect—sort of doing it by instinct!"

"Perhaps he has always lived amongst the ruins?" Betty whispered.

But it was no time for even the most guarded talk. This weird performance had started at ten-past ten. Now the moment fixed by Professor Donkin for the EXPECTED performance was at hand!

Again those who had wrist-watches peered at them. Only five minutes more to go, and then—

And then, suddenly, the unexpected happened once more!

It was a terrible thing that happened, turning the juniors' blood to ice.

From somewhere amongst the ruins a wild

beast of the cat tribe leaped upon the ghost-man.

They saw the whole thing happen; the howling, bounding springs, and then that final leap!

The man, with an unearthly shriek, went flat to ground as the beast's claws took him at the shoulder.

It was more than the watchers could witness without sending up shouts and cries of horror. Most of them felt that before anything could be done, the wretched man would be dead.

But, even as he went down, with the beast pawing over him—BANG! went a revolver shot, and then another.

BANG!

Mr. Willoughby had fired!

And the beast had rolled over—dead.

### Professor Donkin Acts

"OH!" gasped all the girls—and their mothers!

There was a general rising up.

"Steady, all!" pleaded Mr. Linton. "Keep back, you youngsters!"

"I say," came Jack's shaken voice. "But that was some good shooting, anyway!"

"Yes, wonderful—and what a mercy that Mr. Willoughby was ready!" panted Polly. "Whoever would have expected such an awful thing to happen?"

"Dad's lived years in India," said Pam with swiftly-returning composure.

Keep a wide eye open for our representatives at the seaside resort you are visiting. They have a packet of delightful Cadbury's Dairy Milk Chocolate for you when you buy your copy of *Schoolgirls' Own*.

"My gwacious, goals, I—I feel—"

"Oh, don't you begin, Paula!"

Polly's laughed remark had a shaky note in it.

Already Mr. Willoughby, revolver in hand, was going forward with Mr. Linton and the professor. The boys understood that this was one of those occasions when they were expected to look after the girls, but in a minute there was a hailing cry for Dave.

He ran to where the menfolk were standing, at the spot where the so-called priest had been laid low.

The dead body of the beast was being dragged aside as Dave ended his short run.

"Here, Dave, my boy," said Mr. Willoughby, who was pouring peroxide into ugly gashes made by long claws. "We shall have to see about getting him down to camp at once. He may have to be carried. He's insensible now—fell on his head."

"That's all right, sir."

"Perhaps you and Dicky can manage, between you? We feel that Jack ought to remain; he may be needed. Rough luck, your having to go back, but there it is!"

"Can I take him now, sir? Shall I shout for Dick, then we needn't trouble you?"

"Yes, you might do that—thanks!"

"But I think they might all come along," the professor interposed. "The girls won't see anything of that fellow in his present state. And we had better keep together."

So, next minute, Morcove was at the spot, with all the other members of the party. The wounded "priest" was being taken away by Dave and Dicky, and Mrs. Cardew decided to go with them. She was a first-rate nurse, and knew all about the treatment of wounds.

Then, to the amazement of all his friends, the professor seemed to become occupied with a tape-rule, for the taking of measurements at that spot!

He began upon this strange task after looking at his watch. Not a word did he say in explanation.

"Gee, boys!" Jack whispered some of the girls, "it's as if he were a bobby, taking measurements after a road-smash."

"But I notice one thing," Polly muttered; "he has made his starting point for the measurements just where the moonlight forms a sort of triangle on the very stone where that man was—"

She broke off. The professor, coming erect out of a stooping posture, was fiddling for something in a jacket pocket. He brought out what he wanted—a ball of string!

"Gosh, conjuring entertainment," Jack had to have his jest. "Now starting!"

But next instant he was serious enough, for the professor wanted him!

"Er—Jack—"

"Sir?"

"Would you mind taking this ball of string, unwinding it as you go, whilst I keep hold of this first end? I want you to go—that way!" The professor was pointing up the nave.

"Yessir!"

"Until you come to the end of the string. It's a certain length, and the measurement is a pretty exact one. You will hold the end against your chest."

"Expanded, or otherwise, sir?" Jack asked, quite seriously, but some of the girls had to laugh.

"Oh, just ordinary," smiled the professor. "Strictly speaking the line should be laid along the ground, but there are too many stones about. Still, we'll see how we get on."

Thus instructed, Jack walked away, slowly unwinding the ball of string as he went.

Those who watched the professor, saw him stoop to put the first end of the string down to a certain spot on a stone slab which was catching the moonlight in a triangular patch.

It was one point of the triangle to which the professor held his end of the string. He kept it there by placing his foot upon it.

"Well!" gasped two or three of the girls blankly.

"Yes," he smiled round upon his audience of juniors and adults, "this, to-night, is mere make-shift. I may have to be far more exact with my measurements, may have to get half an acre of these ruins cleared away, to obtain level ground. But I have got the starting-point!"

"The moonlight gave it you!"

"Yes, Linton! Or rather the moon at its full, plus what I have been told by those ancient documents which I managed to translate. Ah—excuse me!"

The string was tautening, now that Jack had got to his end of it.

"We're lucky about one thing," Professor Donkin murmured. "No mound of stones interferes with the string at the height Jack is holding it, his end."

Then he called to Jack:

"What are you standing upon, my boy?"

"Just a bit of the old paving, sir!"

"Good! Excellent!"

"Gorjus!" capered Naomer, unable to keep silent any longer. "Bekas, ze trick, whatever eet is, is going to work!"

"One of you girls—"

"Oh, me, professor—me!" The entire Morcove chummary was offering itself, with one voice.

Professor Donkin chose Betty.

"Just to keep your foot on that end of the string, as I have been keeping mine. You see? That's right. And now—"

The learned man was becoming a little excited at last! He hurried away, without completing the remark, going towards Jack.

"I think I had better go as well," said Mr. Willoughby, strolling off in the same direction. Then, whether it was right to do so or not, Polly and others followed. Interest had been transferred from that starting-point to the place where Jack was standing.

The girls found him looking conscious of his stupid appearance as he stood there, holding the end of the string to his chest. As for the professor, he seemed to be peering down to examine Jack's boots!

"Thank you!" the professor said, looking up at last. "This stone still shows a faint trace of the mark I hoped to find. Oh, you girls would never be able to make it out, unaided!" he laughed as they crowded nearer. "Exposure to the weather, remember, for two thousand years and more!"

"But—"

"Yes, bekas—"

"Now, Jack, my boy," the professor cut short that astounded outburst.

In his genial way he took Jack by the shoulders with one hand, as if to guide him.

"Keep the string taut, my boy—that's right! Go slowly, the way I am directing you. Of-course, the taut string is causing you to take a circling course, Betty's end being at the centre of the complete circle."

"Do I have to go right round the circle, sir?"

"Oh, no!"

"I was going to say," grinned Jack, "there are a good many bits of wall in the way. Well, I never expected to travel on the Inner Circle out in India!"

"You may have to use the Underground before the finish, my boy," Professor Donkin capped Jack's joke. "Ha, ha, yes!"

Morcove, following behind with two or three of the grown-ups, became murmurous in its excitement.

"Bai Jovo—"

"What ze diggings! Bekas—"

"Talk about a mystery!"

And then came a shout from Jack:

"Whoa! Gosh, sir!" he cried to the professor. "Look what's in front of me here—a hole in the ground!"

The pair of them had stopped dead; but the others swarmed closer, eager to see.

No moonlight was there. One of the largest masses of masonry cast deep shadow across the lumpy ground. But, blacker than the blackest patch of shadow could have been, was that square opening into the very bowels of the earth, from which Jack had recoiled, at the very brink of it.

"Howwows!" gasped Paula. "That's a dreadful place!"

"Scares me stiff, to see it!" shuddered Madge. "Yes, bekas—you never know! Ooo, be careful!"

"It is all right," Professor Donkin exclaimed, with a most reassuring smile. "And the trouble

we have been saved, too, thanks to that priest!"

"You mean, sir—he came up out of this hole?"

"But, of course!" cried Betty, bringing her hands together with a clap. "That's why the hole is open now, isn't it? He intended to go to ground again, but that wild animal wounded him."

"The hole certainly wasn't to be seen when we were here by day," broke out Helen. "We must have come upon it, if—"

"St!" said one of the others, whilst another cried:

"Yes—hark!"

A second or two went by in complete silence. Crowding as close as they dared around the edge of the pit, they were all listening intently.

"It seemed to me," whispered Pam at last, "like someone calling out."

"Help—Help!"

THE professor fumbled out a pocket torch and switched it on.

"Ah, exactly!" he said.

For the strong ray of light, directed downwards into the pit, revealed rough stone steps. The shaft was not perpendicular, but sloped away into the ground as the steps required it to do.

"But the covering?" wondered Mr. Linton. "There must have been such a big slab of stone here, it could only be moved by some form of mechanism."

"Probably a slab moving backwards and forwards on rollers," nodded the professor. "All ancient peoples were pretty good at that sort of thing. Levers and rollers—they achieved marvels with both! Unless I am mistaken, there's the edge of the covering slab," and he pointed, "the rest being out of sight."

"I'd like to go down, sir!" pleaded Jack. "Do let me be the one to—"

"But listen—listen!"

This time it was a convinced exclamation from half a dozen of them.

Again there was a heavy pause. The only movement in the small crowd was one caused by Naina and her mother. Those two, whilst edging closer still to the underground steps, unwittingly jostled some of the Morcove girls.

Suddenly, they all heard, distinctly—an uncanny, groaning cry.

It came up to them, from the mysterious depths. The voice sounded a third time, more in the form of a hoarse shout.

Then Naina gave a wild cry, clutching her mother by the arm. It was an utterance in the native dialect, and it was answered in the same language. But afterwards Naina's mother said agitatedly in English:

"It is my husband; it is he—alive, after all!"

A MOMENT of sensational silence, and then a babel of talk broke out!

Even the grown-ups were almost beside themselves with excitement.

The one impulse of young and old alike was to go down those mysterious steps—at once!

"But, steady," Mr. Willoughby said, putting a strong check upon his own excitement. "We must be on our guard against treachery—any cunning trick."

"The majority stay up here?" suggested Mr. Linton quickly. "Then the few who go down should be all right?"

This was agreed upon instantly.

The risk being greater above ground, the two fathers decided to stay on guard at the top of



There was a moment's tense silence while they all peered down the shaft. Then Betty whispered, in an awed voice: "Where does it lead?"

the steps, along with their wives and some of the girls.

Jack and the professor were to explore below, and as Naina and her mother were desperate to go with them, it was decided that two or three of the girls should also take part in the adventure.

Betty, Polly and Pam were chosen, so that Naina could be sure of ample aid should her mother need support.

It had to be remembered that Naina's mother was not in a fit state to undergo great exertion and suspense.

Another electric torch was forthcoming, and Betty was given charge of this, to hold it in reserve.

Then, the professor going first, one after another the chosen few went down those rough stone steps—down, down, full fifty feet below the surface.

Very little could the girls see, for the light was in front, and they were coming last of all—close behind Naina and her mother.

Now and then they brushed the walls on either side with steady hands, and they could tell that this was a subterranean passage hewn out of solid rock.

The steps ended, and they were all on the level floor of a vast underground chamber.

The wavering beam of light roamed the walls and revealed weird, carved lettering, stranger to the juniors than Greek itself.

"Hunda Khan!" called out the professor, and his voice rang hollowly.

They all shouted together:

"Hunda Khan!"

There was an awful re-echoing of the shout, then silence, except for some agitated whispering between Naina and her mother. The suspense, for them, was proving terrible.

Suddenly the voice came again, in a weak shout. The first utterances were in the native, then came another hoarse cry, in English:

"Help!"

"Good! Now we can go on again," the professor said. "He's somewhere ahead of us—locked away."

"But we'll get him!" cried Jack. "We'll soon have him out of here!"

"Yes, Naina," said Betty, to give the native girl and her trembling mother relief, "it'll be all right now!"

They swarmed on, hardly heeding the vastness of this first chamber, and certainly without a thought of the marvellous ingenuity and labour that had gone to the making of it, all those ages ago.

There was just a vague impression of pagan origin in those weird carvings running round the cold stone walls.

For the rest, every mind was charged with concern for the man who, it was now evident, had been the wicked rajah's doomed captive in this dreadful place.

Of a sudden,

"What's this?" the professor asked himself aloud, still leading. "Jack, my boy—"

"My word, sir, he must be behind that door!"

For, even as the professor had spoken, the voice of Hunda Khan had sounded again, eerily.

"Help!"

The wife and daughter of that ill-fated man pressed closer, as did the Morcovite trio.

The professor must have been greatly excited. The electric torch so shook in his hand its beam danced up and down upon the door—a door with

an iron-barred, foot-square opening in it, forming a grille.

"This door is comparatively modern," the professor's expert eye caused him to comment. "I see! The rajah had it fitted—"

"In readiness for his prisoner, sir? The brute!" Jack said passionately. "But can we open it, or shall we have to smash it in?"

"It opens," said the professor. "Here's the lock, and the key left in it—by our so-called priest. Gaolor, would be the better name for him, I think!"

Naina's mother suddenly reeled; but it was an attack of faintness, for which our three girls had been on the look-out. They were ready!

Two of them held her up, hearing, as they did so, the key grating over in its rusty lock. The third Morcovian gave Naina a steady hand.

Tears were streaming down the native girl's cheeks.

"My father!" Pam, who held her, was sure Naina was saying in her own language. "My father!"

Professor Donkin slowly pushed the door open. "Hunda Khan!" he voiced, entering the dungeon-like place. "Old friend!"

And there he was—the man who should have been the reigning Rajah of Chodopore—in rags!

The torch was blinding eyes that had not seen daylight for months on end, and it was a kindness to turn the beam away from him instantly, where he huddled upon the stone floor of his cell.

Hunda Khan, rightful owner of that name which, months ago, had assumed such fateful importance to the chums of Study 12 at Morcove!

Hunda Khan, found at last! And for mother and daughter alike it was a case of the dead returned to life.

He was so weak he had been unable to maintain his stand behind the door, to call out through the grille, although—as he afterwards explained—he had heard voices that gave him hope.

So they gathered round him, there in the dungeon from which he would soon be free. And it seemed to all three Morcovians that they would live over this great moment a thousand times again during the years to come, hearing the emotional murmurs of wife and daughter as they knelt beside their dear one.

"My father—my father!" Naina was still saying, over and over again.

And that sob-choked, joyful murmur seemed to follow the juniors when at last they went running back to reach the open air and make known the triumphant news!

### The Final Thrill

**B**UT that great thrill for Morcove and the boys was not to be the last in connection with the Temple of the Moon.

Down there in those secret places beneath the ruins, before another day had sped, a vast treasure was discovered.

The find was made almost as soon as Professor Donkin could again give his mind to the work of investigation.

That was after Hunda Khan had been installed, with his wife and daughter, at the palace, and all anxiety about his ultimate recovery had been set at rest.

Chodopore was to know a better ruler now. That young tyrant who had usurped his elder brother's position was gone, and gone for ever.

In his bruised and battered state, after rough handling during the revolt of an oppressed people, the usurper had sneaked away, and those members

of the expedition who returned to the palace were eye-witnesses to the great rejoicing that attended the rightful rajah's reappearance.

In its own native way Chodopore went mad!

Before even the rajah had had time in which to issue a proclamation, the people knew what such a ruler was likely to promise them.

Humanity, going hand in hand with prosperity—and a welcome to every British influence, ensuring lasting peace and steady progress!

That was to be the policy of Chodopore's rightful ruler, now that he had been saved to his wife and daughter and his people, after all.

Naomer, Paula, Madge and Helen—they had the treat of being at the palace during such a great do as it was.

But an even greater treat fell to the lot of the rest of the girls, and the three boys.

They were with Professor Donkin when, back in those labyrinthine passages under the ruins, he came upon the treasure.

A rectangular chamber, with supporting columns of enormous thickness—such was the original treasure house of those who dwelt and served in the temple centuries ago, when the sect flourished.

Down through the ages the treasure had lain here, unmolested. Now it was to come out of the darkness and be put to useful service—thanks to the patient work of a certain scholar, some months back, labouring to translate so ancient a manuscript that no other man but he could have triumphed at the task.

Genial Professor Donkin, adored by the Morcove chums, working at those ancient writings in his little bungalow on the Morcove cliffs, and here was the sequel!

"You might have told us!" Polly playfully reproached him.

It was during a brief rest for a meal, after the chamber had been entered. Polly herself sat perched upon a huge chest, legs a-dangle, just as if it were nothing different from the study table at Morcove.

But that chest, when opened after removal down to the palace, would prove to be crammed with treasure worth a king's ransom.

"My dear," said the professor, munching a very welcome sandwich, "it was more than I dared do—tell you girls or anyone else what I expected to find at the temple. The manuscripts spoke of fabulous wealth, but up to as late as last night I could not be sure of finding it."

"You mean, the ruins cover such a lot of ground?" Betty took him up. "And there was no exact information where to search?"

"The information was exact enough," came the affable answer. "But it gave, as a starting-point for the search, a certain spot that could only be located by watching for a patch of moonlight on a night of full moon, at a certain time."

"The triangle on the slab!"

"Exactly," the learned man nodded. "And here was my difficulty—my fear. For that slab to receive the triangular patch of moonlight, a certain portion of the ruins had still to be standing, to cast the required light and shade."

Jack, helping himself to another snack, said:

"Gosh, sir, no wonder you weren't too hopeful! We've seen the ruins—the acres of buildings that have become mere mounds of stones. What a marvel, then, that you got that starting-point after all."

"It is one of those things," murmured Mr. Lion, fumbling out his cigarette-case, "that pass all human understanding."

"That's so," nodded Mr. Willoughby. "The wall of the temple serving to cast that triangular patch of moonlight may have been built stronger than all else. We do not know. But, at any rate, it has survived to this day."

"Just fancy," Judy exclaimed. "For hundreds of years on end—thousands!—the patch of moonlight has been coming and going at certain times

(Concluded on the next page)

## TREASURE TROVE

*MATILDA put the book down—'twas a tale to do with history, All full of secret passages, and other things of mystery, A most enthralling story, and her thoughts went into channels Concerning hidden treasure trove and ancient secret panels.*

*She glanced around her study, and blinked with utmost gravity, And wondered if these caken walls contained a secret cavity. The school was old established, being built in bygone ages— For further details please consult the local guide book pages.*

*"Who knows," Matilda muttered, "there may be something hidden, And though to smash a study wall I'm well aware's forbidden, Yet if a hoard of gold is there, I think that I could manage, If I became a millionaire, to square up for the damage."*

*Resolved on this Matilda quickly snatched her Latin Grammar And started with avidity upon the walls to hammer. She hammered there, she hammered here—the dust was hard to swallow— But not a single echo rose to tell of something hollow.*

*An hour fled—'twas time for bed—Matilda felt despairing. When all at once she rapped a spot which sent her hopes careering; A sound which very plainly proved behind where she was smiting Was some recess which might possess a treasure most inviting.*

*Matilda dragged a chair across and mounted at the double; She then hit hard without regard for any future trouble. A sudden smash, a sudden crash—a gaping hole revealing, And in a sec. Matilda's hands inside the place were feeling. Matilda's fingers gripped and clutched an object—held it numbly. She curbed a shout and drew it out, then gazed upon it dumbly. A jar—a jar in every sense, which stifled all her ardour; For there displayed was "MARMELAD"—from next door's STUDY LARDER!*



By  
Iris  
Holt



during full moon. And yet no one—no one has ever known!"

"So don't you feel proud of yourself, Professor Donkin?" smiled Pam. "You know you do!"

"I feel extremely happy," he acknowledged. "But I mean it when I say that all this"—he indicated the chamber and its vast treasure—"counts for little, compared with what we have been able to do for Naina and her mother."

"Hear, hear!" said Dicky Cherril heartily. "But, supposing, sir, you had never got together the expedition to carry out investigations for what they were worth? Then you'd never have heard of Hunda Khan again!"

"Oh, don't talk of such a thing!" pleaded Betty. "It won't bear thinking about. The fact remains the one discovery has led to the other—good enough!"

"Yes, well," smiled Pam, "it would be hard to imagine anything better! Naina recovers the father who was supposed to be dead; Naina's mother finds that she isn't a widow after all; Chodopore gets a really decent rajah for his ruler—"

"And the rajah gets the treasure, as he deserves!" chimed in Jack. "Didn't you say, professor, that the ruins are on his land, and by rights everything that comes out of them belongs to him?"

"Not that I can imagine his putting in any selfish claim," was the professor's rejoinder. "If

it had been the other rajah—ah, then there would have been a claim, to the last particle of gold! But my old friend, Hunda Khan, is not like that. You'll find him probably offering to share with the Government of India—and the British Museum won't be forgotten, either!"

"We've a museum at Morcove," Polly suddenly recollected. "So I do hope the new rajah will allow us girls to take back some little thing from the Temple of the Moon!"

"Something not too big—remembering," chuckled Jack, "that most of us are going home by air."

And then, by the ample lantern-light, the men-folk looked at their watches.

The juniors knew it to be the signal for resumed activity.

In next to no time the girls cleared up after the bit of lunch.

Then they were ready to move around again, in wonderment and awe.

"Here, my dears!"

That was Professor Donkin, turning to them in the old genial way, as they rejoined him and the rest.

"You were saying about that museum at the school, girls—how you would like something for it from the Temple of the Moon. I am sure the rajah will not mind if I—"

"Oh!" cried several of them. "If you will, professor!"

"We'd value it all the more," added Pam, "coming from your hands. Not that we don't think a great deal of the rajah, but it's been you, Professor Donkin—you, from the first!"

He looked charmed.

"A tiny figure, small enough to make a handy paper-weight, but pure gold," he commented on what he proposed to hand over. "You see the inscription?"

"We see it, but we can't read it!" laughed Betty. "They don't teach us that language at Morcove!"

"TO THE GREAT ONE OF THE NIGHT—LET ALL MEN BOW"—that is a very rough translation," the professor said simply. "And now, which of you girls is to take care of the souvenir?"

"Betty!" was the others' chorus.

"There you are, then, Betty Barton!"

"Thanks! On behalf of the Fourth Form at Morcove," came Betty's impromptu little speech, "I thank you very much for this gift, Professor Donkin. A souvenir of the really wonderful time we've had!"

She turned to her chums.

"Girls, we will label it, and very likely the headmistress will give it a good place on the shelves."

"It's certain she will!"

And that is why, if you were to go to Morcove School to-day, you would see the tiny image of gold in its place of honour on the museum's well-filled shelves, and in front of it this label, in Betty's neatest writing:

"From the Temple of the Moon, India.—Presented to Morcove School by Professor Donkin in the Treasure Chamber beneath the ruins." And the date.

Behind which inscription, all so brief, lies what a story of Study 12's holiday adventures!

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

## Beginning a Thrilling New Holiday Series

On their way home from India Betty & Co. decide to visit Turania—little guessing that exciting adventures and a strange mystery await them in that romantic land.

Complete in next  
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### Morcove's Trip To Turania



By MARJORIE STANTON

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