

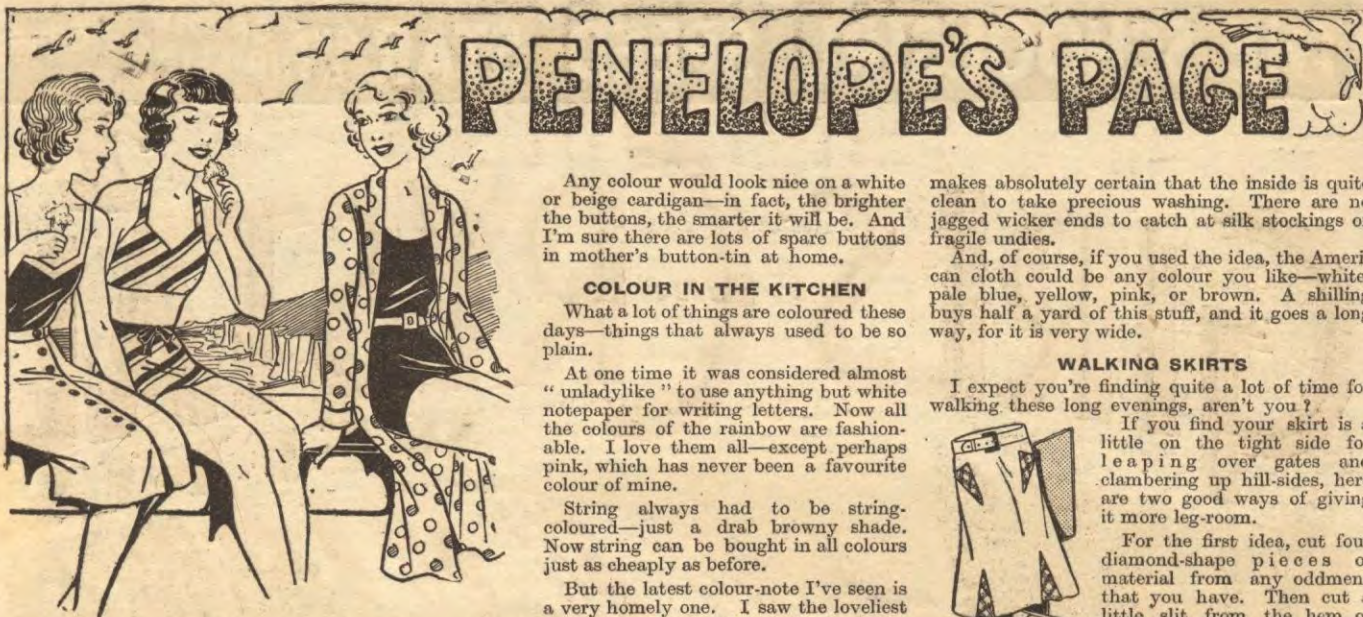
THE SCHOOLGIRL SPEED STAR ONE OF THE
6 THRILLING STORIES
INSIDE

GIRLS' CRYSTAL ^{2^D} WEEKLY



**WILL STELLA'S
SIGNAL FOR
HELP BE SEEN?**

*An incident from the intriguing story
"Stella and the Sheikh of Mystery"—
inside.*



PENELOPE'S PAGE

Any colour would look nice on a white or beige cardigan—in fact, the brighter the buttons, the smarter it will be. And I'm sure there are lots of spare buttons in mother's button-tin at home.

COLOUR IN THE KITCHEN

What a lot of things are coloured these days—things that always used to be so plain.

At one time it was considered almost "unladylike" to use anything but white notepaper for writing letters. Now all the colours of the rainbow are fashionable. I love them all—except perhaps pink, which has never been a favourite colour of mine.

String always had to be string-coloured—just a drab brownish shade. Now string can be bought in all colours just as cheaply as before.

But the latest colour-note I've seen is a very homely one. I saw the loveliest collection of coloured scrubbing

brushes, if you please.

The bristles were the same colour as usual, of course; it was the wood backs that were painted—green, blue, red, white, and yellow.

Don't you think that's a gay notion? Mind you, these I saw were very costly, meant for the housewife with lots of money. But it's an idea we with less pennies can copy, isn't it?

I can easily imagine a sixpenny scrubbing brush, a threepenny laundry brush, and a twopenny nail-brush, all with backs painted a deep blue with one of those sixpenny tins of enamel. Can't you?

It's certainly an idea for a bazaar. Wouldn't the mothers gather round!

"That green scrubbing brush would just go with my green enamel pail!" I can hear them say.

"That blue nail-brush is just what I want in the bath-room to match the blue tiles!"

While a coloured laundry brush would cheer up the duller wash-day!

AN IDEA FOR MOTHER

Talking of Monday and wash-day, I also saw a very good idea that you might like to pass on to mother. It was a laundry basket—with a difference. It was lined.

It looked very elaborate at a glance, but on examining it, I saw that you could quite easily do it yourself at home. All the lining consisted of was a piece of ordinary American



cloth sewn round the inside of the basket. What a brainwave! A wipe with a damp cloth

makes absolutely certain that the inside is quite clean to take precious washing. There are no jagged wicker ends to catch at silk stockings or fragile undies.

And, of course, if you used the idea, the American cloth could be any colour you like—white, pale blue, yellow, pink, or brown. A shilling buys half a yard of this stuff, and it goes a long way, for it is very wide.

WALKING SKIRTS

I expect you're finding quite a lot of time for walking these long evenings, aren't you?

If you find your skirt is a little on the tight side for leaping over gates and clambering up hill-sides, here are two good ways of giving it more leg-room.

For the first idea, cut four diamond-shaped pieces of material from any oddment that you have. Then cut a little slit from the hem of your skirt over each knee.

Stitch the two diamond pieces in these slits. The other two will make useful pockets.

For the other idea, cut the two slits again—one over each knee. Then bind these slits and all round the bottom of the skirt with either ribbon or braid, which you can buy for a few pence.

This will make your skirt slightly longer as well.

Here's a shoe-tip that's worth remembering. If your brown shoes are a bit stained after their holiday and no amount of cleaning seems to get the stain off, try rubbing the stained part with the inside of a banana skin.

Methylated spirit, too, is very good for removing stains from leather. But it also takes off the polish as well, so you'd have to give your shoes an extra-special clean after this.

Milk—even sour milk—gives an excellent polish to patent leather shoes. Remember this when the shoe-cream has mysteriously vanished. In fact, lots of people never use anything else but milk.

When mixing the shoe-white for white tennis shoes, a spot of milk is useful, too. It certainly doesn't rub off as it does when mixed with water.

Oh, and if you should lose the little sponge that generally accompanies shoe-white, don't let it worry you.

Use a spot of old towelling instead. As a matter of fact, I prefer this to the sponge. It's easier to get the "white" smooth with this.

Bye-bye till next week.

Your own,

PENELOPE

HALLO, EVERYBODY!—Here's your Penelope, rapidly growing excited about her holiday, while some of you are trying to forget yours and settle down to work again!

Of course, there's no need to put bathing-suits and shorts away for several weeks yet. But I do hope you are taking care of them, for all that.

When you leave the sea and arrive home again, do make a special point of washing out your bathing suit in warm water, and hanging it up carefully to dry. Even if it has lost shape through being bundled about on holiday, it will immediately respond to this treatment, you'll find.

Do you find your rubber bathing cap "perished" after being tucked into a drawer or cupboard for a week or two? They will, quite often.

The best way of avoiding this is to give the cap a thorough drying, inside and out, with a towel. Then sprinkle it with a little starch or boracic powder. Place a sheet of tissue paper inside it as well, and it will last much longer. (Cheap ones, of course, won't live as long as the more expensive ones.)

Treat rubber bathing shoes in exactly the same way as the cap if you want to find these wearable next year.

I expect you're going to get a lot of wear out of your summery frocks yet—just in case they grow too short by next year. And very wise, too.

If you find the evening rather chilly for short sleeves, don't forget your old friend, your cardigan, to slip over your frocks.

They're such useful garments always. If yours is on the plain side, you can make it look very pretty simply by sewing on gay buttons as trimming.

SCAMP, THE SCOTTIE





SUSIE

And her Camera

By
ELISE PROBYN



THE FIRST PORTRAIT

"CHEERS! My parcel arrived? Where is it, George?"

"The vanman's unloading it now, Susie. You sign, and I'll see it's taken upstairs for you."

"Thanks, lad!"
Susie Bowling signed the slip of paper the message-boy gave her, then turned eagerly to her chums at the workbench, in the machine-room of Spollard's—gown and mantel manufacturers.

"That's my camera that's arrived," she said gleefully. "I got it through an advert in the paper!"

It was just on knocking-off time, and no one paid much attention to Susie's news.

"What do you want a camera for, anyhow, Susie?" Nellie Baker wanted to know.

"What do I want it for? To comb my hair with, of course!" grinned Susie. "To begin with, it's an amazing bargain. I'm getting it in exchange for that old gramophone of mine which needed repairing, and I might tell you that this camera cost seventeen pounds when it was new!"

"Seventeen pounds!" Everyone looked more interested now. "Oh, it's one of those good cameras?"

Susie nodded enthusiastically.
"I wanted a good camera, you see," she explained, "because I'm going to have a shot at that newspaper competition. You know—five pounds if you snap Duggy Drake!"

All the girls knew of that competition. All London did. The "Daily Echo" had been running it for weeks.

Each morning it published a careful description of a gentleman known anonymously as "Duggy Drake"—stating what he was wearing, which neighbourhood he was visiting, and the different places in which he would be mingling with the public.

As a clue to identify him, Duggy Drake carried a copy of the "Daily Echo." A prize of five pounds was offered to anyone who recognised him and succeeded in taking a snapshot of him.

Most of Spollard's girls had wasted reels of films snapping the wrong man, and they said so now.

"I know," eagerly answered Susie; "but even if you had spotted Duggy, it's my belief you wouldn't have had time to get a shot at him with an ordinary camera. They're not quick enough—too slow in the take—too clumsy. He'd be gone before you clicked him. But these expensive cameras have marvellous lenses. They pick their man at a distance, and they snap him quicker than you can wink your eye. That's why I fancy my luck in that competition now, girls. I've got the right sort of quickfire camera!"

Closing down her machine for the day, Susie hurried up to the staff-room with the rest of the girls.

"Hallo, where is it?" She stared wonderingly at her place at the tea-table. "Where's my parcel?"

It wasn't on the table, and Susie ran to the door to call George.

A heavy bump sounded against the banisters. Susie blinked. She saw George and the vanman struggling upstairs, panting and blowing, and carrying an enormous packing-case on their shoulders.

"Wh-what's that?" gasped Susie.
"Your p-parcel!" puffed George.

Susie looked at him in pained pity. The other girls had to move the chairs before the case could be got into the room, and they all made facetious remarks, and asked Susie if it was a house she had bought.

"There's some mistake, you chumps!" retorted Susie. "They've delivered the wrong thing—a mangle or a bedstead or something!"

It was very annoying, but it had Susie's name all right on the case. She couldn't make it out. She got a hammer and prised the lid open, while the other girls stood round, laughing.

Under the lid was a vast quantity of straw and packing. Susie dragged it out. Then a sudden shriek of laughter went up from the girls, and Susie's eyes bulged in her head.

"Wh-what's this—a giddy harmonium?" she gasped.

But it wasn't!
With limp hands Susie lifted out a camera—an enormous folding camera, all wood and brass and bellows, the size of a soapbox!

"It's—it's the one they used in the Ark!" stuttered Susie; but the girls couldn't hear her for laughing.

In a kind of a trance, Susie drew out the rest of the gadgets. A dozen huge slides, like

Susie nearly fainted when she saw the camera that she had thought was such a bargain. It was an 1890 model—all wood and brass and bellows! But Susie soon got over the shock. She meant to have plenty of fun with it—and she did!

window-frames, each containing a photographic plate. Then a dark hood as big as a tablecloth, the outer material black, the inner side red. Last, but not least, a gigantic wooden tripod, whose joints creaked with old-age.

Susie stared up faintly at the girls while they tried to overcome their hysterics.

"Of course, it's a—a bargain, really—cost seventeen pounds when it was new; only it's not exactly what I wanted—"

"Not for quickfire snapshooting!" shrieked Nellie Baker.

"Not unless you're going to cart it round in a fire-engine, Susie! You might catch Duggy Drake guessing that way!" roared the humorists.

Susie grinned ruefully.

"All right, girls. I'm the lemon!" she admitted.

In gloomy interest she opened the tripod and set it up on its legs. It occupied half the floor space. Then she mounted the cumbersome camera upon it. It looked bigger that way. The outfit complete resembled a pigeon-coop that was top-heavy. Susie placed the hood over it, and got underneath, in the manner of a studio photographer, curious to see the view through the misty lens.

The laughter brought Miss Wickens, the sour-tempered forewoman, crashing into the room.

"What's going on here? Good gracious, a camera!" she gasped. She looked very comical to Susie, because, seen through the lens, she appeared upside down, as though she were standing on her head. "What on earth does it mean? Is that—is that Bowling under there?"

Reluctantly Susie emerged from under the hood; then, seeing the look of admiration out Miss Wickens' face, she made a flourishing gesture. "My camera!"

"Yours?" blinked Miss Wickens.

"I had it sent along to me. I do all my portrait work with this fellow!" Susie said professionally, giving a turn to one of the screws on the camera.

Miss Wickens was deeply impressed. She didn't see the other girls smothering their hands over their mouths. What she did see was a camera that looked truly imposing—Susie standing solemnly beside it—and her name on the packing-case proclaiming her, without doubt, the owner.

Miss Wickens could not, as a rule, be even

civil to Susie; but now she was positively gushing.

"This is very interesting, Susie! I always knew you were clever; I didn't know you were experienced in portrait photography. As a matter of fact," breathed Miss Wickens, "I was thinking of having some nice portraits taken of myself, at a studio—people are always asking me for them."

She paused, watching Susie ingratiatingly. "But the studios are so expensive—it's their rent one pays for. Now, you don't have any overhead charges, Susie, and I would pay you for the materials and everything," wheedled Miss Wickens, "so I wonder if you will take a nice portrait of me?"

"Certainly, ma'am!" said Susie, with a promptness which nearly sent the girls off into hysterics again.

"Will you do it now?" fluttered Miss Wickens. "Your apparatus is all ready, isn't it?"

"Right now, ma'am—in the yard," Susie said heartily—"while the light's good!"

"That's splendid! I shall be most excited to see the result!" twittered Miss Wickens.

So would Susie—and she most enjoyed having Miss Wickens as her first "sitter."

Aided by the other girls, she carried the cumbersome camera and accessories down to the yard. She fixed everything up to look right, and arranged a chair for the sitter, while Miss Wickens was prinking her hair and changing into her best frock.

Susie warned the girls to stop laughing.

Then Miss Wickens came along and enthroned herself in the chair. And Susie posed her with care. Half-profile suited her best, said Susie. Eyes slightly upturned—and a smile; that was right.

"Keep the smile!" said Susie.

Back and forwards she ran, from the camera to the chair. One moment she was under the hood, next moment she popped out again just when Miss Wickens thought the photo was taken.

But Miss Wickens was commendably patient. She sat as still as an oil-painting, and the longer Susie took, the better she seemed to like it.

Susie was nothing if not thorough. She opened the huge camera out to its full extent, till it looked like an elongated concertina. She experimented out of curiosity with all the different gadgets. By turning a brass knob, she could see through the lens, not one, but twenty Miss Wickenses. At length she put in a slide, and, with a flourish, she squeezed the indiarubber bulb.

"Thank you, ma'am!" she said professionally, and struck an attitude with the hood over her shoulder. "You shall see a proof as soon as it's ready!"

"I shall be looking forward to it, Susie!" breathed Miss Wickens.

Her fate would soon be known. Susie took the slide straight along to a photographic chemist's in Oxford Street, and they told her that it would be developed and printed in two days' time.

Miss Wickens made herself very agreeable to Susie during those two days. She gave her cups of tea at the workbench, and she called Susie into her room, and spent hours showing her an album of portraits of herself—taken at all ages.

Two days later Susie sailed along to the chemist's in Oxford Street. The man at the photographic counter gazed at her oddly. He looked as if he had a lot to say, and hardly knew how to begin.

"Did you take this picture yourself, miss?"

"Yes," Susie nodded.

"What sort of camera did you use?"

Susie gave an expressive description, and the man looked more baffled than ever.

"That's what I thought," he said; "one of the old 1890 models. It's amazing. Do you know that plate is thirty years old?"

"I bet it is!"

"Did you seriously expect any result?"

"Well, I tried every gadget there was in the camera, and left it to chance," laughed Susie, "the same as the Chinaman who tried to make a Christmas pudding, you know!"

"You did everything possible that was wrong, miss! And yet the result is simply

astonishing. It couldn't happen once in a million times, miss!"

Next moment she lurched against the counter. Her eyes nearly dropped out of her head. She was staring agape at the proof the man was showing her.

It was an amazingly good portrait of Miss Wickens! A perfect portrait! And a highly flattering portrait!

OFF TO THE ZOO

MISS WICKENS was delighted when Susie showed her the proof. She sat in her office, holding the picture this way and that to the light, and gazing at it in smug rapture.

Her words ill expressed her feelings.

"Yes, Susie, it's quite good!" she said. "It doesn't do me justice—but, then, photos never do. I would say it's a very fair likeness. I can see that you are a skilled photographer!"

"Thank you, ma'am!" said Susie.

That fluke portrait won Susie a reputation as a great photographer. The news went all round Spollard's, and Miss Wickens showed the picture to everybody, and she made herself sweet as honey to Susie—with an eye on further favours to come.

Susie knew perfectly well that the thing had been a colossal fluke—a millionth chance, as the chemist had said.

But it gave her a fond affection for the old camera. There was no parting Susie from it. It had served her once, and it should serve her again. She was out to win that five pounds from the "Daily Echo."

The girls teased and ragged her, but Susie stuck faithfully to her camera. She photographed them in groups in the yard; she tried a portrait of the next-door cat while it sat sphinx-like on the wall.

Sloping the camera on her shoulder by its long-legged tripod, Susie hiked it out with her in the evenings. She practised on the traffic policemen, the park speakers, and the swans on the lake.

When Saturday came—early-closing day—Susie bought a copy of the "Daily Echo," and directly after dinner she grabbed hold of her friend Nellie Baker.

"Get your hat on, Nell! We're going along to the Zoo this afternoon—all three of us!"

"Three?"

"You and me and my camera! Duggy Drake's going to be there! I know I shall spot him and get his snap—I feel it in my bones!"

"Yes, Susie, but you can't take that ridiculous old camera round—"

"That camera's lucky! Don't you say a word against it, Nell!" scolded Susie. "There's a share of this money for you when I win it. Buck up and get ready, ducks!"

The doorkeeper grinned when Susie came struggling along with the camera and tripod over her shoulder, followed by Nellie with the huge case of slides strapped on her back.

"What's on—moving 'ouse?" he asked.

"No, we're going to the Zoo!" answered Susie.

He cackled loudly.

"Funny 'ow I guessed that!"

"Can we give any message to your relations there?" offered Susie.

There was a bit of bother when they got on the bus. Susie was half-way up the steps before the conductor saw her; he was on top.

"Oy, you can't bring that bag o' tricks up here!" he said, barring the way.

"Can I leave 'em down below on the platform?" asked Susie.

"No, you can't! This is a bus, it ain't a luggage van. You'll have to get off!"

Susie half moved to go down. Only half moved. The legs of the tripod got wedged in the stair-rail, and stuck fast there. It prevented Susie going either up or down. Likewise the conductor and anyone else.

"Well, now what about it?" he asked.

"I'd better get off and just leave it here!" suggested Susie.

"You'd better not!" roared the conductor.

He got one of the men passengers on top to come and help release the tripod—and Susie hampered their efforts cleverly, and it all worked out very nicely. The bus stopped at the gates of the Zoo just at the moment that the tripod was freed.

Susie winked at Nellie and stepped down.

Precariously she navigated the camera through the turnstile.

She gasped when she saw the crowds. It was a cunning dodge on the part of the "Daily Echo," to let Duggy Drake loose at the Zoo on a Saturday afternoon.

"Like looking for a needle in a sandpit!" muttered Susie.

A whoop came from Nellie.

"There he is, Susie—that man in the bowler! Look! He's carrying the 'Daily Echo'!"

She would have pounced upon the stranger—but Susie grabbed her just in time.

"Silly! They're selling the 'Echo' at the gates—everyone's carrying one!"

"Yes, but—" Nellie blinked with disappointment. "Well, how do you know that isn't him, anyhow?"

"Because Duggy isn't wearing a bowler, dearie!" Susie told her gently. "He's wearing a grey trilby, brown tweed jacket, and grey flannel bags. Why all these other fatheads should go and wear the same get-up, I don't know, but look at 'em! They're here in their thousands. The clue we'll have to go by is his face."

"How's it described?"

"Prominent cheekbones, rather a long chin, and a large, humorous mouth. That's quite a rare sort of face, Nell," mused Susie; "you don't see many like it!"

She saw at least two hundred like it in the next half-hour. But either the owner didn't wear grey flannel bags, or a grey trilby, or a brown jacket—or else he wore all three, but he didn't happen to be carrying the "Daily Echo."

Susie grew limp and footsore under the weight of her enormous camera. She stopped suddenly.

"We're all wrong trudging about like this, Nell—we ought to work on a system!" she exclaimed, out of breath, but triumphant. "Why didn't I think of it before? What we'll do, we'll plonk the camera right here, and we won't budge from the spot, and we'll just wait till Duggy passes along, as he's bound to do some time in the afternoon!"

Susie spreadeagled the tripod on the ground. The spot exactly faced the chimpanzee's cage. One of the chimps saw the camera and evidently thought it was a rabbit-hutch or a dog-kennel.

He squawked and jeered at it through the bars of his cage, trying to goad some sign of life out of it. That failing, he picked up half an orange and aimed it, and it caught Susie full on the ear.

"Bless his heart, let him have his fun!" said Susie cheerfully, dabbing her ear with her handkerchief.

"They're very intelligent creatures!" babbled Nellie.

Susie was just about to give her a suitable answer when something caught her attention. Her eyes bulged, then glowed. She saw a man pause idly by the chimp's cage, and that man answered in every detail the description of Duggy Drake!

It wasn't only the clothes and the newspaper he carried. It was the face, the studied carelessness of his movements, it was everything.

"Nell! Look! Duggy Drake!" Susie burst out.

Some infallible instinct told her she was right. In one movement she dived for the camera, in the other she gave a push at Nellie. "Go and buttonhole him! Keep him there! Keep him talking while I get his photo!"

Nellie promptly darted across to the stranger. She was good at this sort of thing. Susie dived under the hood of the camera, frantically getting the focus, and she could see Nellie making foreign gestures to the man, and talking in broken English, which he was gallantly trying to understand. She was keeping him so engrossed that he hadn't even seen the camera.

Susie went on feverishly focusing the lens. She could see his features clearly now, although he appeared upside-down. The humorous mouth was unmistakable.

"I'm sorry. I don't understand. No savvy. Try again, miss," he seemed to be saying to Nellie.

Susie grabbed a slide and clamped it into the camera. She wished there weren't so many other people crowding round the scene, but she

knew she had got Duggy neatly in focus. She was ready to snap him now.

She whisked the slide open. She reached for the bulb to squeeze it.

What happened next Susie hadn't time to realise.

All she knew was that the camera-legs suddenly wobbled. They shot apart. They did the splits.

Crash!

Down went Susie and camera and all like a pack of cards. She struck the ground with a bump. The shock dazed her. The hood curled round her head and shoulders and swathed her in darkness.

Dimly Susie heard roars of laughter from the crowds who had witnessed her mishap. She fancied she heard echoing shouts of excitement.

She wrenched the hood from her face.

The sight she saw kept Susie seated, riveted to the ground.

A girl in a school blazer had dashed away from her friends, and was pointing a hand camera excitedly at that man by the cage.

Click!

"I've got you! You're Duggy Drake!" Susie heard her shout.

The man laughed and nodded, and doffed his hat to her.

"You're right! Send your snap up to the 'Echo,' and you'll get the five pounds! You've won, miss!" he said; and, with another nod, he elbowed his way through the crowd and was gone.

Susie sat, speechless, on the ground beside her fallen camera. She knew how that other girl's victory had come about; she didn't need to hear. She saw that girl run jubilantly back to her friends, and tell them in high-pitched tone:

"I'd never have dreamed that was Duggy Drake! Do you know what it was? I saw that girl with the big camera go flop on the ground, and I realised it was that man she was trying to snap. That's how I guessed."

Susie looked up, with a groan, and saw Nellie glaring down at her. Painfully she picked herself up.

She bent over the camera as though it were a sick patient, and her relief at finding there was no damage done, no bones broken, reduced Nellie to a state of exasperated laughter.

"Never mind, Nellie!" Susie said doggedly. "The old camera knows its job, and it's going to get Duggy Drake all right. It'll get him next time."

"Next time?" repeated Nellie sarcastically.

"Let me tell you, Sue Bowling, that next time is going to be the last time that Duggy Drake goes round! What's more, it's on Tuesday afternoon. And you'll be working on Tuesday afternoon, dearie!"

"Eh?"

Susie's face dropped.

"I know what I'm talking about. Look!" And mercilessly Nellie thrust a copy of the "Echo" into Susie's hand, pointing to the paragraph that proved her words. "Duggy Drake's last appearance will be next Tuesday afternoon at Cherry Park fete!"

Susie groaned with dismay.

The realisation certainly put quite a damper on Susie's week-end. She felt that she and the jolly old camera had both been cheated. They'd had Duggy's five pounds right in their grasp, and it had been snatched from them. They were entitled to another shot. And Susie racked her brains for some excuse to get Tuesday afternoon off. But she knew it was hopeless. Spollard's were extra busy on an important order.

It wasn't the usual sort of order. It was a special clothing contract—dresses and suits for celebrities, including the robes of a mayor, his mayoress, and all his aldermen and their wives.

Susie spent a wistful Sunday with her camera, photographing the watchman on the roof of Spollard's, and wishing that he were Duggy Drake.

Next day she felt rather Mondayish, and as soon as she entered the work-room she thought she was in for trouble over something, for the forewoman summoned her to her office.

"Susie, there's an important job to be done—a very important job," Miss Wickens said mysteriously, closing the door upon them—"and I'm sure you could do it! It would be to-morrow—Tuesday afternoon!"

"Yes, ma'am!" Susie said, stifling a groan.

It was, she thought, a dirty trick of Fate that Tuesday afternoon of all times should be chosen to keep her busy at an important job.

"You know that Spollard's have made all the robes for the Mayor of Mayfair and his entourage?" went on Miss Wickens, very earnestly. "Well, they will be wearing them in public to-morrow. They will be in full regalia at the Cherry Park fete."

"Yes, ma'am!"

And Susie's groan was envious.

"Now, I shall be going there myself, and what I want you to do, Susie," wheedled Miss Wickens, "is to come with me, and bring your camera and photograph the mayor and all the celebrities in their robes. The pictures will make splendid publicity for Spollard's advertisements. Will you do it, Susie?"

Would she! It was the best bit of luck Susie could have wished for. She couldn't grab it fast enough. It was an invitation to the Cherry Park fete, and it was her last and only chance to snap Duggy Drake and win a five-pound note!

Susie had eyes only for the crowds massed round the ropes.

Somewhere in this forest of people Duggy Drake was hidden—wandering amongst them for the last time, with a five-pound note to award to anyone smart enough to snapshot him.

He had changed his garb to-day.

Susie wasn't a bit interested in the medieval-clad dames and knights of the pageant, or the be-robed mayor and his party. She was looking for a man in white flannel trousers, blue blazer, and panama—the elusive Duggy of the "Daily Echo."

The crowd at the ropes tried hard to bar Miss Wickens' way, but the forewoman was in a very pushful mood. Hot and triumphant, she forced a passage, and Susie found herself entrapped inside the enclosure—camera and all—and being steered across to the mayor's stand.

"Wait here while I get his worship's permission for the photographs!" breathed Miss Wickens.

Susie concealed a grin. She must get this



Dimly Susie heard the schoolgirl's voice. "I've got you! You're Duggy Drake!" she said, and click went her camera. Susie had been the first to spot the elusive Duggy—but the schoolgirl would win the prize!

MIX-UP AT THE GARDEN FETE

"HERE we are, Miss Wickens! Here's Cherry Park!" whooped Susie above the whirr of the taxi and the blare of the brass bands. "Would you mind giving me a hand with the camera and the slides?"

"Certainly, Susie!"

It was the afternoon of the fete, and never had Susie known Miss Wickens so amiable. Miss Wickens herself had paid for their tickets and for the taxi that drove them there. She was beaming all over her face. With remarkable good will, she helped Susie carry the cumbersome camera and its accessories into the crowded fete ground.

"I know you will distinguish yourself to-day, Susie!" she breathed. "The glory will be its own reward. It is not only the service you are doing Spollard's. Just think of the honour of photographing his worshipful mayor, the mayoress, and all their notable following! Ah! There they are—assembled in the private enclosure over there!"

Miss Wickens had seen the big marquee, and the draped stand in front of it, upon which the mayor's party were gathered, with due pomp and ceremony. She hurried Susie towards the enclosure.

part over and done with—the sooner the better. Tinging with restlessness, she watched Miss Wickens curtsying to the celebrities on the stand.

"Come along, Susie!" Miss Wickens came scurrying back to her in a quiver of excitement. "The mayor would like a special portrait taken of himself as the Knights of the Round Table go by!"

Susie was nothing if not willing. She mounted her camera on the stand, and cheerfully she photographed the mayor, while the brass band played and the local tradesmen clanked past in knightly armour.

But now the lady mayoress thought she would like a portrait of herself during the Joan of Arc parade. And no one was more enthusiastic about it than Miss Wickens.

"Be sure to get a nice picture of the frock, Susie!" she whispered. "Remember that Spollard's made it!"

Precious minutes were passing. One after another of the ladies and the aldermen requested their portrait. Miss Wickens encouraged them with a gush. Susie's impatience grew agonising. She got into a frantic muddle over the slides. At any moment, someone in the crowd might spot Duggy Drake and snap him—beating her to it!

In a torment of suspense, Susie gazed over the heads of the crowd from her elevated perch on the stand.

Her heart gave a sudden bounce.

She saw a white panama hat moving amongst the people; she caught a distant glimpse of a long face with a large, humorous mouth—and it was the face of that man she had seen at the Zoo. It was Duggy Drake!

Susie was positive of it!

She made a wild grab at the legs of the camera, to dash off with it—but Miss Wickens seized her excitedly before she could move a step.

"What are you doing? Where are you going, Susie? Here's another portrait wanted! It's Lady!"

Susie felt as if she were on pins and needles. But she dared not neglect this chance. Her ladyship was wearing a fifty-guinea Spollard's frock.

With one movement Susie took a shot of her. With the next she grabbed up the camera and lurched down from the stand before Miss Wickens could stop her.

But now the white panama was no longer visible! Duggy was hidden in the thick of the crowd!

There was no hope of pushing through that mass of people.

Susie gazed about her frantically. She saw a wooden platform erected just inside the enclosure. It was the Press photographers' stand. A whole army of photographers and newspapermen were perched upon it.

Susie didn't think twice.

With the tripod sloped over her shoulder, she scrambled, panting, up the steps on to the Press stand. The newspapermen stared at her dumbfounded. They were too surprised to collect their senses. Susie plonked the huge tripod down, and its legs nearly knocked two of the men flying.

But now Susie could see distinctly the figure of Duggy Drake again. He was making straight towards her through the crowd—making for his colleagues on the Press stand.

Too excited to breathe, Susie levelled the camera upon him.

What she didn't see was an irate park inspector, who had watched her movements with unbelieving indignation.

Susie grabbed at the camera-bulb to squeeze it.

In the same instant the inspector came stamping up the steps behind her. She felt a hand grip furiously at her shoulder.

"Who gave you the right to be up here, miss? Do you represent any newspaper?"

The weight of his hand made Susie swing round. The camera swayed ominously.

"I shan't be a jiff! Let's get one picture!" she panted.

Frantically she turned to the camera again. Frantically she tried to get Duggy back into focus. But now the inspector was shouting. He was grabbing officiously at the legs of the camera. Everybody's attention was suddenly directed to the scrimmage going on aboard the Press stand.

"This stand is for the Press only. You know that perfectly well! You can't take pictures here without a permit and—O-o-o-ow!"

The disaster came too swiftly for Susie to realise what happened. The inspector lost his balance on the edge of the platform. He made a wild grab at the tripod to save himself. The tripod folded up and crashed to the ground.

So did Susie!

Bump! She landed on her back with every ounce of wind knocked out of her.

Vaguely she heard the crowd roar with laughter, and she heard the smash of the camera as it struck the ground beside her.

Susie sat up dizzily. In horror she saw the camera lying there shattered in ruins—the lens smashed into smithereens, the bellows limp and crumpled, pierced in a thousand places by broken glass. Never again would that old camera take a photo! Not for a five-pound note—not for all the tea in China!

The newspapermen came rushing to her rescue. What a mockery it was—Duggy Drake was among them! He was the first to help Susie to her feet! They were all sympathetic and whole-heartedly on her side.

"Hard luck about your camera, miss," they said. "It's properly done in—but not before

its time, by the look of it. Gee, what a relief!"

"What about your slides? They aren't broken!" said another. "Can we give you any help, miss?"

She remembered the portraits of the mayor's party that she was supposed to have taken. She gazed at a tent erected beside the Press stand. It was fitted up as a dark-room, with the latest apparatus for high-speed developing and printing.

"Would you mind developing my plates for me?" she hazarded.

"Sure! We'll have the prints ready for you in ten minutes," they said.

Susie gave them the slides to take into the tent. She told the park inspector what she thought of him, and then, with a sigh of anguish, she began collecting up the tripod and the remains of the broken camera.

It was a laborious task.

In the middle of it Miss Wickens came hurrying across to her. And Miss Wickens wasn't alone! Behind her, looking business-like and irritable, followed Mr. Spollard, the boss!

"Mr. Spollard didn't know you were taking those photographs, Susie, but I've explained to him that you are an expert," Miss Wickens jerked out. "He's rather anxious to see them."

"Will they be long, Susie?" demanded Mr. Spollard, hustling up.

"No, sir; the Pressmen are developing them now!" muttered Susie.

LIKE SCHOOL STORIES?

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The SCHOOLGIRL

2D—Every Saturday

—for the school stories in this
topping paper, introducing the
famous Chums of Cliff House,
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There are heaps of other en-
thralling features, too. Why not
buy a copy to-day?

"Bring them along to the mayor's stand, Susie," gushed Miss Wickens. "I know they will be beautiful. I told Mr. Spollard so!"

What with the members of the pageant treading on the broken glass, Susie was kept fully occupied for the next ten minutes. Then one of the Pressmen came out of the tent and pushed a batch of prints into her hand. At the same instant Miss Wickens signalled impatiently to her from the mayor's stand.

Without a pause, Susie hurried straight along.

The mayor and his party were all clustered in an expectant group on the stand, with Mr. Spollard in the middle. Miss Wickens was holding forth triumphantly, as though the conquest was hers.

"You will be surprised, your worship, and so will you, Mr. Spollard! I arranged myself for Susie Bowling to take the portraits. I have seen her work before. I knew I was making no mistake. Please gather round, everybody! Now, Susie—the pictures!"

Susie produced the top one from the batch, while all heads were craned over her shoulder.

"Ah! The mayor himself!" cried Miss Wickens; then she gave a suffocating gasp.

True enough, it was a portrait of the mayor in full regalia; but unmistakably he was gazing out from behind the bars of a Zoo cage! Over his head was a notice:

DON'T FEED—DANGEROUS!

Susie blinked. She realised faintly that she had exposed this plate before—at the Zoo on

Saturday. The sound that came now from the mayor reminded her vividly of the Zoo.

"Preposterous! A gross insult!" he roared. "I'll demand an explanation of this! I'll demand satisfaction, or—"

"Purely a mistake, sir!" Susie blurted out desperately, and made a hurried grab at the next print.

"Ah! The mayoress!" flustered Miss Wickens. "Her beautiful frock is a credit to Spollard!"

She broke off, choking.

The frock was faultless in the picture. But where the mayoress' face ought to be, it bore the face of Spollard's watchman—the result of Susie's effort on the roof last Sunday. One sight of that walrus moustache, and the mayoress breathed a faint "O-o-o-oh!" and swooned into the arms of an alderman's wife.

Susie looked about her desperately for a way of escape.

"Show me the othals! I demand to see them all!" bawled the mayor, shaking his fist at Miss Wickens and Mr. Spollard.

Recklessly Susie produced the next picture. "Sir William—the alderman!" someone gasped.

And so it was—partly. The face and the spreading regalia across his chest were perfect. But the arms were the arms of the chimpanzee who had shied the orange at Susie—and they reached almost to Sir William's ankles.

"Monstrous! My solicitor shall hear of this!" he yelled, dancing with rage. "I call upon everybody to witness this insult!"

"Where's my picture—what have you done to mine?" screeched her ladyship. "If it's anything like these others I'll—Owl!"

She broke off with a scream. She had snatched the next print from Susie's hand. It showed her ladyship's aristocratic figure and features to perfection; but upon her head she appeared to be wearing a tattered old cap, and she was addressing a meeting outside the gates of Hyde Park.

"It's—it's an outrage!" her ladyship shrieked.

But not more outrageous than Councillor Mrs. Bird's picture, because, by a horrible coincidence, Mrs. Bird appeared with her own face and the body of a swan.

Above the bedlam, Susie could hear Mr. Spollard conciliating the mayoral party, while at the same time heaping the blame upon Miss Wickens' and Susie's heads.

Susie was defending herself from the attack of the mayor's party.

"You've come out better than I have, anyhow, folks. It's cost me a broken camera!" protested Susie. "Not only that, it's cost me five pounds! I was just on the very point of snapping Duggy Drake, when, blow me, if—"

She broke off, with her eyes dilating in her head. She was staring at the last print in the batch.

It showed a dense crowd of people, seeming to fall backwards. The effect was caused by the fact that the picture had been taken just as the camera was toppling on the Press stand. But right in the forefront of that crowd, crystal clear in his white panama, was a perfect portrait of Duggy Drake!

Susie gave one boisterous yell, which made everybody stare agape.

"Hi, Wicky! Mr. Spollard! It's O.K.!" "O.K.?" repeated Mr. Spollard, bewildered.

"Yes! I've won the five!" shouted Susie, and with a whoop she galloped down from the stand and streaked across to the newspaper tent.

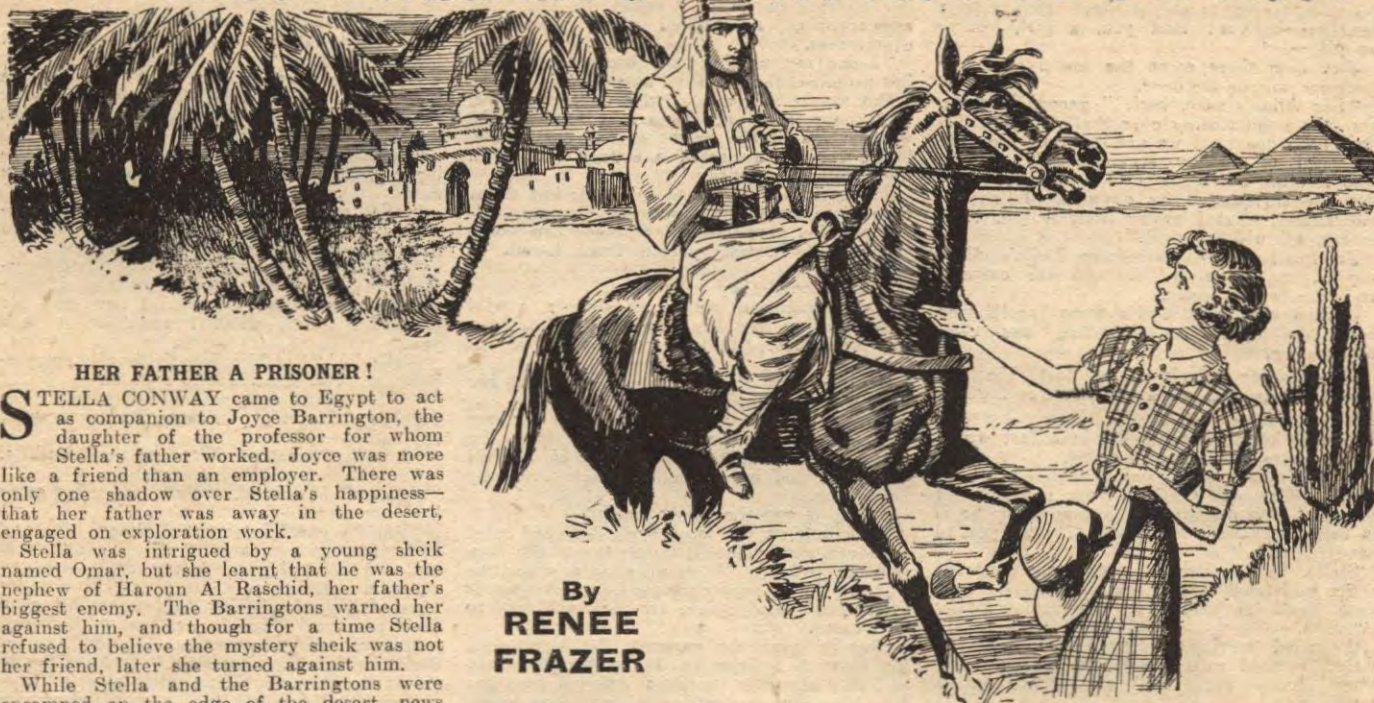
O.K. it was! Susie saw to that. Just a word in Duggy Drake's ear, and he got his colleagues to take decent Press portraits of the mayor's party and send them all home smiling. As for Mr. Spollard, he had splendid publicity next day, when the "Daily Echo" gave the full story of how Susie Bowling, of Spollard's, won the last five-pound prize in the Duggy Drake competition.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

Haven't you loved every word of this splendid story? Don't miss next Friday's tale of our cheery Susie. Order your GIRLS' CRYSTAL in advance.

GIRLS' CRYSTAL
4/9/37

STELLA and the SHEIK of MYSTERY



HER FATHER A PRISONER!

STELLA CONWAY came to Egypt to act as companion to Joyce Barrington, the daughter of the professor for whom Stella's father worked. Joyce was more like a friend than an employer. There was only one shadow over Stella's happiness—that her father was away in the desert, engaged on exploration work.

Stella was intrigued by a young sheik named Omar, but she learnt that he was the nephew of Haroun Al Raschid, her father's biggest enemy. The Barringtons warned her against him, and though for a time Stella refused to believe the mystery sheik was not her friend, later she turned against him.

While Stella and the Barringtons were encamped on the edge of the desert, news came that Mr. Conway was at the Oasis of the Moon and in great danger. It looked as if Sheik Omar was responsible for his plight, and Professor Barrington returned to Cairo to secure help.

Desperately anxious about her father, Stella set out across the desert. Joyce followed her, but both girls were captured by Omar, and taken to his desert palace. Joyce managed to escape, and rode off to seek help; but Stella remained behind in the palace. To her surprise, Omar's sister, Princess Yasmin, helped her to fool Al Raschid, the young sheik's villainous uncle, into thinking that she was one of Yasmin's attendants. Then one day, while exploring the dungeons, Stella found her father locked up in a cell, sick and helpless.

TEARS in her eyes, Stella stared into the cell in which her father was imprisoned. Suddenly he opened his eyes, staring unseeing at his daughter.

"Barrington," he muttered hoarsely, "are you there? I tell you there's a secret in that amulet—treasure man—fabulous treasure! Wait! Ah! That scoundrelly sheik! I might have guessed it. Close in, you fellows! Stop him, Barrington! Can you hear? My daughter—take care of her—"

His words trailed away in a groan as he flung out an arm in his delirium, the cruel chain clanking on his wrist.

Frenziedly Stella wrenched at the bars of his prison.

"Father!" she choked. "Oh, the beasts—the hateful beasts!"

She tried to unlock the barred door, but the keys she had were useless. Miserably she sank to her knees, reaching her hand through the bars, contriving to touch her father's grey, tousled head.

It was burning hot, as though with fever. He was muttering weakly in his delirium.

"I must get to him," whispered Stella huskily. "They must let me nurse him—they must! I'll appeal to Yasmin—to the sheik—to Haroun Al Raschid! They can't all be heartless!"

Frantically she turned, intending to race back in search of Yasmin, or the young sheik.

But suddenly her way was barred by a bearded Arab, rifle in hand. Another menacing figure came up from behind her. They

By
**RENEE
FRAZER**

grasped her by the shoulders, addressing her harshly in a native tongue.

Realising that she did not understand, one of the men reached out to grasp her veil.

Stella struggled frantically; she felt that her senses were leaving her. The blood was throbbing in her temples.

Just then a sharp order rang out: the guards sprang to attention, releasing her. With a moan, Stella sank unconscious to the floor.

The tall figure of the mystery sheik strode up. He lifted her in his arms, his dark eyes blazing with anger as he turned on the two frightened guards.

"Dogs!" he cried. "How dare you lay hands on a woman of the palace—an attendant on my sister Yasmin? She was sent here by the princess' orders to bring news of the prisoner. By the beard of the prophet, I'm minded to have you whipped. Go! Out of my sight, before I strike you down!"

The cowed guards scuttled away before their young master's fury.

Omar drew a deep breath, staring down into Stella's pale, anguished face.

"Allah!" he muttered. "I would have spared her this, at all costs."

He turned, staring towards the barred cell, his handsome face twitching with suppressed emotion.

"So," he muttered, "it has come to this! I am to be defied in my own palace—my wishes set at naught! Someone will pay dearly for this outrage!"

HER SIGNAL OF DISTRESS

Eagerly Stella tied her scarf to the flag-staff. Hopefully she watched the distant horsemen. Were they the rescue party for whom she had waited so long? And would they see her signal for help?

He drew a key from his girdle as he spoke, and unlocked the barred gate. Still supporting Stella, he bent over the grey-haired prisoner, his dark eyes smouldering with mingled anger and pity.

"There's no time to lose!" he muttered. "I must act swiftly—and to-night. Tomorrow may be too late!"

Rising swiftly to his feet, with Stella in his arms, he left the cell, his dark eyes smouldering with a grim purpose.

WHEN Stella came to her senses, the grey light of the dawn was creeping through the latticed windows of her room, dimly revealing the luxurious surroundings.

She sat up, with a broken sob—memory flooding back to her—the memory of a grey-haired prisoner lying ill and helpless behind the bars of his cell.

"Father!" she exclaimed brokenly.

She struggled to her feet, staring round her dazedly. And just then the curtains parted noiselessly, and Yasmin entered, her dark eyes alight with pity.

"Hush!" she whispered, taking Stella by the arm. "It is not yet morning. You must sleep. There is nothing to fear."

Stella gazed at her wildly.

"My father!" she gasped. "He's a prisoner—in the dungeons! He's ill! Oh, Yasmin, let me go to him—please!"

There were tears in Yasmin's dark eyes as she pushed Stella gently back on to the couch.

"I have a message from my brother," she whispered. "He begs you to have patience—to trust in him. All will yet be well."

Stella drew a sharp breath. The momentary gleam of hope that had crept into her eyes was stifled by bitter recollection.

"I don't believe him!" she exclaimed. "Omar's my enemy—father's enemy! He's trying to deceive me now, as he's deceived me before. Why has he imprisoned my father? Why won't he let me go to him? Yasmin, please—please help me get daddy out of this dreadful place!"

She clung to the Arab girl, her eyes filled with piteous entreaty.

But Yasmin turned away.

"I—I can do nothing," she whispered. "My brother has sworn me to silence. He knows best what he is doing. There is

dark treachery afoot; but, believe me, Stella, it is not of his doing. He is your friend—I swear it!”

“It’s not true!” choked Stella wildly. “You’re trying to shield him! He’s utterly heartless—callous! And you, a girl, you’ve no pity—”

Just then there came the sound of heavy footsteps outside the door.

“For Allah’s sake, hush!” gasped Yasmin, her slim hand closing over Stella’s lips. “If the guard hears us, we are undone. You are supposed to be my serving-maid, Ayesha, who left me a week ago to join her people. We are surrounded by dangers you cannot understand. But I swear that, if you trust in me, all will be well!”

Freeing herself quickly from Stella’s clinging hands, she glided through the curtain, and was lost to sight.

Choked with sobs, Stella flung herself face down on the couch, realising her utter helplessness.

From sheer weariness, at last, she fell asleep, to awaken when the sun was high in the sky.

Yasmin herself brought her breakfast—fruit, dainty cakes, and fragrant coffee.

“You must eat,” she whispered, “and drink. You will need all your strength. I have not seen my brother this morning; he is in conference with my uncle. I pray you to have patience.”

Stella, left to herself, sipped the fragrant coffee and tried to eat, realising that no purpose could be served by undermining her strength.

A veiled serving-girl brought in washing water, scented with rose-petals, and laid out some dainty garments, retiring without a word.

Stella made a hasty toilet, bathing her aching eyes in the cool, scented water, and slipping on the silken garments.

A sudden gleam of hope had crept through the cloud of despair that enveloped her mind.

She had remembered Joyce—and the rescue party! Surely her chum would have met the party by now! Perhaps, at this moment, they were on their way to the oasis!

She darted to the narrow, latticed window; but she could glimpse only a portion of the palace grounds.

Stella commenced hastily to explore the room, seeking a window from which she might catch a glimpse of the desert. Then, as she pulled back a silken curtain, her heart gave a sudden bound.

Behind the curtain was a small door, standing ajar!

Hardly able to credit her good fortune, she crept through it—to find herself confronted by a flight of winding stairs, apparently leading up into some kind of tower.

Her heart thumping, she hurried up the stairs, hardly hoping to find any means of escape; yet it was better than remaining imprisoned in the narrow confines of her chamber.

At the top of the stairs was another door, and, pushing it open, Stella gave a little gasp as she found herself on the high turrets of the palace!

Above her was the dazzling blue of the Egyptian sky. Peering over the turrets, she could see the grounds of the palace, and, beyond, the fringe of the desert itself!

Shading her eyes from the dazzling sun, she stared hopefully towards the horizon—seeking the dark specks that would herald the approach of the rescue party.

But her heart sank as her anxious gaze encountered nothing except a rolling waste of sand, scattered with rocky boulders and stunted shrubs.

Nothing was moving in that barren waste; there was no sign of the rescue party.

A little sob rose in Stella’s throat; her fears returned. Had anything happened to Joyce?

Wearily she made her way back to her room, preparing to wait with what patience she could muster, tortured by thoughts of her father—of Joyce—of her own helplessness.

The day dragged by interminably; she saw little of Yasmin and nothing at all of the young sheik.

But from the palace came sound of activity; the tramp of armed men in the courtyard;

the whinnying of horses; footsteps in the corridors.

Stella wondered uneasily if some fresh journey was contemplated; but, in reply to her anxious questions, Yasmin, on her brief appearances, maintained her mysterious evasiveness.

“I can say nothing; my brother the sheik has promised that all shall be well.”

But as the long afternoon drew to its close, and the crimson of the sunset touched the white walls of the desert palace into flame, Stella became aware of a sudden change in the sounds of activity.

Till now they had been subdued; but all at once there broke out a confused clamour.

Stella, her ears strained, detected two words shouted in French, passed from mouth to mouth.

“They come—they come!”

Stella caught in her breath sharply, a wild hope flashing into her mind. Flinging open the inner door, she raced madly up to the turret.

A broken cry of joy escaped her lips as her hope was confirmed.

Limbed against the flaming sunset she saw a band of horsemen approaching from the desert—line upon line, galloping in trained formation, led by a smaller group—evidently Europeans.

Surely it was the rescue party!

Snatching off the long, gaily coloured scarf she wore, she hoisted it to the top of the flagpole on the tower. It would serve as a distress signal. If the approaching horsemen saw it they would surely guess her need and ride to her rescue.

Craning over the parapet, Stella watched the feverish activity in the courtyard below, and then abruptly the blood drained from her face, her excitement gave way to frozen horror.

For streaming out of the gateway was a party of Arab horsemen, heavily armed and led by the giant figure of the chieftain, Al Raschid—and swaying in their midst was a fluttering tent, strapped to the backs of camels!

A choking sob escaped Stella’s lips as she realised the truth.

The Arabs were absconding from the palace and taking her father with them! The rescue-party would arrive too late!

THE MYSTERY SHEIK TO THE RESCUE!

WHAT could she do? How could she stop them?

Wildly Stella fled back by the way she had come—to find the door of her room open.

Servants—men and women—were scuttling down the passages, carrying bundles; cries and wild confusion filled the air.

Stella, caught up in the throng, fought her way out into the courtyard.

Here an armed guard was drawn up to cover the retreat of the household. Pack-horses, mules, and camels were waiting at the gate.

Obviously, the arrival of the rescue-party had been anticipated; preparations had been made in advance.

Stella raced for the gate in company with three other women. They were challenged by the guard, and while her companions chattered excitedly, Stella seized the opportunity to dive under the sentry’s arm and hurry along a narrow path skirting the walls.

She had no idea which way the Arabs had taken their prisoner, or how she could possibly hope to stop them.

She hurried on, with a blind, desperate purpose of overtaking them and flinging herself on Al Raschid’s mercy. Perhaps by that means she might hinder them until the search-party arrived.

She found herself in a deserted part of the walls on the brink of a dark, turgid moat that bounded the palace on three sides.

Even as she looked round desperately for a bridge by which to cross, a tall, bearded figure leaped out suddenly from the shadows to confront her.

It was the Arab guard whom she had tricked on the previous night.

“So,” he snarled, grabbing her by the

shoulder and speaking in broken French, “we meet again, my veiled desert beauty! Let me see what is the colour of thy complexion.”

As he spoke, in spite of her frantic struggles, he snatched off her veil.

A triumphant shout escaped his lips.

“A spy! Al Raschid will reward me well for this! Come!”

He grabbed her by the wrist; but even as Stella cried out, a lithe, boyish figure sprang from the parapet, landing on the man’s shoulders.

There was a brief scuffle; then, with a choking cry, the guard pitched backwards into the moat.

Stella, swaying weakly, found herself supported by a strong arm as she stared into the dark, smouldering eyes of the young sheik.

“Little fool!” he rapped. “Will you deliberately invite death? My sister and I have searched the palace for you. I have sent her on under escort, while I remained to seek you.”

Stella looked at him dazedly, hardly comprehending. Her mind was in a whirl.

“What—what do you want with me?” she gasped. “Haven’t you done harm enough? My father—”

“Is safe!” breathed the young sheik huskily. Stella stared at him incredulously.

“Safe?” she echoed. “He’s been taken away by your men—”

“Foolish one,” interrupted Omar, his hand tightening on her arm, “will you not trust me even now? I swear to you, Stella—”

As he spoke there came a deafening rattle of musketry; the fleeing Arabs were firing on their pursuers. The air was rent with shouts.

With a sudden movement the sheik thrust Stella behind him, standing in front of her to shield her from the flying missiles.

Dazed, half-fainting, Stella wondered why he did not try to escape to join his men.

And just then, with a loud shout, the rescue-party swept in sight.

One of the remaining Arabs, flung from his horse, turned in his flight to fire wildly over his shoulder. The bullet went wide of its mark. With barely a groan, the young sheik crumpled and fell to the ground, the blood oozing from a wound in his temple.

With a little cry, Stella dropped to her knees at his side. She realised that he had saved her life at the risk of his own.

With a groan, the young sheik opened his eyes; a twisted smile curved his lips.

“Stella,” he breathed huskily, “your father is—”

She bent to catch his words. But just then, with a loud clatter, the rescue-party dashed up, Professor Barrington leading them.

He sprang from his horse, catching Stella up in his arm.

“Thank heavens,” he gasped, “we were in time! And this”—he stared down at the limp figure of the young Arab, his face darkening—“this is the young scoundrel responsible for the outrage! Shot down by one of his own men—eh? Only wounded, though, luckily for him and for us. Lift him up, men, and take care of him. We’ll take him back to Cairo with us—under arrest!”

STELLA’S STARTLING DISCOVERY!

STELLA was barely conscious of what happened after that, until she found herself lying on an improvised bed, beneath canvas; Joyce was bending over her, her eyes filled with tears.

“Stella,” she whispered brokenly, “thank goodness we reached you in time!”

Stella smiled wanly, pressing her chum’s hand. She felt too tired to ask questions—too tired almost to think.

But slowly, recollection came back to her; with a sudden catch in her breath, she raised herself on her elbow.

“Joyce—my father,” she whispered. “Did they—did they find him?”

Joyce looked away, swallowing hard. Stella understood. With a faint moan, she sank back on her pillows, burying her face in her hands.

They’d been too late to rescue her father; nothing else counted. She’d rather have been a prisoner, with her father, than free without him.

The memory of the last dramatic scene with the young sheik flashed into her mind. His cryptic words still haunted her. He had been about to tell her something when he had been hit by the flying bullet; falling in an attempt to save her life!

Her hand tightened on her chum's arm. "Joyce," she whispered, "the sheik—is he—"

"He's getting on as well as can be expected," said Joyce, her expression hardening. "And better than he deserves. It's thanks to him all this has happened, Stella—but he'll receive his deserts. Just wait till he's taken back to Cairo!"

She spoke almost fiercely, her eyes gleaming with indignation.

But there was a strange look in Stella's eyes as she passed her hand unsteadily over her forehead.

"I—I wonder," she breathed.

"Stella! What—what do you mean?"

"Stella shook her head wearily.

"Oh—I don't know, Joyce. Don't ask me. Until a few hours ago, I—I hated Omar as much as you do. But—Joyce—he saved my life."

Joyce stared incredulously.

"Saved your life?" she echoed. "Why, you poor dear, you don't remember. When dad found you, you were struggling in his grasp—he was obviously trying to hide you from us. He's a hateful treacherous scoundrel; try to forget all about him."

A few minutes later she left the tent, announcing that she would fetch her chum some refreshment.

But Stella's thoughts were racing. True, her mind still felt dazed—but she couldn't have dreamt that last, dramatic scene.

The young sheik had saved her life at the risk of his own! But why—why?

She had been convinced that he was her father's bitter enemy; but those last words of his—before the bullet struck him—suggested that he was guarding some secret.

She must see him—she must!

Unsteadily she rose to her feet, groping her way to the entrance of the tent.

She stared out into the gathering dusk—at a scene of bustle and activity.

The camp had been pitched in the grounds of the palace; armed guards in the smart uniform of the desert spahis formed a wide ring around it.

Outside one tent, in particular, were posted several armed sentries, their rifles on the alert.

Stella guessed that the prisoner lay in that tent.

With an effort, she pulled herself together, making her way unsteadily across the clearing.

The Arab guards saluted as she approached.

"How—how is the prisoner?" inquired Stella.

"The prisoner is unconscious, ma'mselle," replied the officer of the guard. "The Effendi Barrington has left strict orders that none shall be allowed to see him."

Stella clenched her hands.

"Where is Professor Barrington?" she asked.

"The effendi has departed with a party of men to attempt to overtake the chieftain, Al Raschid," was the reply.

Stella drew a deep breath.

"You will permit me to see the prisoner—just for a moment," she said. "It is important! I will take full responsibility."

The officer hesitated, glancing at his men. Then he nodded.

"Very well, ma'mselle—if you command it."

He stepped aside and Stella, her heart thumping, entered the dimness of the tent.

The young sheik was lying on a rough couch, his eyes closed, his head swathed in bandages.

Stella approached him noiselessly, dropping to her knees at his side. He stirred and in his sleep began to mutter:

"So I am to be a pawn in your game, uncle!" he breathed huskily. "That remains to be seen! The reckoning will come soon—very soon. It is written in the desert sands—"

He broke off and his eyes opened. For a moment he stared dazedly at Stella, raising his hand weakly to his head.

"Ah—I dream," he muttered. "She has come to taunt me—to reproach me. But I

swear that I am her friend. If only I could get free! If only—"

He gave a groan and his head fell back on to the pillow.

"Omar!" whispered Stella. "Omar—what do you mean?"

But just then she heard voices outside the tent—Professor Barrington's deep voice, replying to Joyce's anxious questions.

"I'm afraid not, my dear; they got clean away—and they've taken poor Conway with them. But that scoundrelly young sheik shall pay dearly for this. I'll have him sent back to Cairo to-morrow under a strong guard—"

The rest of his words were lost to Stella, as she crouched there at the young sheik's side.

At that moment, a desperate thought was born in her mind. Whatever happened, the young sheik mustn't be taken away—not till he could tell her the truth!

STELLA returned to her own tent without being seen. She decided to appeal to Professor Barrington.

With trepidation she broached the subject, emboldened by the professor's kindly manner

thing just before he was shot. Oh, please don't think I'm trying to shield him for what he's done—but just give him another chance; let him stay here, under guard, until he regains consciousness! I'm positive I could persuade him to tell the truth about daddy."

"Impossible, Stella!" The professor's eyes hardened. "What you ask is out of the question. No doubt you think it is for the best; but you have no knowledge of the world of men. You have been deceived by a plausible scoundrel, who knows how to act the part of a mysterious friend."

That night, Stella found sleep impossible. Her mind was in a turmoil. She could not refute the stark facts put forward by the professor. The young sheik had proved himself a villain. And yet—if only she knew what was in his mind!

If only she could speak to him!

It was in the grey light of the early morning that Stella reached her reckless decision.

She would make one more attempt to learn the truth from the young sheik's lips—before they sent him away.

Hastily attiring herself, she crept from the tent.

The encampment was in darkness and silence; the moon was obscured by heavy banks of cloud.

Hardly daring to breathe, she crept towards the prisoner's tent.



"Oh, Yasmin, let me go to my father!" Stella begged. Gently Yasmin pushed her back on to the couch. "My brother begs you to trust him," she said gently. But how could Stella do that when she knew her father was the young sheik's prisoner?

as he came into her tent to ask how she was feeling.

"Professor Barrington," she began unsteadily, "Joyce tells me you are sending the young sheik back to Cairo under arrest."

A swift frown crossed the professor's face.

"That is so," he said sternly. "I shall not be satisfied till he is safely in the hands of the Egyptian authorities—and behind prison bars!"

"Did Joyce tell you that—that he saved my life?" she breathed.

The professor eyed her sharply; then, his expression relenting, he patted her hand.

"You imagined it, my dear. Ben Istar is a thorough-paced rogue, and clever into the bargain. If he made a pretence of protecting you, then it was for some reason of his own."

Stella bit her lip, her face rather pale.

"I don't understand," she whispered; "but I am certain he was trying to tell me some-

A tall sentry stood, grave and motionless, in front of the opening.

Stella's eyes gleamed with a reckless determination. Picking up a stone, she flung it out across the clearing. It landed with a crash in a clump of stunted cacti.

She saw the sentry stiffen. Slowly he moved away from the tent, approaching the bushes.

Holding her breath, she crept up to the tent, and pulled open the flap.

"Omar!" she whispered unsteadily.

There came no reply from the motionless figure on the couch.

Stella crept forward, grasping the figure gently by the shoulder.

Then a startled, incredulous ejaculation escaped her lips.

For the figure on the couch was a dummy—a dummy composed of tightly wrapped blankets!

The Mystery Sheik had vanished!

How has Omar managed to escape, and is he really Stella's enemy? There are more thrilling developments next Friday. Don't miss them!

KENNEL-MAID at PHANTOM ABBEY



By
GAIL
WESTERN

THE GHOSTLY KIDNAPPER

EVER since she had left school, Kitty Graham had wanted to establish her own kennels, and when she inherited the ancient abbey at Lorne Fen she was able to realise her dreams.

Together with Bridget, a cheery Irish girl, Kitty took up her residence in the one wing of the abbey that was not in ruins. The place was supposed to be haunted by a phantom monk, and one night Kitty saw the dreaded Green Friar for herself.

She tried to make friends with Remus, a homeless black retriever, who seemed to have some mysterious interest in the abbey, but the dog was nervous and always ran away.

Judith Bligh, the daughter of Kitty's neighbour, also ran a kennels, and she was furious at a rival establishment being set up.

Mrs. Fergusson, a dog lover, put Kitty in charge of her comical little Scottie named Pogo. Providing she was satisfied with the care Pogo received, Mrs. Fergusson promised to let Kitty have her other four dogs. But Mrs. Fergusson heard disturbing rumours about the Abbey Kennels, and she telegraphed that she intended visiting them next morning.

That night Kitty was awakened by a series of frantic yelps. Getting out of bed, she went to the window, to see the Phantom Monk in the very act of kidnapping Pogo, the Scottie!

"THE Phantom Monk!"

Eyes wide with horror, Kitty watched the Green Friar emerge from the stables.

In the faint moonlight his cowed robes shimmered eerily; like a shadow he moved, gliding across the ground.

A terrified yelp came suddenly from the wriggling, furry shape the figure was clutching. Instantly Kitty forgot her terror. She remembered only that Pogo, the little Scottie, was in danger.

"I've got to save him!" she gasped. "If Mrs. Fergusson finds him gone to-morrow—"

Her face went white. Mrs. Fergusson was Pogo's owner. She had already been doubtful as to the wisdom of sending him to the Abbey Kennels. But what would she say if she arrived to find him stolen?

Kitty snatched an electric torch up from the dressing-table and darted desperately across the room. As she flung open the door and went racing along the dark landings she called urgently to the Irish girl who was asleep in the next room:

"Bridget—Bridget!"

But she did not wait for a reply. Down the stairs she plunged, and grappled frenziedly with the rusty bolts of the front door. Would she be in time? Would she be able to prevent the Phantom Monk from getting away with Pogo?

Creakingly the ancient door swung open, and out into the garden Kitty ran, the wind plucking at her dressing-gown, her slippers pattering on the hard gravel.

Anxiously she looked around, but there was no sign of the Green Friar. He had vanished as strangely as he had appeared.

Kitty turned in bewilderment. Had she imagined it all? Had her eyes been playing tricks in the darkness?

Doubtfully she moved across to the out-buildings which she and Bridget had converted into kennels. The door hung open. The chain and padlock fastening lay on the ground. She called, but there came no reply. Pogo really had been taken away.

And then suddenly, from the ruins she heard a low, suspicious growl. At first she thought it was Pogo, but that growl was too deep, too powerful, to belong to the little Scottie.

She took a step forward, then pulled up, looking in astonishment at the big black shape that lay curled up in one of the crumbling archways.

How glad Kitty was when Remus began to trust her! The homeless stray showed signs of settling down at the Abbey kennels. But his strange ways puzzled Kitty. What was the mystery dog's secret?

"Well, if it isn't Remus!" she cried.

And the mystery stray it was. Evidently the homeless retriever she had tried to befriend had gone into the ruins to sleep, but her shouts had roused him. Now, as she approached, he rose to his feet, regarding her doubtfully.

Kitty's heart leapt. An exciting thought had occurred to her. What if Remus could help her to track down the Green Friar! Once before he had come to her rescue, and she knew how he hated that ghostly figure.

Softly she crossed to where he stood. Reassuringly she smiled at him. To her delight, he did not back away. He seemed to recognise that she was a friend. There was something in her voice that gave him confidence. He even let her soothing fingers ruffle his fur.

"That's right, old chap," she whispered. "You can trust me, can't you? I want you to help me—help me to find the Phantom Monk!"

Something in Kitty's voice caused the dog to stiffen.

Eagerly he looked up at her, and Kitty's heart leapt again. Remus seemed to understand that she needed his help.

"Find him!" she urged. "Find Pogo!"

She pointed to the ground, and the black retriever gave a deep, rumbling bark. He seemed to understand what was required of him, for he dropped his nose to the hard ground and began to run to and fro, whining and snuffing.

Anxiously Kitty watched and waited. Only the mystery stray could save her now. Only he could track down that spectral figure.

"Find him!" she gasped again.

Remus' bushy tail thrashed the air. His whole body quivered, and in a perfect frenzy he sniffed around. Then suddenly he raised his head. Another bark escaped at his throat, and away he went—charging madly across the garden.

Eagerly Kitty followed—as far as the boundary fence that separated the abbey from the neighbouring grounds. Remus was out of sight now. Could the retriever have followed the Green Friar through Samuel Bligh's garden?

For a second only Kitty hesitated, then, climbing over the fence, she set off in search. Through the trees she went, presently to find herself confronted by spacious lawns, with an imposing house in the distance.

She stopped, nonplussed. This must be Samuel Bligh's residence. Surely neither the Green Friar nor Pogo was likely to have come this way? Then where had they gone? And Remus, too?

As she stood there in her dressing-gown, shivering with the cold and her head throbbing, she heard the crunch of tyres and the purr of a high-powered engine. A smart blue coupe was coming up the carriage drive. A thick-set man in evening dress was at the wheel, and by his side was a haughty-looking girl wearing a rich velvet dance frock.

Judith Bligh and her father!

But Kitty was not conscious of the car's approach, for suddenly an excited yapping attracted her attention. It came from the far side of the house. She ran in the direction of the sound; but another disappointment awaited her. It was not Pogo who called, but one of Judith's dogs. As she saw it, jumping up and pawing at the wire-netting that enclosed its run, Kitty stepped forward.

"Hallo, old chap!" she said smilingly.

"What's up? It's time you were asleep, you know! Now, be a good lad, and—"

But that was as far as she got.

Unnoticed, Judith Bligh had clambered out of the coupe. For a moment she stood there, glaring suspiciously at the girl who stood beside the door of the kennels; then she darted forward.

"Caught you!" she snapped, and her hand closed angrily over Kitty's shoulder. "I knew you were no good the first time I saw you! But you'll be sorry for prowling round here! I'll show you that it doesn't pay to interfere with other people's dogs!"

AN ENEMY IN JUDITH

"WHAT do you mean?"

With a startled gasp, Kitty swung round. She stared at Judith incredulously.

"Surely you don't think—" she began, then broke off; for there could be no mistaking the significance of the other girl's sneering look, and suddenly she realised how suspicious her presence here at midnight must look.

Judith's red lips curled scornfully.

"It's no good you trying to wriggle out of it!" she snapped. "You're caught red-handed! I suppose you heard that I've got several dogs entered for the county show, so you thought you'd try to spoil their chances—eh?"

Kitty's cheeks went first white, then red. She could hardly believe her own ears. That she should be accused of trying to harm her rival's dogs!

"Why, it's abominable!" she gasped. "How dare you suggest such a thing! I—I came here to look for Pogo, Mrs. Fergusson's Scottie. The Phantom Monk's kidnapped him."

Judith stared, then laughed.

"Well, of all the yarns!" she exclaimed. "I've never heard such rot in my life! As if a ghost would be interested in a dog!" She gave another sneering laugh, then turned and waved to the thick-set man, who now came hurrying forward. "Just listen to this, dad!" she cried. "This ridiculous girl says the Phantom Monk tried to steal her Scottie!"

"But it's true—honestly, it is!" Seeing that it was useless to try to convince her sneering rival, Kitty turned to Mr. Bligh. Appealingly she surveyed him. "I—I know I'm trespassing," she gulped, "but I didn't mean any harm! You see—"

Agitatedly she explained, and, to her relief, Mr. Bligh listened attentively, though, when she had finished, he rubbed a doubtful hand across his grizzled hair.

"It certainly sounds an extraordinary story, young lady!" he commented.

"But it's true!" insisted Kitty, and shiveringly she pulled her dressing-gown around her. "As if I'd come out like this if I meant any harm!" she added.

Mr. Bligh nodded.

"It doesn't seem reasonable," he admitted, "though why a ghost—even if it's a fake one—should want to kidnap your dog—" He broke off, and, darting forward, he put a concerned arm around Kitty. "Steady on, young lady!" he urged. "Feeling the cold, aren't you?"

Gratefully Kitty smiled at him.

"I'm all right!" she gulped. "Yes, it is cold. But I'm all right now. If you'll excuse me, I'll go back home. But before I go, I'd like you to believe that what I said was true. The Phantom Monk did—"

"Kitty! Kitty, me darlint!"

Bridget's cheery voice interrupted her, and from out of the trees the plump Irish girl came running. At sight of Kitty, the servant gave a gasp of relief.

"Thanks be to ould Patrick, but there you are! Bejabbers, but 'twas myself who thought the ghost had spirited you away!"

Kitty smiled quiveringly.

"He did get Pogo, I'm afraid," she said, and for the second time explained.

Bridget listened, open-mouthed, putting an anxious arm around her.

"You poor darlint!" she exclaimed. "'Tis terrified you must have been! But come with me! 'Tis a nice hot cup of tea'll do you good."

She made to lead Kitty away, but Mr. Bligh intervened.

"If there's anything I can do—" he began.

Bridget shook her head.

"Thank you kindly, but 'tis myself can manage!" she said. "Come on, me darlint! 'Tis shivering you are!"

Mr. Bligh turned away, but his daughter stood there, watching the two girls disappear back through the trees. There was a spiteful gleam in her eyes and a sullen twist to her lips. Whatever her father believed, plain it was that she did not accept Kitty's strange story.

Despite Kitty's protests, Bridget insisted on escorting her indoors and in making her a pot of tea. Only when she had made her young mistress comfortable did the Irish girl think of Pogo; then, with a comforting smile, she turned towards the door.

"You sit there and keep warm," she bade. "'Tis myself will look for that scamp!"

Kitty did not like staying behind, but she really did feel exhausted. As she sipped at the warm tea, her thoughts went back to the night's happenings.

What was the Green Friar's reason for kidnapping the little Scottie?

Again her suspicions centred on the Blighs. Was it possible that they were connected with these frightening incidents? They both had reason to dislike her. But slowly she shook her head.

"I can't believe it," she murmured. "Mr. Bligh seems quite nice, and though his daughter's horrid— No; I can't believe they've anything to do with the Phantom Monk!"

As she sat there, puzzling over the mystery, the time slipped by. It was not until the old grandfather's clock chimed two o'clock that she realised with a start that Bridget had been absent nearly an hour.

"Goodness, what's become of her?" she exclaimed in sudden anxiety.

Pulling off the blanket in which the Irish girl had wrapped her, she jumped to her feet, but at the same moment the hall door opened and Bridget came running in.

"Well?" asked Kitty, but one look at Bridget's rueful face was enough. She gave a gulp of dismay. "You haven't found him?" she faltered.

Bridget shook her head.

"Not a trace of him anywhere. 'Tis clean gone he has." Then she forced herself to be optimistic. "But you mustn't worry, me darlint. You see, he'll turn up as right as rain in the morning. I expect he got scared and ran away. But he'll come back, don't ye worry."

Cheerfully she tried to comfort Kitty, urging her to return to bed. Kitty, with a sigh, realised that there was nothing else they could do until it was light. Reluctantly she let herself be led upstairs.

"I hope you're right, Bridget," she murmured. "But if Pogo doesn't turn up—"

There was no need for her to finish the sentence. Disastrous it would be if the Scottie were still missing when his proud owner turned up in the morning. Mrs. Fergusson would blame Kitty. She would not only flatly refuse to have anything more to do with her, but she would see that none of her friends did either.

It was a fretful night that Kitty spent, but at last she fell asleep. When she awoke the sun was streaming through the window, and she gave a gasp of dismay as she saw the time.

"Eight o'clock!" she cried. "Goodness, and Mrs. Fergusson's coming at nine!"

Jumping out of bed she rushed to the door and leaned over the banisters. From the kitchen came the rattle of crockery. It was obvious that Bridget was already up. Anxiously Kitty hailed her.

"Has Pogo come back?" she asked.

The Irish girl shook her head as she stepped out into the hall.

"Fraid not, Miss Kitty, but that big stray's outside."

"Big stray—you mean Remus?"

"The very same, me darlint. He's been whining and scratching at the door for hours. 'Tis myself who can't make him out. He seems off his head with worry, but whenever I show myself he goes scampering away."

Kitty's heart leapt. A sudden gleam of hope crept into her brown eyes.

Dashing back to her room, Kitty flung on her clothes and went downstairs. From the back door came an agitated series of whines. Remus had returned again.

Softly Kitty opened the door; soothingly she greeted the big dog.

"What is it, old chap?" she whispered. "What are you so excited about?"

Remus did not seem nervous of her. He made no attempt to scamper off. Whining, he stood there, his head turned away, his brown eyes looking across the garden.

On tiptoe Kitty approached. Gently her hand fell on his head.

As Kitty took a step forward, Remus went scampering off. "I knew it!" said Kitty. "He wants me to follow him."



"What is it?" she asked again. "What do you want to tell me?"

Remus gave an excited bark and leapt off the path. Again her gaze went to the wood at the bottom of the garden, then he gave another urgent bark and took another bound forward.

Bridget, who was watching from the kitchen door, gave an exasperated snort.

"'Tis crazy the creature is," she declared.

But Kitty's eyes were gleaming.

"He isn't crazy. He's trying to tell me that he wants me to follow him. See how he keeps looking across at the wood. There's something there he wants to show me."

Kitty took a step forward. Remus barked with obvious delight and away he went scampering.

"I knew it!" Kitty cried. "I'm certain he knows where Pogo is!"

Her heart quivering, her pulses racing, she followed the big retriever. Like a thunderbolt he tore across the garden. Reaching the fence, he paused, looked anxiously back, then, as he saw that Kitty was still following, he gave another excited bark and wriggled between the palings.

After him Kitty pounded. In and out of the trees Remus led her. The trail seemed never-ending, but at last she saw the hedge that bordered the road. Here the intelligent dog stopped, sniffing at a hole in the ground, clawing wildly at its edge.

Breathlessly Kitty gained his side. She gave a gasp as she saw a half-filled pit yawning at her feet, and her eyes filled with admiration.

"Oh, you clever darling!" she exclaimed.

For, lying at the bottom of the muddy pit, looking utterly wretched and helpless, was the missing Scottie. Plain enough what had happened. Terrified of the Green Friar, he had wriggled free and bolted, only to fall headlong into this steep hole.

As he saw Kitty, Pogo jumped up and down, whining piteously. His coat was muddy and a pathetic sight he looked.

Recklessly Kitty went slithering down the clay side of the pit, to gather up the little dog in her arms and fondle him.

"Poor Pogo!" she whispered. "But never mind. You're safe now."

Pogo licked her cheek and gave a squeal of contentment. He seemed to know that he had nothing to fear now. As Kitty battled her way back up the slope again, Remus sank back on his haunches, a proud look in his eyes. Kitty gave him a fond smile as she reached the top.

"We've got you to thank for this," she declared. "But for your cleverness—"

She paused, looking curiously over the hedge as a taxi went rattling by. A startling possibility occurred to her.

"Golly, I hope that isn't Mrs. Fergusson!" she gasped. "If she sees Pogo in this state there'll be trouble."

Anxiously she watched the taxi proceed along the road, but to her relief it stopped outside the entrance to the Towers, Samuel Bligh's residence.

At that moment Judith Bligh emerged from the gateway, a shopping-basket in her hand. The occupant of the taxi hailed her.

"Excuse me, but is this Lorne Abbey?"

Kitty gave a start as she recognised the voice; recognised the middle-aged woman who leaned out of the taxi window.

"It is Mrs. Fergusson!" she gulped.

Then came Judith's shrill voice:

"No; the Abbey's farther along. But you are Mrs. Fergusson, aren't you? I thought so," as the woman in the taxi nodded. "Well, I'm afraid there is bad news for you."

"Bad news! You—you don't mean about Pogo—about my Scottie?"

Mrs. Fergusson clambered out of the taxi and clutched Judith with an agitated hand.

"What's happened?" she gasped. "Don't say that Kitty Graham has betrayed my trust?"

Judith sighed.

"I'm afraid she has," she replied. "That wretch isn't fit to be trusted with a mongrel, let alone a pet like your Pogo. When you learn what has happened—"

Her dark eyes gleaming with spite, she went on to explain; but she said nothing about the Phantom Monk. According to her version, Kitty's carelessness had been at fault.

Mrs. Fergusson listened with increasing

anger, but it was nothing to the indignation Kitty felt. For a moment she was tempted to burst through the hedge and defend herself, but the sight of Pogo's muddy coat restrained her.

"She'll never listen to me if she sees you in this state!" she whispered to the little Scottie. "I must hurry back and give you a bath. As for that spiteful Judith—"

She set her lips fiercely, horrified by her rival's malicious spite. This, no doubt, was revenge for what had happened last night. But, judging from her conversation, she was not only intent on blackening Kitty's reputation, but in addition she was actually hinting that Mrs. Fergusson would be wiser to let her have the custody of her dogs.

"But she shan't get them!" Kitty muttered. "Her mean trick shan't succeed!"

Desperate to get back to the house and clean Pogo before his mistress should see him, she turned; but, as luck would have it, at that moment the irate Mrs. Fergusson raised her voice.

Instantly Pogo pricked up his ears. He gave an excited yap as he recognised his mistress' voice, and wildly he began to wriggle.

"Stop it!" ordered Kitty. "You mustn't, Pogo! Oh, please be quiet! If she hears you—"

But the damage was done. Mrs. Fergusson turned and peered hard towards the hedge, and at that moment the little Scottie, with a final frenzied wriggle, managed to tear himself free of Kitty's arms.

Down he dropped to the ground, bolting for a hole in the hedge.

Kitty made a frantic snatch at him.

"Come back!" she hissed. "Pogo!"

But Pogo, with another shrill yap, had plunged through the hedge, and had gone scampering after his mistress.

THE MYSTERY DOG'S SECRET

"**P**OGO! My precious pet!" With a cry of relief Mrs. Fergusson scooped the dog up in her arms; then, as she saw his muddy coat, she gave a gasp of dismay. "Oh, where have you been?" she asked. "What have they done to my darling?"

Judith, quickly recovering from her surprise, decided to make the most of this unexpected development.

"Thank goodness!" she exclaimed. "I can't tell you how glad I am, Mrs. Fergusson, that your pet has turned up. But it's no thanks to that girl next door. But for her wilful carelessness poor Pogo would never have been lost."

"That's not true, and you know it isn't!"

Unable to restrain herself any longer, Kitty burst through the hedge. With stormy eyes she confronted Judith, then she stretched out an appealing hand to Pogo's owner.

"Mrs. Fergusson—" she began.

But Mrs. Fergusson was not in the mood to listen.

"I wish to have nothing more to do with you!" she said acidly.

"But—but surely you'll let me explain?"

"Explanations are useless. Nothing can excuse your disgraceful conduct," was the grim reply. "Please leave this young lady and myself to talk together."

Kitty stared blankly.

"You mean that—that you're taking Pogo away?" she gulped.

"Certainly!" Mrs. Fergusson gave a stiff nod of her head. "In future I shall take more care in choosing kennels for my pets. Come, my dear!" She smiled at the triumphant Judith. "Take me to your home. I should like to discuss the matter with you."

"But it's not fair. Surely—"

Kitty finished with a helpless gesture. She realised that it was useless to argue with the irate woman. Still clutching Pogo to her, she walked away without another word.

The little Scottie gave a protesting yelp as he saw that Kitty was being left behind. He did not understand what had happened, but the look in his eyes showed that he hated being parted from her. But his mistress for once paid no heed to her pet's shrill entreaties. Her face grim and determined, she followed the grinning Judith up the Towers' carriage drive.

There were tears in Kitty's eyes. She did not blame Mrs. Fergusson. It was only natural that a dog lover like her should feel angry and upset. But Judith's meanness made her boil. Most exasperating of all was the knowledge that her rival's spite had succeeded. Instead of coming to the Abbey, all Mrs. Fergusson's dogs would go to the house next door.

"It's not fair!" Kitty muttered again; then suddenly she became conscious of a warm tongue on her hand. Looking down, she saw Remus squatting beside her, his big eyes regarding her with sympathy. "You darling!" she exclaimed.

Impulsively she bent and kissed the homeless stray.

"I'm going to adopt you," Kitty went on. "Then the kennels won't be entirely empty. Would you like to come and live with me?"

Remus regarded her gravely for a moment, then a joyous bark escaped his throat, and with a bound he went leaping back through the hedge. Kitty followed, and together they returned to the Abbey.

Bridget was horrified when she learnt what had happened. Wildly she brandished the frying-pan in her hand.

"Where is that black-hearted girl?" she shouted. "Bejabbers, but if I ever get my hands on her I'll treat her the same as I mean to do the Green Friar! I'll dent my pan on her head!"

And Bridget demonstrated her intentions by bringing down her frying-pan with a smack upon an imaginary head.

Kitty had to laugh. The sight of the fiery Irish girl capering up and down, lunging out at imaginary enemies, was absurdly comical.

"Don't worry," she said. "We'll beat Judith yet, and that awful Phantom Monk! Won't we, old chap?"

And she gave Remus a hug; then she became serious as she noticed his muddy fur and thin, hungry condition.

"We've got to fatten you up," she told him. "But, first of all, you need a bath. Come on; follow me, there's a good lad!"

Trusting the big stray trotted into the house after her. Bridget was busy cooking the breakfast in the kitchen, so Kitty decided to bath Remus in the sitting-room.

She spread old newspapers on the floor, put on them a huge, galvanised-iron bath, and got soap and brushes all ready. Remus eyed all these preparations suspiciously, and as Kitty beckoned to him he backed away.

"Come on, you big silly; I'm not going to hurt you!" she laughed.

Darting forward, she clutched him in both arms, and, wriggling and struggling, lifted him into the bath. He gave a doleful bark when he first felt the water running over his back, but submissively he stood there. Indeed, after the first shock, he seemed to enjoy being bathed, for he barked and gambolled like a puppy as Kitty rubbed in the soap.

When she had finished she surveyed him with satisfaction.

"There!" she cried. "You look as if you're worth ten pounds more now! And when you're fattened up a bit you'll be a real champion. We'll win a prize with you yet. Oh, Remus!" Kitty, towel in hand, sat back on her heels and surveyed him excitedly. "Wouldn't it be lovely if I could put you in a dog show?"

So happy was she in tending the homeless stray that she forgot her bitter disappointment. Only later on was she to realise what a struggle lay before her.

Mrs. Fergusson would not remain silent about her grievance. Soon every dog-lover in the district would learn about Pogo—and that would not do the Abbey Kennels any good.

The retriever wagged his tail and barked excitedly as he was being dried. Then, as Kitty touched his collar, he gave a sudden whine, and made as though to bolt. Kitty stared at him in surprise.

"Why, what ever's the matter?" she asked. "Steady on, silly! I'm not going to hurt you."

For Remus was struggling wildly in her

(Please turn to the back page)

The Threatened Girl Record-Breaker



A Thrilling Story of Noel Raymond—Detective
By PETER LANGLEY

THE WARNING MESSAGE

"SO you are determined to go through with it, Miss Powers?" Betty Powers, the girl speedboat racer, nodded emphatically as she returned the young detective's questioning glance.

"It was granddad's last wish, Mr. Raymond," she said quietly. "As you know, he was one of the early pioneers of the motor-boat, and everything I have I owe to him. I'll go through with this, whatever happens!"

Noel Raymond's eyes glinted with sudden admiration. He held out his hand, grasping the girl's slender fingers in his.

"Good for you, Miss Powers!" he said boyishly. "It was my duty to try to dissuade you, but I'm glad you've stuck to your guns. Whatever peril there is, it'll be my job to circumvent it and catch the scoundrel responsible. May I see that note you received?"

Betty nodded, her hazel eyes serious as she opened her handbag, searching among some papers. Noel glanced instinctively over her shoulder through the window of the pavilion.

Beyond the crowds who thronged the jetty he could see the blue expanse of Bracombe Bay, in Devon, smooth as any lake, and dotted with countless vessels—white-sailed yachts, pleasure launches, rowing-boats—all of them packed with spectators.

In their midst was a broad, clear channel, marked off by buoys and shaped roughly like a horseshoe. Along this course the girl speedboat racer was to commence her third bid for the world record.

"Here you are, Mr. Raymond," said Betty, holding out a crumpled slip of paper. "I received this message; that was why my manager sent for you."

In spite of her plucky bearing, there was a slight tremor in her voice as she spoke. Her face was a little pale.

Noel's eyes narrowed as he scrutinised the words scrawled across the paper:

"RACE TO-DAY—AT YOUR PERIL!"

That was all, yet those words held a sinister threat that could not be mistaken.

"Of course," went on Betty, "we'd have taken no notice of it if—it hadn't been for those other attempts."

Noel nodded, his face grim. He, in common with half the world, had read of Betty Powers' two previous ill-fated attempts at the record.

On each occasion there had been an inexplicable accident. "Temporary failure of eyesight owing to flying spray or 'glare,'" so the newspapers had said. The explanation at the time had struck him as pretty thin.

"Just what happened on those other occasions, Miss Powers?" he asked, as he slipped the threatening note into his wallet.

Betty shivered.

"I don't like to think of it," she admitted. "It was all so strange—inexplicable. On each occasion I was just rounding the big buoy—the turning-point of the course—when something happened. There was a sort of blinding flash, and everything went black. I knew nothing more till I woke in hospital."

Noel's eyes were narrowed thoughtfully.

"It certainly sounds like foul play," he admitted. "Frankly, Miss Powers, I don't like it. Does anyone stand to benefit by your failing?"

Betty shook her head.

"No. Lord Bullingham and one or two others are financing the attempt. There is no prize-money at stake."

She glanced at her wrist-watch.

"It's nearly time I started, Mr. Raymond," she breathed.

Noel's hand rested for an instant on her shoulder. He looked into her steady hazel eyes.

"Go ahead, Miss Powers!" he said. "And good luck! I promise you I shan't be far distant. I've already made certain plans, and if there's any attempt to stop you, someone may get more than they bargain for!"

Betty smiled at him gratefully as Noel held

open the door. Calm, though a trifle pale, she walked down the steps of the pavilion, to be greeted by a deafening cheer by the assembled crowd.

They all knew of her previous ill-fated attempts, and they admired her for her indomitable pluck.

Noel did not wait to see the preliminaries of the attempt; he had other, more urgent business. The actual attempt was timed to start at three o'clock; it was a quarter to three now.

Ten minutes later a small but powerful seaplane droned over the heads of the crowds waiting on the beach and circled over Bracombe Bay.

The pilot was Noel Raymond.

With earphones clamped to his head, his hands lightly manœuvring the controls, the young detective gazed down at the animated scene below him.

He had a perfect view of the course and of the big red bell-buoy that marked the tricky turning-point.

The distant crack of a pistol reached his ears; then he heard the staccato voice of the official commentator coming clearly over the ether:

"She's off! I can hardly see the boat for a cloud of spray, but the Silver Rocket's justifying its name. Hark at the crowds cheering! They're almost frantic with delight. Miss Powers' plucky attempt at the world record for the third time is likely to make racing history—"

Noel banked his plane lower, straining his eyes towards the distant jetty.

On the shimmering waters of the bay he could see a bright silver speck, with a long trail of white foam reaching out behind it.

The Silver Rocket was certainly justifying its reputation—or, rather, the reputation of its daring young driver.

Noel, through his binoculars, could see the slim, tense figure crouched at the wheel, almost hidden by the flying spray.

He could imagine her face, pale and tense, her hazel eyes staring through her goggles. She knew the risk she was running, yet, in spite of everything, she meant to go through with it.

The young detective's admiration knew no bounds.

"The girl's a sport!" he breathed. "I'll take care that nothing happens to her this time—"

Once again the staccato voice of the commentator reached her ears:

"She's nearing the turning-buoy; the crowds are silent now—tense and watchful. They're holding their cheers in reserve. It's a breath-taking experience. From where I'm posted, in a coastguard's hut on the dunes, I'll be able to describe exactly what happens as she rounds the buoy—"

A sudden crackle of atmospherics drowned his next words; then, faintly through the spluttering sounds came the announcer's horrified voice:

"Something's wrong! She's swerving madly. I can see a light flashing—"

The voice broke off suddenly, and there came a confused shouting from the crowds on the beach.

Noel, craning from the cockpit, felt the blood drain from his face.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed. "She's lost control!"

He grabbed the joystick, bringing his plane into a swooping nose-dive. The blue waters of the bay rushed to meet him. He could see the ill-fated speedboat zigzagging madly, heading for the big red buoy—and certain destruction.

Other boats were racing to the rescue, but they would never arrive in time. With almost superhuman skill, Noel righted his plane in time to avert a crash. The water hissed and sprayed beneath the floats as the seaplane swept in a wide circle towards the buoy, heading off the runaway speedboat.

Climbing from the cockpit, Noel swung himself over the side on to the floats. He was within a hundred yards of the wildly driven boat; he could see the girl driver's tense, white face beneath her helmet, her expression revealing helpless terror.

She seemed to be driving blindly, as though in the dark, and a collision with the buoy appeared inevitable. Noel clenched his teeth as he clung to the fuselage, grimly awaiting his chance. The zigzagging boat would pass the plane with perhaps a yard or two to spare, and the young detective had decided on a desperate move.

Even as he tensed himself for a spring, he saw the girl release the wheel, flinging her hands up to her face with an agonised cry.

Risking everything, Noel took a wild leap from the fuselage, landing asprawl on the racing boat.

The impact set the boat swerving perilously on its side, but the next moment the young detective had wriggled forward and seized the controls—in the nick of time!

The big red buoy loomed above them, its bell clanging dolefully, as the boat roared past, a few inches only from destruction!

NOEL'S PHOTOGRAPH CLUE

HIS face bathed in perspiration, Noel managed to stop the engine, swinging the boat clear of the buoy. With a little moan, Betty Powers collapsed over the wheel in a dead faint.

Other boats were crowding round now, among them a large motor-launch. Noel caught a glimpse of Mr. Trevelyn, Betty's business manager, and a uniformed police inspector. With them was a grey-haired man who was a stranger to Noel.

A moment later the fainting girl had been lifted into the launch, and Noel had climbed swiftly on to the deck.

Mr. Trevelyn seized the young detective by the hand.

"It was a near shave that time, Raymond!" he said huskily. "If it hadn't been for you—"

"Forget it!" interrupted Noel tersely. "There's something dashed queer at the bottom of all this, and I mean to ferret it out!"

He glanced interrogatively at Trevelyn's companions.

"This is Inspector Saunders of the local police," explained the manager, "and that's Dr. Gifford. I brought 'em with me, just in case, and it's just as well, as it happens."

Noel shook hands with the inspector—a shrewd, alert-looking man, who regarded the young detective with considerable respect.

"I've heard of you, of course, Mr. Raymond," he remarked confidentially. "Lucky thing for Miss Powers you happened to be on the spot. Between you and me, what do you make of this affair?"

Noel shook his head.

"I'll reserve my opinion, inspector," he remarked, "until I've heard the doctor's report."

When Dr. Gifford had examined Betty he shook his head in perplexity.

"It's most amazing, gentlemen!" he remarked. "Undoubtedly a case of temporary blindness, brought on possibly by shock or a sudden glare. The young woman is in no danger, but rest and quiet is essential. It would be inadvisable for anyone to question her at the moment."

Noel whistled softly.

"Temporary blindness—brought on by shock or a sudden glare!" he muttered. "Three times in succession, and each time while rounding the buoy!"

The inspector glanced at him sharply.

"What are you getting at, sir?" he asked curiously. "You've a theory to explain these accidents?"

"Possibly," rejoined Noel, non-committally. "I suggest that Mr. Trevelyn takes Miss Powers back to the shore, while we scout round for a bit, inspector. We'll borrow the young lady's speedboat."

"I'm with you, sir!" declared the inspector enthusiastically.

They climbed down into the Silver Rocket, and Noel took the wheel.

"What's your idea, sir?" asked the inspector, as the speedboat neared the bell-buoy. "You think someone flashed a light from the buoy to dazzle the young lady?"

Noel shrugged.

"It's an improbable theory," he rejoined, "but at the moment I can see no alternative."

He stopped the engine, and the long, gleaming boat slid forward by its own momentum.

The inspector smiled grimly as he nodded to the big black cat mascot, perched in the bows, staring at them with wide, glassy eyes.

"Never did think much of black cats for luck, sir," he commented. "After this I'll think even less of 'em!"

Noel grunted as he manoeuvred the speedboat close to the buoy, and rose to his feet, grasping one of the painted iron rings attached to its side.

"Give me a hand, inspector!" he said tersely.

With the other's aid, Noel clambered on to the buoy, and commenced a painstaking scrutiny. The buoy had recently been painted, and in parts was sticky to the touch. But though Noel contrived to pick up a good deal of red paint on his hands and clothes, he could find no trace of anyone having been there before him.

From his high perch, he scrutinised the shore through his binoculars. The crowds who had thronged the foreshore had practically dispersed, and Noel could see little, except sand-dunes stretching far into the distance, broken only by stunted bushes and clumps of grass.

Then abruptly he stiffened, a soft whistle escaping his lips.

Into the range of his glasses appeared a solitary hut, standing on piles, with some kind of observation window in the front.

"I say, inspector, is that the coastguard's hut?" he demanded.

"That's right, sir," replied the inspector, looking puzzled. "But what—"

"The radio commentator spoke from that hut!" snapped Noel, "and it strikes me the fellow must have seen something. He broke off abruptly, if you remember—"

The inspector snapped his fingers.

"Gosh, you're right, sir! I thought it queer at the time. But if the chap saw anything, why hasn't he reported?"

"That," said Noel tersely, "is what I want to find out. Come on; let's go!"

He sprang back into the speedboat, and, taking the wheel, sent the powerful craft roaring towards the beach.

A few moments later the boat grounded on the sand, and Noel leaped out, followed by the inspector. Together they made their way over the dunes, approaching the lonely coastguard's hut.

The door of the hut stood open, but there was no sign of anyone stirring.

The inspector pointed to the insulated cable recently laid to the hut for the purpose of the broadcast. Noel glanced at it casually; then abruptly he stiffened. Darting forward a few paces, he snatched up the gleaming end of a copper wire.

"Cut!" he snapped. "That explains the break in the broadcast!"

Together they raced for the hut. Noel kicked the door wide and entered, to halt sharply on the threshold, with a swift intake of breath.

Sprawled on the floor of the hut, near a shattered microphone, was a fair-haired young man, an ugly wound on his forehead.

It was the radio announcer. He had been shot, but fortunately the bullet had only stunned him. He was not badly injured.

Whipping out his handkerchief, Noel commenced deftly to bind the young announcer's forehead.

"We're up against a cunning and unscrupulous scoundrel, inspector," he remarked. "Someone who's determined, at all costs, to prevent Miss Powers from gaining the world's speedboat record."

The inspector whistled.

"You think someone shot this young man, because—"

"Because he saw, or heard too much!" snapped Noel. "Precisely! From his observation-window here he had a perfect view of the bay. You heard what he said before he was cut off—something about a light flashing. He'd probably have explained further, but at that moment the cable was cut. Finding that something was wrong, he sprang to the door, to encounter a bullet from the unknown's revolver."

The inspector mopped his forehead.

"There were two of them, then! The chap who played the trick on Miss Powers, and a confederate ashore?"

Noel shrugged non-committally.

"Possibly. I've another theory that's a bit far-fetched—but it can wait for the moment. Meanwhile, we'd better get this young chap off our hands. Perhaps you'd like to have a look round the hut, while I bring the boat in a bit nearer?"

The inspector nodded, and Noel departed on his errand. When he returned to the hut, he heard a sound of excited voices. Inspector Saunders, looking very important, was cross-examining a startled-looking little man, clad in a suit of baggy flannels, and carrying a large camera and tripod.

"Here you are, Mr. Raymond!" called out the inspector triumphantly. "I've got something important! This chap's the beach photographer. He was taking photos of the crowd at the time, and he saw something."

The little man turned excitedly to Noel.

"That's right, sir!" he cried. "I was taking some pictures of the crowd, when I happened to look out to sea. You know that big red buoy, sir—the one with the bell on it—"

"Eh? What about it?" demanded Noel, regarding the other sharply.

"Well, sir, I may be mistaken," replied the photographer cautiously; "but I could ha' sworn I saw someone creeping along the side of buoy, holding something up in his hand as Miss Powers' boat came along, and—"

"There!" interrupted the inspector. "What d'you think of that, Mr. Raymond? It fits my theory to a 'T.' Someone on the buoy, flashing a light into Miss Powers' eyes!"

But Noel did not appear enthusiastic. There was a puzzled frown between his eyes.

"Where did the fellow get to?" he asked. "And how was it he left no traces?"

The inspector waved aside the objections.

"Probably he swam out from one of the boats, and swam back again; meanwhile his confederate ashore, here, was cutting the broadcasting cable. It's as plain as a pike-staff!"

"Perhaps," said Noel dryly. He turned to the nervous photographer. "On which side of the buoy was this figure?" he asked. "Facing the speedboat as it came along from the jetty?"

"That's right, sir," replied the man eagerly. "Directly facing it."

Noel nodded, his eyes narrowing.

"Thanks!" he said quietly. "I'll look into this." He jerked his head towards the hut. "Better help me get the poor fellow down to the boat, inspector."

The injured commentator was carried down to the boat, and made comfortable. The inspector climbed in after him, while the beach photographer took his departure. Frowningly Noel watched the man go.

"You don't think much of his evidence?" the inspector ventured.

"I don't know what to think," said Noel frankly. "Somehow, I can't believe that there was a man on the buoy."

At the same moment a figure emerged from the dunes—a tousled-haired young man, carrying a towel and bathing-costume, his face strained and agitated.

Noel gave him a hail and ran forward.

"Pardon me—but what are you doing here?" he inquired.

The young man glared at him; his good-looking face was a trifle pale beneath his tan.

"What the dickens has that got to do with you?" he retorted.

The young detective looked down at the stranger. He was wearing bathing sandals, and there were sandal marks near the coast-guard's hut!

"It would pay you to answer my question civilly," replied Noel quietly. "The police are making certain investigations here, and—"

"What's that to do with me?" retorted the young man hotly. "Kindly get out of my way—I'm in a hurry!"

As he spoke, he brushed past Noel, and set off at a run along the beach.

Noel's eyes narrowed, but he did not attempt to follow. His hand had flown to the lapel of his jacket, and there was a barely audible "click."

Turning, he made his way back to the boat. The inspector greeted him excitedly.

"Who was that chap, sir? Why did you let him go?"

"I'd no grounds for detaining him," replied Noel. "But I've got his picture."

"You've—what?" demanded the inspector, staring.

Noel smiled grimly as he rolled back the lapel of his jacket—revealing a minute camera, barely larger than a lady's powder-compact, with a rubber tube leading to his pocket.

"It's useful, at times," he said. "Snapshots are a hobby of mine. We'll be able to find that young man—if we want him. Meanwhile, let's be getting back. I'm anxious to have a word with Miss Powers—if she's sufficiently recovered."

An hour later, Noel met the inspector outside the Brancombe Cottage Hospital, where the young speedboat driver had been taken.

"I've got the snap of the young man here," he said, producing a miniature portrait from his pocket. "It's just possible Miss Powers may recognise him."

"It's the chap we're after, all right," declared the inspector, with conviction. "It's as clear as a pikestaff!"

Together they entered the hospital, to be informed that Betty Powers' condition was greatly improved. Her eyesight was expected to be recovered fully within a day or two.

Noel sent up his name, and they were escorted to the private ward—to find that Betty already had a visitor.

Seated in a chair, wrapped in blankets, she was talking cheerfully to her manager, Mr. Trevelyn.

As the newcomers entered, he turned to greet them.

"Ah—I'm glad to see you, gentlemen! Miss Powers is set on making a fresh attempt, as soon as the doctors permit. I've tried to dissuade her, but she won't listen to me—"

"I'm going to win that record, whatever happens!" Betty Powers spoke softly, but emphatically. "It was my last promise to granddad. It's stupid to talk about a deliberate attempt to stop me; who on earth could hope to benefit by such a thing?"

A glint of admiration crept into Noel's eyes as he stepped forward.

"Quite right, Miss Powers," he said briskly.

"I like your spirit. I wish you luck on your next attempt!"

The other two men stared at him in amazement.

"But—" protested the manager.

Noel held up his hand.

"I think that Miss Powers should be given the opportunity to make another attempt," he said, with a meaning glance at the inspector.

"There should be no danger—if we take precautions. Say in about a week's time."

"Oh—thank you!" breathed Betty, holding out her hand impulsively. "I'm glad you're on my side, Mr. Raymond."

But Mr. Trevelyn looked uneasy, and Inspector Saunders was frowning.

"We'd better be pushing off now, inspector," remarked Noel lightly. "But before we go, there's just one thing." He took the miniature portrait from his pocket. "Can you see clearly enough to recognise a photograph, Miss Powers?"



"Do you know this young man?" Noel asked the girl. "Why, it's Frank!" Betty Powers gasped. And to the young detective's surprise, tears filled her eyes.

The girl looked surprised.

"Oh, yes; but what is it all about?"

Noel handed her the tiny portrait, watching her closely.

"Do you recognise this?" he asked.

The girl started, a crimson flush suffusing her face.

"Why, it's Frank!" she gasped. "Where—where did you get it?"

"You know that young man?" demanded the inspector sharply.

The girl bit her lip.

"I—I thought everyone knew; it was all in the papers. We—Frank Clayton and I—were engaged, but I broke off the engagement." Her lips trembled. "He—he didn't approve of my racing. He—he said it was all tommyrot—"

She turned away quickly, biting back her tears.

THE UNKNOWN STRIKES AGAIN!

NOEL'S hand tightened warningly on the inspector's arm, as the latter was about to interject some excited remark.

"Where—where did you get it?" whispered the girl. "I—I've not heard from Frank for ages—"

"It came into my possession by accident," said Noel carelessly. "If you don't mind, I'd like to keep it for a bit—"

He took the snapshot from the girl's reluctant fingers, and a few minutes later he and the inspector took their leave.

"It's as plain as a pikestaff!" declared the inspector. "That young man, Frank Clayton, is the chap we want. The motive's clear—jealousy or pique, or both."

But Noel shook his head.

"Sorry, inspector, but I don't agree. That fellow's still in love with Miss Powers—that's why he looked so upset when I saw him. And Betty Powers is definitely in love with him—in spite of her pride."

"Huh!" The inspector gave a sceptical grunt. "Anyway," he said, "I mean to keep an eye on him. It shouldn't be hard to trace him."

"It certainly won't," agreed Noel. "As a matter of fact, I can help you. He's a pilot at the local aerodrome—I remember seeing his name in the papers at the time the engagement was announced. Now you can do me a favour. Put it round—as tactfully as you can—that Miss Powers is going to make another

trial run next Tuesday afternoon at four o'clock—"

"But," gasped the inspector, staring, "she won't be in a fit state—"

"Quite," agreed Noel dryly. "Miss Powers will be convalescing at the time—out in the country."

"Then who's going to race?" demanded the bewildered inspector.

Noel smiled—a daredevil glint in his eyes.

"I am!" he said.

IT was a sultry, oppressive afternoon; heavy banks of cloud were gathering ominously on the horizon, and there was a hint of thunder in the air.

But that did not deter a large and enthusiastic crowd from assembling on the jetty to witness Betty Powers' fourth attempt at the coveted record.

To the crowd's disappointment the Silver Rocket was not moved to the landing-stage. It entered the bay from around a near-by headland, and its pilot made no attempt to land, but drove straight for the starting-point.

Which was just as well, for it was Noel who sat in the cockpit. Wearing white overalls, a white helmet, and goggles, he crouched low so as to show himself as little as possible. No one must guess that it was not Betty's boyish figure at the wheel.

As he waited for the signal to start, a launch shot alongside. In it was Inspector Saunders. He greeted the young detective with a grin.

"Good-morning, Miss Powers!" he chuckled. "I'm glad to see you've shaved this morning."

Then his face became grim. "I've got several of my men posted in boats, adjacent to the buoy," he went on. "As you suggested, I'm taking Sergeant Burkin and old Norgrove, the beach photographer, along with me; we'll take a few close-ups of the buoy. If anyone tries any monkey-tricks, we'll grab 'em!"

"That's the idea," said Noel. "Hope the storm holds off—that's all."

The launch went off to pick up its other occupants, and a few minutes later the starting pistol cracked, and with a roar the speedboat shot away, quickly picking up speed.

In spite of Noel's smiling assurance to the inspector, his nerves were keyed up. He realised that he was running a risk—but for the sake of the young girl speedboat racer, he was determined to take a chance.

For a time he could see nothing except the driving spray, with occasional glimpses of the small buoys that marked the course.

On the Silver Rocket hurtled—faster and faster!

Now Noel could see the big bell-buoy, looming a quarter of a mile away; and just then the first distant mutter of thunder greeted his ears.

"I'll just about do it before the storm breaks—if I'm lucky!" he muttered into the teeth of the wind.

Noel was letting the speedboat all out; at the terrific pace it was making, the bows almost lifted from the water.

Swiftly he covered the distance to the ill-fated buoy. As he approached it, his hands clenched on the wheel.

Would anything happen?

He swung the wheel, bringing the speedboat in a wide sweep round the buoy. He heard a faint cheer from the crowds collected in the distant boats. And then—

There was a blinding flash of lightning; a deafening thunderclap.

A startled ejaculation escaped Noel's lips as he leaned forward. For he could see nothing—nothing at all! All around him was black as night, as though the daylight had been blotted out by that clap of thunder.

But Noel knew that it was impossible; with a cold thrill of horror he realised the truth.

He had been struck temporarily blind—not by the lightning, but by some dastardly force operated by human agency.

And at that moment he might be racing to destruction!

Frantically, Noel stopped the engine, wrenching at the wheel; but there was no way of stopping the onrush of the boat, carried forward by its own tremendous speed.

A confused shouting reached his ears—a shout of warning. The next instant there was a sickening crash, and Noel was flung violently forward. His head struck the edge of the cabin, and his senses left him.

WHEN Noel opened his eyes he could see only a dim blur; he made out a window, the rail of a bed—and a face bending over him. Inspector Saunders' face.

In a flash memory came back; with a groan the young detective attempted to sit up; but the inspector laid a hand on his shoulder.

"It's all right, Mr. Raymond—take it easy, sir. You're in a nursing-home. The doctor says you'll be all right in a few hours. Those special goggles of yours saved your eyes from the worst effects."

"But what happened?" demanded Noel.

"Goodness only knows, sir! We saw you swerve suddenly—just after that thunderclap; then next moment you had run head-on into the buoy. We dragged you out of the water, but the speedboat's practically wrecked, and the buoy's dented right in. I've given orders for it to be removed; we can't afford to take any more chances."

Noel leaned back, thinking quickly.

"Did you get that photograph of the buoy?" he asked.

The inspector nodded.

"Norgrove's developing it; I'll let you have it as soon as it's done. Think it'll give us any clue?"

"It might," said Noel quietly. "And I've taken a snap which I'll get you to develop privately. I took it just before I crashed; you'll find the camera in my pocket. I'd be obliged if you'd keep it to yourself."

A few minutes later the inspector departed, and Noel, tired of thinking, dropped into a troubled sleep.

When he awoke, the morning sunlight was shining through the windows of his room. There was a green shade over his eyes, but Noel found that he could see quite well. His head ached, but otherwise he felt no ill-effects from his adventure.

A nurse was hovering at the end of his bed. "Inspector Saunders to see you, Mr. Raymond," she announced brightly.

A moment later the inspector entered.

"Look at this, Mr. Raymond!" he barked, thrusting a photograph into Noel's hand. "Old Norgrove, the beach photographer, took it from the motor-boat; I was with him at the time. See that chap crouching on the buoy? That's young Frank Clayton, or I'm a Dutchman!"

Noel stared at the photograph, a strange expression in his eyes.

"It looks like him," he admitted. "What are you going to do about it?"

"Arrest him, of course!" declared the inspector. "I've taken enough chances. Miss Powers is back—and she's announced her intention of making another attempt this evening—in another boat. We'll have young Clayton under arrest before she starts. I've had the buoy removed, too, so there'll be no danger this time."

Noel stared at the photograph, biting his lip.

"In another boat, you say?" he muttered. "She ought to be safe enough. But do me a favour; when you arrest young Clayton I'd like to have a word with him."

"Very well, Mr. Raymond; by the way, here's the snap you took in the boat. Can't make head or tail of it."

Noel reached out eagerly for the tiny snapshot. It was completely black—except for two round blurs of white, for all the world like glaring eyes.

After the inspector had gone, Noel studied the two photographs for a long time—especially the ruined snap.

That afternoon he insisted on getting up, and he went in a taxi to the local aerodrome.

Inspector Saunders met him at the gate.

"We've just arrested young Clayton, sir. He protested his innocence, of course, and created no end of a scene. He was just starting off in his plane—said he was going to watch Miss Powers make her fourth attempt. Bit significant—eh, sir?"

Noel glanced quickly at his watch.

"When does she start?" he asked.

"At five o'clock—and it's close on that now. That's why I had the young fellow arrested."

"You've seen the boat she's going in?" asked Noel quickly.

The inspector chuckled.

"A beauty! The Ruby. The Silver Rocket's not a patch on it. Brand-new, of course. All she's salvaged from the old wreck is that black cat mascot of hers; it was given to her by an old friend of her father's, and she still believes in it—Why, what's up, sir?"

Noel had given a sudden, startled ejaculation; his face was white as death.

"Glaring eyes!" he gasped. "Great Scott, I was mad not to have thought of it before! Saunders—quickly, a phone! We must stop her, at all costs. She's in deadly danger, man!"

The inspector stared blankly, obviously suspecting Noel of having taken leave of his senses.

"It's too late, sir. She'll be starting now any minute!"

"Then I must have a plane!" shouted Noel. "You must release Clayton; he must pilot me! Don't stand there staring, man; it's a matter of life and death!"

A FEW minutes later a powerful plane soared up from the aerodrome. Noel was in the observer's seat, his face white and tense. The young pilot was Frank Clayton.

In a few moments they sighted the sea. Brancome Bay lay beneath them, shimmering in the red rays of the setting sun.

And across the bay, like a crimson streak, with a tail of white foam, came the Ruby—Betty Powers at the wheel!

"Plane down!" rapped Noel in the mouth-piece of his speaking-tube. "As near to the boat as you can."

He climbed from the cockpit, clinging to the fuselage.

With a giddy swoop, the plane dived towards the sea, roaring above the racing speedboat.

Noel, clinging for dear life to the fuselage, saw the girl's white, strained features.

Lower swept the plane, its wheels almost touching the sea. A revolver glinted in Noel's hand. Grimly he raised it and fired—into the glassy eyes of the black-cat mascot!

There was a flash and a faint coil of smoke, vanishing in the flying spray. A moment later Noel had climbed back into the plane.

"Quickly!" he rapped into the speaking-tube. "The coastguard's hut!"

Away droned the plane, while, behind it, the speedboat roared on its way—round the fatal bend, and back on its final lap.

Meanwhile, the plane swept over the beach, flying low. Noel caught a glimpse of the coastguard's hut—and a scurrying figure.

As the wheels of the plane bumped over the sand the young detective leaped clear, pouncing on the running figure of the elderly beach photographer, and bringing the man to the ground.

"The game's up, Norgrove!" he snapped.

With a sudden movement, Noel whipped off the man's wig, revealing a crop of sleek, black hair. Then, bending, he picked up the other's fallen apparatus—the heavy "camera" and tripod.

Jerking open the back of the "camera," he revealed a mass of twisted wires and tubes.

"So that's the mechanism!" he snapped. "A wireless transmitting set, on television lines! It flashes a blinding ray of light through the eyes of the 'mascot' on Miss Powers' speedboat! You'll pay dearly for this, you scoundrel!"

"BUT how on earth did you tumble to it, Raymond?" demanded Inspector Saunders, later that evening.

Noel smiled grimly.

"I suspected Norgrove at our first meeting. He was a bit too explicit about that figure he said he saw clinging to the buoy. Unless he had telescopic eyes, how was it no one else had seen it."

"I hoped to trap Norgrove by taking Miss Powers' place in the speedboat, and getting you to watch him. But the storm assisted him to bring off his trick without being detected. That flash of lightning distracted your attention from the flash that took place as he operated his machine."

"The 'photo' he was supposed to have taken, of course, was a fake. I detected that at once; but it was a long time before I tumbled to the meaning of those glaring eyes on my snapshot—the eyes of the black-cat mascot!"

Noel smiled grimly as he smoothed out a telegram.

"I've just received a wire from young Lord Bullingham, who was one of Miss Powers' backers. Bullingham is a sportsman; he engaged in a bet with a member of his club—a man named James Huntley—that Miss Powers would succeed in gaining the record. If she succeeded, Huntley stood to lose two thousand pounds to Bullingham; if she failed, Huntley would win double that amount! Our cunning friend, Norgrove, is none other than Mr. James Huntley. The apparatus he used in his dastardly attempt he purchased some years ago from a penniless inventor, who has since died, and—well, I think that is about all."

"Not quite," put in young Frank Clayton gruffly, as he stepped forward. "On behalf of Miss Powers and myself, I want to thank you for all you've done for us. Thanks to you, Betty's achieved the record; and we—well, we're going to be married next week!"

"Bravo!" exclaimed Noel, his eyes twinkling. "That's what I like to see!"

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

"THE PHOTOGRAPH THAT ASKED FOR HELP." That is the title of next Friday's thrilling detective story. Make certain of reading it by ordering your GIRLS' CRYSTAL now.

The Happy-go-Lucky Hikers



WENDY'S THRILLING DISCOVERY

"NOTICE to Hikers—" read out Fay Wyndham.

"Ssh!" retorted Wendy Topham. "You're not buying any more shorts, shirts, socks, or shoes. We're hikers, not mannequins—"

"And we're reading something else," added Jill, "so don't interrupt."

Fay flapped her sheet of newspaper excitedly.

"But this is important," she insisted. "Not so important as this," Wendy said.

"And who's leader, anyway?" There was only one answer to that. Wendy was the leader of the hiking club that the three young typists had formed.

Wendy, Jill, and Fay were out on their usual Saturday afternoon hike. Having taken a bus for some twenty miles, they were now not far from the sea. Seated under the shade of a tree, they were enjoying a late lunch, for they had started out immediately their office had closed.

As they ate their sandwiches they read the paper they had been wrapped in.

Fay had been giving vent to exciting murmurs every time she had noticed a bargain in the papers, for Fay was fond of frocks, and took a great deal of care about her appearance.

"Notice to hikers means—buy our best boots," said Jill. "Don't take any notice of Fay, Wendy, read that bit about the millionaire's daughter."

"Fay can read hers afterwards if she sits quiet," promised Wendy, a twinkle in her eyes.

Fay folded her piece of paper and looked mysterious.

"All right," she said. "But you'll be sorry. You'll say—why ever didn't you tell us that before? I bet my last chocolate you do!"

"I bet mine we don't!" said Jill.

"Mine, too," nodded Wendy. "If we lose, you have the last three bits of chocolate, Fay. If you lose, none for you."

And Wendy spread out the paper and read:

"Despite intensified search, no news has yet been received of Geraldine Fletcher, daughter of Hiram G. Fletcher, the steel king, who is visiting England with his family. Geraldine left home after a family quarrel regarding her intention to marry a suitor whom her father considered unsuitable."

"As she took with her the famous diamonds left her by her grandmother, Geraldine has a means of obtaining money, and unless recognised from photographs, might keep her whereabouts secret for some considerable time. The diamonds are worth several thousands of pounds."

"Phew! Thousands of pounds!" exclaimed Fay, her eyes shining. "Wouldn't I just love to be a millionaire's daughter!"

"Apparently they don't have all the fun," said Wendy, "or she wouldn't have left home. I shouldn't say she could sell those diamonds easily."

"Unless her boy could," mused Jill. "I wonder if he really loves her!" Jill was romantic.

"Who cares?" said Fay lightly. "I think love's all twaddle. But think of the clothes she could buy, and a snappy car! My goodness! Perhaps our reward will be a big one—something worth having!"

Wendy and Jill stared at her. This was the first they had heard about a reward.

"Our reward?" asked Wendy, puzzled.

"Notice to hikers," said Fay loftily, holding up her piece of the newspaper. "Perhaps I can read it now! Thanks! Listen, then!" She cleared her throat and began to read: "Notice to hikers.—Will the hikers who were in Pawsey Cove last Saturday afternoon—"

Wendy and Jill interrupted with an excited shout.

"Great Scott! That's where we were last Saturday!"

"Will the hikers who were in Pawsey Cove last Saturday," read on Fay, conscious of her tremendous score, "and found a small snake bangle, please return to the same spot with it, as it has great sentimental value. They will be well rewarded for their trouble."

Jill gaped at Fay.

"Well, why ever didn't you say so before?" she asked, quite crossly.

"Yes, every minute may count," said Wendy.

Fay smirked and held out her hand.

"My reward first, please," she said. "All the chocolate! I've won it!"

Wendy chuckled and gave her the chocolate, then took the paper, and with Jill leaning over her shoulder, she read the notice through again.

"The bangle—it was a funny, clumsy

The bangle the Happy-Go-Lucky Hikers found was only an ugly, worthless trinket. They did not connect it with the disappearance of the millionaire's lovely young daughter. Nor did they suspect the thrilling secret it contained!

This Week:

THE SECRET OF THE BRACELET

By ELIZABETH CHESTER

thing!" she exclaimed. "Did we keep it, after all?"

"You did, yes," said Fay. "It was awful! A frightful thing—terrible taste! I said 'throw it away,' but you kept it."

Wendy snatched up her rucksack and opened it, remembering that she had put the odd looking bangle in it. At the time they had wondered whether to keep it or not. It seemed to be of no value at all, but Wendy thought that possibly it might mean something to the owner, and had saved it from the incoming tide. But they had not met anyone looking for the lost bangle, and it had remained ever since in the rucksack, forgotten.

Wendy, groping, found it and brought it out. It was not pretty, being badly made and unusually thick. Thin silver obviously covered some baser metal, for in one place the thin covering was slightly torn.

"I suppose we shall have to take it back," she mused. "It means something to someone."

Fay took it and tried it on.

"Ugh!" she said, and waggled it on her wrist.

The bangle slipped off, and dropped to the gritty roadway with a thud.

"Whoa! Careful!" said Wendy.

She stooped and picked it up. As she did so a thrill of excitement ran through her.

"My goodness, it's a trick thing! It opens, and there's something inside!"

Jill and Fay, intrigued, hurried to Wendy's side, and all three stared at the gap that showed on the inner surface of the strange bangle.

"It's hinged, and there's a little trapdoor thing," Wendy exclaimed. "My word! It isn't such a cheap, shoddy thing after all. That little trap must be beautifully made if we couldn't even see the joins."

"The bang on the road burst it open. But what's inside?" asked Fay excitedly. "A secret document?"

Fay always had exciting far-fetched ideas. "Nothing much—something that rattles," said Wendy. "We'll see—"

She shook the bangle, cupping her hand under the small, open trapdoor to catch the contents.

And out on to her hand poured a dozen or more flashing, sparkling stones.

"Diamonds!" gasped Fay.

"Loaded with diamonds! Why—there must be a hundred pounds' worth at least," cried Jill. "And to think you've had that in your rucksack for a whole week, Wendy!"

Wendy, her hand a little shaky, carefully poured the valuable gems back into the little trapdoor, and then snapped it shut.

"A hundred pounds—more likely a thousand," she murmured. "Why, one good diamond in a ring can be worth a hundred, and there are more than a dozen here. They look good, too."

There was silence as Wendy tucked the bangle into the pocket of her shorts, and buttoned it in. The same thought was in every mind.

Who had put those diamonds there, and why?

"My goodness, I'd like to see the owner," said Jill. "He or she must have been worrying and fretting—but how did they know we found the bangle? And why didn't they call out?"

Wendy shook her head and, a thoughtful look in her eyes, she picked up the sheets of paper from which she had been reading.

"Millionaire's missing daughter," she mused. "Her grandmother's diamonds. Now, I wonder—"

"The millionaire's daughter!" exclaimed Jill. "My golly! Could these be her diamonds? But why on earth hide them in the bangle—a cheap little bangle? And what is she doing in this lonely place?"

"Just the place to hide!" cried Jill. "I say! Can the girl who advertised possibly be this Geraldine Fletcher? Here, come on, let's get going for the cove."

"Rather!" said Fay. "I say! Aren't we in luck!"

"Yes, if it is Geraldine who advertised," mused Wendy. "But whatever happens, don't give away that we know what the bangle contains! There's just a chance she was kidnapped, and the kidnappers might have advertised—she might have thrown the bangle away—anything may have happened."

Thrilled with excitement, the Happy-Go-Lucky Hikers set off over the fields—heading for that quiet, isolated cove, where they had found the bangle.

THE BANGLE IS CLAIMED!

"WELL, here's the cove!"

Wendy Topham, untired after the fast five miles cross-country ramble, quickened speed, and then cautiously approached the edge of the cliff.

The sea had been visible for the last quarter of a mile. Vivid blue it was, and only slightly ruffled. The tide was coming in, and as Wendy knew, when right in it covered the sand and shingle of the cove completely.

No one had called to them; they had seen no one at all on the cliff-head. And Wendy was on that account somewhat disappointed.

For she had expected the advertiser to be waiting at a spot whence he or she could catch the first glimpse of the hikers.

"Perhaps she doesn't want to be seen," hazarded Jill, panting slightly from their hurried journey. "That makes it all the more certain that it is Geraldine. She wouldn't want us to see her."

Wendy peered over the cliff edge. The beach was some sixty feet below; and the rocks, almost black in colour, were jagged and dangerous. It was a steep descent, but they had made it in safety before.

But there was something else now that instantly took her eye and brought a gasp.

A small yacht was beached on the cove!

"Hallo, look there!" she exclaimed. All three studied the yacht in silence, and Wendy brought out her field-glasses to get a better view of it.

It seemed to be deserted, and it was beached, pushed up against the rocks inshore and jammed there!

"A wreck!" cried Wendy, amazed. "My word, how long has it been there? No one can see the cove from anywhere else along the coast, you know. And this is so lonely, I don't suppose people stray here once in a blue moon."

Wendy, having studied the yacht with great care, turned her attention to the beach.

Footprints showed clearly, but no one was in sight. Then Wendy saw something that brought a startled gasp to her lips.

"There's a message scratched in the sand," she said. "Or rather, part of a message.



"Girls' Crystal" Office,
The Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street,
London, E.C.4.

HALLO, GIRLS,—Here's your Penelope, still in charge, while the Editor is on his holiday.

I had a card from him this morning—and it wasn't at all stiff and starchy as you might imagine a card from an Editor to be. Lots of people put Editors in that severe class with schoolteachers and policemen, you know!

"How are things going?" he wrote. "Hope you didn't leave out a story and present the readers with three blank pages—or fill up with your chatter. The weather is being a brick. The Lake District is certainly grand. Don't work too hard. Remember me to the readers."

I'm certainly working quite hard—but not too hard, by any means. As a matter of fact, I'm quite enjoying sitting at the Editor's desk—which has a much shinier top than mine, anyhow.

I use his inkwell to fill my fountain-pen. It has a silver top, you know—his inkwell, not my pen.

And when a nice author or artist comes in to see me with stories or sketches, I generously offer them one of the Editor's cigarettes!

So, you can see, I'm quite enjoying myself. In fact, I don't like the idea of going back to my own room at all—it hasn't got a nice important PRIVATE notice on the door, as this one has!

But now I must peep into the Editor's book, which gives me the particulars of next week's stories, and tell you something about them.

"THE PHOTOGRAPH THAT ASKED FOR HELP!" is the intriguing title of the Noel Raymond story—a real thriller, if ever there was one.

The photo isn't a talking one, of course—but Noel does receive a photograph of a pretty girl, and across it is written an appeal for aid. A most exciting opening to a story that will absolutely absorb you from the first line.

The complete story featuring that merry trio, the Happy-Go-Lucky Hikers, is one that you'll certainly enjoy. For, in it, Wendy & Co. set off on another of their care-free hikes, but soon come across adventure in a ruined castle.

Susie tries out an exciting new shampoo in next Friday's story of our cheery work-girl. And what a shampoo! It makes her own and her workmates' hair look delightful. Susie's thrilled, for this shampoo was made by her own cousin, Phyl.

When Miss Wickens sees what this shampoo does, she insists on using it, too. But, in Miss Wickens' case, the results are certainly not so happy. Her hair goes GREEN! It's not the shampoo's fault, of course—but you can trust the spiteful Miss Wickens to make out that it is!

Our three serials will be as absorbing as ever, too, so mind you order the GIRLS' CRYSTAL in advance to make sure of having your copy next Friday.

Cheers!

Your Editress for a week,

PENELOPE

Actually only three letters are visible—H...I...K."

"H...I...K," repeated Fay. "Why, that must stand for 'hikers'! The message is meant for us, but whoever wrote it was interrupted!"

She stood up and gave a call.

In response to the shout a figure appeared from the far end of the beach—an old woman dressed in shabby clothes. A basket was on her arm, and it was evident that she was beachcombing, picking up what she could find.

Seeing the girls, she waved.

"Hikers!" she called, cupping her hands to her mouth.

"Yes—we've come in answer to the advertisement," called Wendy. In a whisper to her chums, she added:

"If she's the one who advertised she'll know what I mean!"

The old woman called back.

"You've got the bangle?"

The Happy-Go-Lucky Hikers exchanged rather surprised glances.

"Then she is the advertiser!" cried Jill.

"What, that old woman own a thousand-pound bangle? Bosh!" said Fay.

"She may be acting for the owner," suggested Wendy. "Anyway, let's go down."

It was a nerve-racking descent, but Wendy loved climbing. She put her feet carefully, selecting strong footholds before resting her full weight, and as she went down, she warned the others of possible dangers.

Jill followed, and Fay came last. Fay's chief concern was to avoid scratching her shoes, or spoiling her shorts, and it made her climb twice as difficult.

But at last all three of them safely gained the level, and the old woman approached, her shawl held so that it almost hid her face.

Wendy's quick eyes took stock of her, and the first thing she noticed was that the hand that held the shawl was not as old-looking as the woman's appearance had first given her to think.

"You've got the bangle, dearie?" asked the old woman quaveringly.

"Yes," Wendy nodded. "Was it you who advertised?" she asked.

"I did. I saw you pick it up, but I couldn't call out. You were too far away, and I'm old. When I got to the spot, you'd gone. And it's my daughter's bangle. It's not worth more than a few shillings, but it means much to her on account of who gave it her."

She held out her hand, and showed half-a-crown.

"The reward?" asked Wendy.

Fay blinked a little, disappointed, but Wendy shook her head in refusal.

"We don't want a reward," she said. "But are you sure the bangle isn't valuable?"

"Oh, no! Hardly worth anything," said the old woman.

Wendy took out the bangle, but as she held it out, Fay gave a cry of protest.

"Don't give it her, Wendy!" she gasped. "I don't believe it does belong to her at all!"

The old woman scowled, and then, like lightning, her hand darted out and snatched the bangle.

"Stop!" cried Wendy sharply. "I want proof that it is yours—"

She made a snatch at the woman and caught her shawl. But, with a quick turn, the woman released her shawl, spun free, and then broke into a run.

She picked up her old black skirt and ran like a champion. The Happy-Go-Lucky Hikers sped after her, but they were tired by the long hike, and the rock climbing. The fugitive gradually increased her lead, and suddenly vanished behind the rocks that hid the entrance to a path up the cliff.

"Oh, my goodness, she's got away!" panted Fay. "And she's taken the diamonds with her! She's not old at all! She's a fraud—a thief!"

Though breathless, she and Jill would have run on, but Wendy called them back.

"It's all right," she said, and to her chums' amazement, she was smiling. "She's not as clever as she thinks she is! I twigged she wasn't an old woman almost at once, and she hasn't got the diamonds!"

"Not got the diamonds?" Fay and Jill stared blankly.

"But she snatched the bangle from you!"

protested Fay. "And I saw you put the diamonds back in it myself!"

"But you didn't see me take them out," grinned Wendy. "I thought things over as we came along; and I decided that hundreds of pounds' worth of diamonds couldn't be given to anyone who asked for them. In fact, our duty is to go to the police."

Fay looked dashed.

"Oh! And you kept all that to yourself. I call it mean!"

"I suppose it was," confessed Wendy. "But, you see, three might have given it away more easily than one. We still have the diamonds, and we know there's crooked work afoot. Tell you what—let's have a look aboard that yacht. I've a feeling that that's got something to do with this mystery."

Turning, they walked back towards the derelict boat. The tide was coming in fast, and already the rudder was awash.

"My word, it will be afloat soon!" exclaimed Wendy.

"Never mind, let's have a look over it," urged Jill. "We could have our tea aboard. That'd be fun. And if we don't find anything connected with the mystery, we can hand the diamonds to the police on the way home."

"And you can take a snap of me," added Wendy, "leaning over the gunwale. We can show it round at the office, and if the photo only shows the deck and the sea, everyone will think we were cruising!"

"That's an idea," chuckled Wendy. "Just to make Miss Ranser mad."

Miss Ranser was the extremely superior head typist who was always going for a cruise, but, through some hitch at the last minute, never went.

"But don't forget you've got all those diamonds, Wendy," warned Fay, with a slight shiver of alarm. "If you lose them—"

"Myes!" agreed Wendy. "Perhaps it is risky. We ought to hand them over to the police as soon as possible. But I would like to explore that yacht, and see what it's like!"

But as they got close to it, they saw it give a sudden lurch.

"It will float at any minute," said Jill.

"And drift back to sea! The wind's off-shore," added Fay, in alarm.

They stood silent, watching. Every minute seemed to bring the yacht nearer to the floating point. They could hear the timbers groaning as it chafed the rocks. Possibly it was already holed, doomed once afloat to drift out to sea, and then slowly go down.

In awed silence, they stood there, thrilled by this unusual sight, and wondering why no one was here to give a hand, no coastguards, none of the crew.

"If they've left it, it must be just a wreck," declared Fay. "Perhaps, after all, we'd better not chance going aboard it. We might be caught on it when it floats, and drift out to sea."

As all three stood there, hesitating, from the boat came a sudden sound of life—the plaintive howl of a dog!

"My goodness, the poor thing must be shut in down below!" cried Wendy. "That settles it! We've got to go aboard. We can't leave the dog to drown."

And she scrambled over the rocks, waded through the foam-flecked water, determined to board the lurching, grinding boat.

THE PRISONER ON THE YACHT

THE yacht was afloat by the time Wendy reached it, and she realised that it was damaged and unseaworthy. In one side was a mighty tear, made by the jagged rocks. Listing badly, the yacht was, nevertheless, afloat, and the wind had caused it to drift a little.

It was a yard from the rock where she stood, and, with the sail fluttering in the breeze, it was moving back slowly, bobbing up and down in the waves.

"Wendy, look out!" yelled Fay. "It's holed!"

But Wendy took a jump, and her hand clutched a rail. Clinging on, she climbed up and swung over on to the deck. The dog's howls had increased, and she called to it comfortingly.

On the sloping deck, she found that it was not easy to stand up, but on hands and knees she worked her way to a doorway. Clutching for support, she hurled the door open and stumbled down a flight of stairs.

The dog was below, and, guided by its piteous howling, Wendy groped her way down the short companionway to the small saloon.

A narrow gangway led aft, and she went along it to a cabin, the door of which was vibrating under a dog's fierce scratching.

"All right, old chap! I'll soon get you out!" she cried.

She tugged at the cabin handle, pushed the door, and a small dog rushed out, leaping up at her in a frenzy of excitement.

"This way, old fellow!" said Wendy, stooping and patting him. "Nothing to worry about now. You'll soon be safe. Come on, laddie."

She climbed up the companionway, losing her foothold once as the yacht lurched crazily. Jill and Fay, who had also scrambled aboard, looked anxious.

the dog, who was pawing at her in frenzied excitement, and told him he, at least, could swim the distance.

But the dog now turned and hurried down the companionway, barking excitedly.

"Oh, the stupid!" said Jill. "It's awash down there. Wendy, you can't go down again and—"

"The boat'll sink before you can get up," panted Fay in panic. "Don't go, Wendy!"

But Wendy, at the head of the companionway, stood tense, staring down. The dog's manner was strange; his excitement unusual. No dog would prefer to go into the darkness of a sinking ship without reason. A more natural instinct would be for him to jump, unless—

"There is someone there!" insisted Wendy, in an awed tone.

"Down—down in the ship!" cried Jill. "Oh, no. They'd call out, unless—" She broke off with a gasp. "Unless they were—were unconscious!"



Wendy shook the bangle. Out of the clever little trapdoor poured a dozen or more sparkling gems. "Diamonds!" gasped Fay.

"Quick, Wendy!" called Jill. "We're leaving the rocks. Drifting off!"

Wendy turned back, gathered the dog in her arms, and climbed again. Jill and Fay helped her up on to the deck. And then all three looked in dismay at the rocks against which the yacht had been pinned.

Already they were twenty or thirty yards away. The yacht was afloat in the cove, and drifting towards the open sea.

Below, water gurgled. The lower deck was awash! Through that jagged hole water was forcing its way. It was only a matter of time before the small vessel would sink!

"We'll have to swim for it," said Wendy. "It's the only way!"

Jill crawled to the lower gunwale on the port side. The yacht listed badly to port, and there was only a short drop to the water.

"We were crazy to come aboard!" declared Fay. "Plumb crazy! I can't swim more than a hundred yards."

"Fay!" said Wendy, in horror, staring at her friend. "You don't mean that? You said you could swim a quarter of a mile."

"I can't. I was swanking," said Fay, her face white as chalk. "And look! We're more than a hundred yards out—"

Jill looked at Wendy.

"We could do it between us," she said tensely.

Wendy put down her hand to push away

The dog rushed to the foot of the companionway, splashing through the water, then barked again. It was nearly crazy with excitement.

"There is someone there," insisted Wendy. "I've got to go down."

She dragged her arm free from Fay's grip, turned, and clattered down the companionway.

"Anyone there?" she called.

There was no reply, but Wendy went from door to door, searching. The cabins were dishevelled, and had obviously been stripped of everything of value. Then she came to one door that would not open. She banged on the panels and called. To her alarm, from the other side, came a faint moan.

"Golly! There's someone locked in here!" she gasped, and desperately she hurled herself against the door. Fortunately, the lock was a flimsy one, and after a struggle, she managed to force it open. The door lurched open, and Wendy almost fell into the cabin.

Panting, she looked around, the water washing around her ankles; then an excited barking from the dog sent her rushing across to the far corner. Lying there was a girl, wearing flannel trousers and a sweater. She moaned as Wendy knelt beside her and lifted up her head, but her eyes remained closed.

Scooping up some water in her hands,

Wendy dashed it in the girl's face, and after a moment or two she blinked open her eyes and looked dazedly around.

"They've gone!" she muttered. "The wretches, to leave me locked up—and I thought they were my friends!"

She gave a shiver, then, for the first time, seemed to become aware of Wendy's presence. "Stand away!" she panted. "They've stolen my diamonds!"

Weakly she struggled to her feet.

"Why—who are you?"

"I'm Wendy Topham, and there's no need to worry about your diamonds," said Wendy. She smiled comfortably at the girl. "You are Geraldine Fletcher, aren't you? I thought so"—as the other girl nodded. "Well, let me help you. The sooner we get out of here the better."

At that moment Jill called frantically from the top of the companionway:

"Wendy! Wendy—come quickly! We're over three hundred yards from the beach!"

Down the stairs she came running, Fay behind her. At sight of the dazed girl in flannels they both pulled up in surprise.

"It's Geraldine," explained Wendy. "We've found her—but it looks as though it's too late."

Geraldine shook herself, and then felt her head tenderly.

"I caught my head a nasty crack," she gasped. "I—I think I must have fainted. But where are my diamonds?"

Wendy, clinging to a rail for support, took from her pocket the diamonds wrapped in her handkerchief.

"Here they are," she said. "I'd rather you took charge of them."

Geraldine clutched the handkerchief, and could feel the stones through the soft material.

"You saved them—tricked her!" she cried. "Oh, you wonder!"

She smiled gratefully at Wendy; then the yacht gave another violent lurch, and they had to hang on for dear life.

The boat was heading straight for the open sea. Every moment increased their danger, and Wendy knew that every second was precious. She looked inquiringly at Jill, and Jill nodded. Between them they could manage Fay, help her to struggle to the shore. But what about Geraldine?

"Can you swim?" Wendy asked her. "It's all that's left to us."

Geraldine, now composed, gave a nod, and led the way back up to the deck.

"Don't jump!" she cried. "I'll run her ashore. Lend a hand to swing her round. Do what I tell you and we'll be safe."

The millionaire's daughter was a keen yachtswoman, and she knew enough to turn the craft and run it aground on the level stretch of beach beyond the cove. Wendy, Jill, and Fay became for the first time in their lives seawomen. They obeyed orders; they hauled on the ropes and managed the sail, while Geraldine took charge of the helm.

The water-logged yacht answered the call, and, though her port rails were almost under water, she headed for the beach at surprising speed. There was a rumbling underneath as the keel grounded on the shingle, and Jill, unprepared for the sudden loss of speed, was shot overboard. As she struck out for the shore Geraldine turned to the others.

"Jump for it!" she cried.

They jumped, less than fifty yards from the land.

A minute later all four, also the dog, were on the beach, gasping and panting.

"All safe?" Geraldine asked shakily.

"All safe," nodded Wendy. "And now—now—"

Geraldine shrugged her shoulders.

"And now—back to pop for me, I think, now that the diamonds are safe. I made a runaway. I've been a fool. That's all about it, and I may as well be honest. People I thought were pals were really crooks, wanting these diamonds. And but for you they'd have had them!"

Wendy nodded, frowning.

"Yes, that old woman wasn't really old at all. I guessed that. But were you kidnapped?"

"It's a long story," said Geraldine slowly. "I ran away—or thought I did, but in a sense I was being kidnapped."

Not until they had obtained shelter in a near-by cottage and had had their clothes dried did Wendy & Co. hear full details of Geraldine's adventure. About her reason for running away the millionaire's daughter kept silent, nor would she give any further account of her supposed friends whose treachery had been responsible for all her troubles. But at least she told them how she had lost the bracelet.

When, too late, she had learnt that her supposed friends on the yacht intended to try to trick her out of the diamonds she had hidden them in the old, hollow bracelet.

The day Wendy & Co. had visited the cove the yacht had been anchored out of sight round the mainland. Geraldine had tried to escape, but had been followed, and during the struggle on the beach the bracelet had fallen off and been lost.

"But how did you know hikers had found it?" asked Wendy. "We didn't see you."

"No, they heard you coming and hid in a cave, keeping me a prisoner," explained Geraldine. "They didn't know how valuable the bracelet was until later. Then, when they discovered the diamonds were hidden in it, they kept me a prisoner aboard the yacht and put that advertisement in the paper."

She paused and sighed bitterly.

"Last night," she continued, "the yacht ran ashore—on those rocks. All the crew except that supposedly old woman went away. But she remained behind to guard me; then, when she saw you approaching, she went to claim the bracelet. I struggled with her, but I slipped and fell. I—I must have caught my head a nasty crack. When I came round—But you know the rest."

Wendy nodded and smiled cheerfully.

"Well, all your troubles are over now," she said.

The Happy-Go-Lucky Hikers said good-bye to Geraldine at the railway station, for she was bound for London, and they for their home town in the Midlands. But that was not the last they heard of her, for Geraldine wrote them a charming letter of thanks, and in it was a cheque and a covering letter from Geraldine's father.

The cheque was a contribution to the funds of the hiking club with which to buy equipment. Jill, being the club treasurer, wrote the letter of thanks, and the hiking club had the kind of outing Fay really enjoyed—at the Stores!

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

Wendy & Co. will entertain you again next Friday. Don't miss their next hiking adventure. Better order your GIRLS' CRYSTAL in advance.

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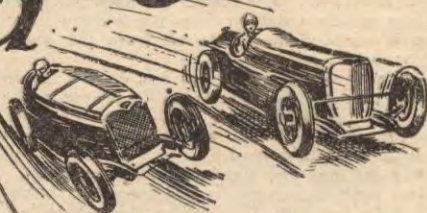


No. 599





The Schoolgirl Speed Star



A GALLANT RACE

PAT SUMMERS, head girl of Ivydale School, had a great ambition to be a racing motorist. So she was thrilled when wealthy Joshua Fingleton offered her the chance to race his car, the Crimson Comet—especially as Miss Clifton, the head-mistress, gave her permission, as this was Pat's last term at school.

Mr. Fingleton made his generous offer on one condition—that Pat should be responsible for his daughter Julie, a new girl at the school.

Gladly Pat promised to do this, little guessing what a wilful, troublesome girl Julie was.

She made things very difficult for Pat at times, but Pat stuck by her promise and tried to make Julie settle down at the school.

Pat won her first two races in the Crimson Comet, but her position in the school became more difficult than ever, for, thanks to the scheming of Alice Smailes, who wanted to be head girl herself, most of the prefects turned against her.

As a result of a foolish escapade, Julie fell over the edge of a cliff. Pat rescued her, but Mr. Fingleton blamed her for his daughter's accident, and he took the Crimson Comet away from her.

In the next race Bert Preedy drove Mr. Fingleton's car. Pat discovered that he intended to lose, so, when he put in at the pits, she jumped into the cockpit, and drove off before anyone could stop her. She meant to finish the race herself!

SHE'D got to win! Got to!

So Pat Summers told herself as grimly, with determination, she caressed the wheel of the Crimson Comet.

Yet what a task she had set herself! What a colossal leeway to make up.

The race was already half over, and Bert Preedy, from whom she had stolen the car because he had been deliberately losing the race, had allowed the foremost car to get over three laps ahead. Could she do it?

Pat's common-sense told her that the race was as good as lost. Bert Preedy had made certain that the Crimson Comet should lose this race long before he had brought the Comet into the pits.

Pat's eyes were steady now. Beneath her the Comet throbbed, sending out a roar, as though of pleasure, at finding itself controlled once again by the mistress for whom it had done such daring deeds in the past.

Every eye was upon her now—this figure in the schoolgirls' uniform, who, lagging well behind the tail of the leaders, was taking that forlorn chance.

Everybody, of course, guessed Pat's intention. Everybody was watching her keenly, not even interested now in the exploits of the leading Alvis. And everyone was shaking their heads.

In the pits a silence had fallen. Tense, hushed, expectant. There was a flame in the

eyes of Grace Campbell of the Fourth Form at Ivydale, an unusual pallor in the cheeks of Evelyn Terry, while Thelma Wayne looked as if she were going to faint with sheer excitement.

"Look!" Evelyn muttered.

Pat was half-way round the course now—and going all out. She had no eyes, no ears, for anything but the Comet then. Her eyes were narrowed to screen them from the wind which roared into her face free from goggles. Her lips were tight; her whole body so taut and rigid that it might have been set in a steel frame. Before her the needle quivered and danced. Seventy—eighty—eighty-five—ninety!

In any other race Pat's heart would have leapt at that speed; but not now. The Comet could—and should—do more. And, pressing until it seemed that her accelerator foot must go through the floorboards, she exerted every ounce of her energy.

Ninety-five—ninety-six—and Pat began to feel an inward glow. Oh, Comet! Speed on, Comet! Keep it up!

Like a gun the comet roared round the track—again—again. People in the stands were beginning to rub their eyes. Bert Preedy, watching from the pits, was gritting his teeth. Near him Grace, Evelyn, and Thelma were beginning to hug each other with delight.

And then—now look at Pat! Oh, the speed, the grace of that Comet! What a car! Was it a piece of human mechanism, or was it a streak of lightning?

Gosh, what speed! What a marvel of a driver!

The last car was caught up now. Whoosh! And Pat was past it, leaving the thing just standing. Hot after the next one she went, caught it, went whizzing past it with a crash

The crowd on the motor-track gazed spellbound. What an amazing change had come over the Crimson Comet since Pat Summers had taken Bert Preedy's place at the wheel! Slowly but surely the wonder car was overhauling its rivals. The Fourth Form spectators held their breath. Could their beloved head girl possibly win?

By HAZEL ARMITAGE

that made the other seem to be merely crawling. Now the third—the fourth!

Involuntary the cheer that arose. "Bravo! Bravo! Bravo! Great Scott, what a car! What driver!"

Pat did not hear. Pat did not see. She knew she was going well. She knew the Comet must be breaking its own records. But she was not satisfied. She would not be satisfied until, with the rest of the field lagging behind her, she had caught up with the leader.

Now she was in the straight, with the Comet fairly ripping along. On the bend, taking it high up, as usual, to cut off the Mercedes, which started the circle with her—zoo-o-coom! Down the banking towards the inside of the straight, cutting every inch of the track she could.

Now five cars were caught, passed. Now six, seven, eight!

The crowd, who had never allowed its attention to stray from Pat from the moment she had snatched the car from Bert Preedy's possession, found itself watching with fascinated eyes the figure of the tunic-clad schoolgirl. In Jim Mace's pit Grace Campbell & Co. were dancing up and down.

"She'll do it!" crowed Grace.

But would she? Long time to go yet. In front of Pat were still five cars, and only six laps to go. Now, Comet! And Pat set her teeth as she fairly jumped on the accelerator, braking slightly as she took the bend, and roaring on again.

Now, here was the car lying fifth; she caught it. For fifty—a hundred yards—the driver kept beside her, then she was away again.

"Pat! Pat!" screamed Grace. "Go it, Pat!"

The next car was the fourth. Then the third. By Jove, the girl was a miracle! All three were now in a bunch. Amazed motorists were rubbing their eyes. Thelma was pretending to swoon with excitement. Grace's face was white. Two laps to go—two cars to beat. Could she?

Tensely Pat gripped the wheel. Malcolm Cobb had said there were no ace drivers in this race—no cars better than the Comet. It wouldn't have been a difficult race for Pat to win—if Bert Preedy had not set out deliberately to lose.

But in spite of that there was still a chance. The Comet, running as it had never run before, seemed to be gaining speed with every moment. Not a split second must she lose. Not an inch must she drop behind.

The second car was fifty yards away. Pat felt electric needles of excitement pricking her skin all over. Now the bend—with the car in front braking just a little too gently, and so losing speed; with Pat taking almost desperate

risks, zooming up the banking without touching her foot brake at all.

Too late the car lying second saw his rival. That glimpse of Pat proved his own undoing. At that red-hot speed it was folly to take his attention off the wheel for even the millionth part of a second.

Down the bank he went in a slithering skid, just managed to wrench his machine right before gently crashing into the narrow fencing which divided the track from the green arena in the centre.

Pat was second. She had just over a lap in which to win. But could she do it—could she do it? The Alvis was still going flat out, leaving a trail of blue smoke behind it. Pat wondered at that trail.

She did not like the look of it, somehow. But here they were, round the bend, entering upon the last lap. The Alvis was two hundred yards ahead now. Pat's foot ached with the strain of ramming the accelerator pedal into the floor, but she kept it there, noticing that she was overhauling. In the stands came a cry.

"Comet! Comet! Come on!"

"Look!" shrieked Grace. Look! Spectators were not only looking. They were holding their breaths now. Rum-um-um-umph! R-r-r-r! Torpedoes on wheels, the two cars hurtled along the track.

Now the next bend, with Pat only a matter of thirty yards behind. Now along the straight, with the next, and the very last, bend ahead. Twenty-five—twenty yards—

But halo! What was this? Then suddenly excitement was changed to horror. Something was wrong with the Alvis. There came a sudden report like a gunshot. Pat had a moment's vision of the driver almost standing up, desperately pulling at the wheel. With a howl the Alvis went into a giddy semi-circular skid, and at the same moment a sheet of flame leapt up from its bonnet. There came a shriek from Grace.

"Pat—Pat! Look out, Pat!" Silence! Frantic, stifled silence! With eyes staring with dreadful fascination, the crowd gazed. There in the middle of the track the flaming Alvis stood. Hurtling towards it—right on to it—was Pat! It seemed that nothing could prevent the most ghastly, shattering collision.

But something did. That something was Pat's supreme mastery of her car. Not for one tiny fraction of a second did she lose her head. Quickly her foot sought the brake; just in time she pulled the car round—pulled it with a jerk that almost tore her arm from her socket and sent the Comet slithering, with only a foot to spare, away from the wreck towards the upper part of the banking.

Too late, however, Pat tried to regain control. Too late pulled the wheel back. By that time the front wheels were over the rim of the concrete banking, madly revolving in the soft sandy soil there, sending by churning showers of dirt beneath the framework. She looked back.

And saw—That car which had been third was rushing round the last bend, into the straight, towards the winning-post—the victor. She saw the driver of the burning car leaping out, running towards the grass.

She had lost! Lost, yes! For a moment she shook her head. For a moment, feeling the strain, she almost collapsed over the wheel. Instinctively Pat shut off the engine. Instinctively looked back. The crowd was roaring—not for the victor, but for her!

"Bad luck, Comet! Bad luck! Your race! Your race!"

It would have been her race! Pat sighed. Well, no good crying over spilt milk, she told herself. Wearily she rose, climbing on to the track. At the same moment there was a rush. Jim Mace, Jimmy Walsh, half a dozen other mechanics, and Grace, Thelma, and Evelyn were surrounding her, faces flushed with excitement.

"Pat, marvellous!" Jimmy Walsh said. "By Jove, what a display! What a race!"

Pat smiled tremulously.

"But I didn't win!" she pointed out.

"You didn't win—no!" Jim Mace put in.

"But it was your race. Barring that accident,

you'd have won by fifty yards or more. I've never seen anything like it. Just the luck of the game, Pat. Just the luck—"

"Just the luck—a dashed bit of bad luck, too!" a voice put in. And Grace and Evelyn parted to make way for the driver of the Alvis, whose burning car was now dissolving in clouds of pungent smoke in the middle of the track. "Miss Summers, you'd have had me beaten," he said gallantly. "Naturally, I'm sorry about my own car burning up, but I wouldn't have had it happen just then for worlds—for you deserved to win. Will you shake?"

Pat laughed. "And will you," another voice put in, "shake with me as well, Miss Summers?" And here came the winner, shaking his head but beaming all over his face. "I hardly knew whether you were driving a car or a rocket when you passed me on the third lap from the end, and although your bad luck has given me the victory—why, I'd hand it over to you willingly if the rules would allow. I hope I know when I'm beaten, and I was beaten then, if ever I was. Congratulations, Miss Summers—not only on your car, but on your driving. Superb!"

And Pat was laughing now. Grace & Co., shining-eyed, were hugging each other. Pat was beaten—but what a glorious defeat! Still the crowd was roaring, still shouting her name, the name of her car. If Pat had lost she had done more that day to enhance her own popularity than she had ever done before.

Until—Still surrounded, forgetful for the moment of all the circumstances which had led up to this race, another figure stormed on the scene—the dark-faced, furious Bert Preedy, accompanied by the chief steward of the track.

With a savage thrust, he caught Grace, hurling her aside. With a fling of his arm sent Evelyn Terry reeling. Then he stood before Pat, his little eyes gleaming.

"You—you thief!" he snarled.

Pat stiffened. "That was my car—my race!" Preedy stormed. "If you had won that race, Pat Summers, it wouldn't have been yours. Steward, I lodge a protest here and now. I demand that this girl be warned off the track for stealing another competitor's car and robbing him of victory!"

Pat's eyes gleamed. The others drew aside, silent now, but every face filled with sympathetic compassion for the girl who had fought and lost so gallantly.

"And if," she bitingly retorted, "I hadn't taken that car—what then? Would you have won, Bert Preedy? Would you have come anywhere near to winning?"

"I'm sorry, but I'm afraid," the steward spoke heavily, "that doesn't enter into the matter, Miss Summers. Whatever your excuse, the fact still stands. Without Preedy's consent, or the consent of the owner of the car, you deliberately took possession of the Comet, and, contrary to every rule, ran it in this race. Even if you had won," he added, "you would probably have been disqualified. As it is—"

He shook his head. His face seemed to indicate that he was carrying out an unpleasant duty.

"As it is," he finished, "it is my duty to tell you that your action will be reported to the board of the race track, and until you appear before the track committee you are suspended from taking part in further races. I am sorry, but—you understand?"

Pat's lips compressed. She flashed a look of scorn at Bert Preedy.

"I understand!" she said.

NO SUPPORT FROM THE PREFECTS

"BUT, Pat, what will it mean?" Grace Campbell asked, as, in the bus, she and Pat, Evelyn Terry and Thelma Wayne, sped back towards Ivydale—the Comet, in Joshua Fingleton's absence, remaining at the track. "Pat, it won't mean awful trouble for you, will it, being called before the board?"

Pat sighed a little. She, too, was pondering that problem. She shrank from the ordeal that was to come, but she was not afraid of it. In Jim Mace and Jimmy Walsh she would have good supporters.

"It won't mean an awful lot of trouble," Pat replied. "I can make out a good case for myself. If I don't—"

"If you don't, Pat?" Evelyn asked eagerly. "Then"—Pat shrugged—"my licence may be taken away."

"Oh!" Thelma said, and bit her lip. "But, Pat, it won't come to that! It can't come to that, can it? Look here, suppose we speak up for you?"

But Pat smiled at that, touched by its spirit, but shaking her head. It was hardly possible that the board would listen to three junior schoolgirls, however ardently those junior schoolgirls may plead her case.

"I don't think we need worry," she said now. "It was pretty obvious to anybody who could see that Preedy wasn't trying. All the same, it's like him to insist upon an inquiry; and an inquiry on the track is just about equivalent to being put in the punishment-room at Ivydale. But, there," she added "don't let's worry any more. I'll tell you all about it when the meeting takes place. And here," she added, as the bus came to a standstill, "is Ivydale School. Out you jump, girls!"

And out they all jumped, to be met on the steps of the school by Lena Grange. Lena smiled.

"Miss Clifton wants to see you, Pat," she told Ivydale's head girl. "No, don't look alarmed"—as Pat glanced at her quickly. "I don't think it's anything grim."

Pat nodded. For a moment she wondered if the mutinous prefects, Alice Smailes & Co., had been taking advantage of her absence to further their own cause.

She darted away at once. Miss Clifton, the headmistress, greeted her with a smile. She came to the point almost at once.

"You may have heard, Patricia, that we have a new governor. He was elected yesterday by the Board. I have received an intimation from Sir George Fall, our chairman, that in the near future the new governor will visit the school for the usual introduction and inspection. I do not know exactly when they will arrive, but I wish to be prepared, Patricia. Naturally, we must give them a good reception. Naturally, we shall have to give some sort of display. So will you summon a meeting of the prefects, Patricia, for seven o'clock this evening?"

Pat bit her lip. "I shall be there," Miss Clifton said swiftly. "Very well, Miss Clifton," Pat said.

She went off at once—not without misgivings, however. Though she had not worried Miss Clifton with the prefects' strike, Miss Clifton must have been fully aware that the strike was on.

She went off to seek Lena Grange. Lena frowned when she heard.

"But they won't obey, Pat. You know what they say—they'll take no orders from you."

"Well, this isn't my order; it's Miss Clifton's," Pat returned. "Anyway, let's tell them."

She went straight away to Alice Smailes' study. Alice was there, talking to Lila Horrocks and Vera Dalton. She looked up with a cold stare as Pat entered the study.

"Well, what do you want?" she snapped.

Pat controlled herself with difficulty. "There's to be a meeting of all prefects at seven o'clock this evening," she said, "in the rec. Miss Clifton has something to say to you."

"Then why," Alice demanded, "can't Miss Clifton come and tell us herself?"

"Because, as the head girl, I'm telling you!" Pat said, and walked out.

From there she called on each of the other prefects, who received her news either in silence or with defiance.

Still, even they could hardly disregard Miss Clifton's wishes, Pat told herself. They'd turn up all right.

But they didn't. Lena and Pat were in the rec at seven o'clock. Miss Clifton came along. She blinked when she saw that the rest of the prefects were not there.

"Patricia, did you tell them?"

"Yes," Pat said, crimsoning.

"But where are they?"

"They refused to come under my orders, Miss Clifton," Pat said. "You may remember that they are on strike against my leadership."

Miss Clifton eyed her. For a moment she

looked agitated. Then she pursed her lips and looked stern.

"Where may I find them?"

"In Alice Smailes' study."

Miss Clifton thanked her with a curt nod. Off she went, leaving Pat and Lena looking in uneasy silence at each other. Five minutes went by—ten. Then Miss Clifton, with heightened colour, came in. She was followed this time by all the rebels.

"Alice, close the door," she said quietly. "I think, before we do anything else, that we had better settle this matter. Patricia, I had hoped you would be able to manage this without further interference from me. Apparently, however, these girls are still antagonistic towards you. They still maintain that you put the juniors before them—that you allow your motor-racing interest to interfere too much with your duties as head girl."

"Yes," Pat said, a trifle wearily. "And do they still demand my resignation?"

"That's it," Alice nodded.

"So that Alice will take my place!" Pat said bitterly.

"Patricia!"

"Well, isn't that right?" Pat was stung to retort.

The headmistress eyed her reproachfully.

"Patricia, please!" she cried. "It is true that if you resign Alice will replace you—at least, for the rest of the term—"

"Which means," Pat could not help but say, "that she will leave school at the end of the term as head girl!"

Alice started, looking quickly at Pat. Pat, meeting the glance, wondered vaguely why Alice's face should redden with such an expression of guilt. But in a moment it had gone.

"Patricia," Miss Clifton said, "please! I have not called this meeting so that you girls can squabble here, with myself as a sort of referee. But I do demand that we overcome this difficulty here and now. As my prefects, I expect you to set an example of obedience and discipline to the school. Patricia is the elected head girl of this school, and it is your duty to carry out her orders!"

"And we feel that we cannot obey a girl whom we neither like nor respect, Miss Clifton," Alice boldly spoke up—"a girl who allows so many outside influences to interfere with her duties! I think you ought to see our point of view, too!"

Miss Clifton breathed a little more fiercely. "You still persist, then, in going on with this strike?"

"Until our demands are met, I'm afraid we must," Alice replied smoothly.

Miss Clifton glared.

Nobody saw the face which suddenly peered in at the door. The face of Renee Jones, the tittle-tattle gossip of the Fourth, and nobody knew that Renee was standing outside the door, breathlessly gulping in every word that was uttered.

But Pat, looking at the headmistress, realising her difficulties, felt first of all a surge of red-hot anger against the prefects; then a sudden compassion for the harassed headmistress. She turned to the prefects.

"I'm sorry," she said, "that we don't see eye to eye. Until recently"—she looked at Alice—"I've always had your co-operation and your support. But I do plead with you for the sake of the school to bury the hatchet now. At least, let us get together when the governors come."

Alice's face took on a grim look.

"And we're sorry, too," she said. "But what we've said we stand by."

Deadlock then. Miss Clifton bit her lip. Hopelessly desperate the situation. And Pat, in that moment, was seeing it from the headmistress' point of view more than anybody else's, including her own.

For what could poor Miss Clifton do? What to say when the governors turned up, and found these warring elements within the school? The prefects stood firm.

Pat bit her lip. She faced them all. For Miss Clifton's, and for the school's sake, someone had to give way, and, though it went bitterly against the grain, this was the time for her sacrifice.

But she was not going to give Alice her triumph by declaring her intention there and then. That would have been too much. She said:

"Miss Clifton, I'm afraid we can't do much here; but I have something I would like to suggest. If you will dismiss the prefects for five minutes—"

And when the prefects had been dismissed, Pat turned to the Head again.

"Miss Clifton, I am sorry it has come to this," she said quietly and sincerely. "But it is obvious we can't carry on with this spirit in the school. And so—it cost her a most terrific effort to bring herself to say the words—"as it is up to me to save you a great deal of trouble, Miss Clifton, may I resign the captaincy of this school?"

THE FOURTH FORM RALLIES ROUND

ALMOST wonderingly, Miss Clifton glanced at Pat as she brought herself to utter those words. If Pat had expected to see relieved gladness in her face, however, she was disappointed. For a moment the headmistress did not

school you were entitled to privileges over and above the heads of all other girls. Patricia, if you resign, I am sorry, but those privileges will have to be withdrawn."

Pat started.

"You mean—"

"I mean, my dear, that as an ordinary girl I could not make an exception. If I still allowed you to have these privileges, then there is no reason why I should not grant them to any other senior girl who asked for them. Therefore, Patricia, I want you to think over the question seriously. And, to enable you to think over it seriously, I am not going to accept your resignation right away."

Patricia did understand as never before. To help Miss Clifton she had been willing to make that supreme sacrifice of giving up her captaincy—that captaincy for which she had worked and striven from the moment she had left junior school.

In offering to give it up, indeed, it had



Shining-eyed, Pat stood there. Congratulations were showered on her, although she had lost the race. And then Bert Freedy stormed up. "I demand that this girl be warned off the track!" he shouted.

speak. Then, amazingly, she pointed to a chair.

"Sit down. You have considered everything, Patricia?"

Pat nodded.

"I wonder?" Miss Clifton eyed her contemplatively. "Thank you, Patricia," she said, "for the offer! I think I know exactly what spirit prompts it. If you insist, I must, of course, accept your resignation; but before you go any farther, Patricia, I want you to think. I personally have no fault to find with you as my head girl. I have always liked the work you have done. I have always admired the hold you have upon the school. Because I was so pleased with you, Patricia, because I understand your circumstances, and wish you to succeed in your motor-racing ambitions, I have granted you unheard of privileges—"

Pat looked at her.

"I have excused you lessons. I have given you late passes. I have allowed you to have your car in the school. I have given you permission to go out of bounds—anything, providing, of course, it has not affected your school work. I have only been able to do these things because you are my head girl, and because as the first girl in the

even occurred to her that with no head girl duties to worry her, she would be able to concentrate more on her motor-racing. Now—

Long after the headmistress had left her to go and talk to the rebel prefects, she sat there thinking it out. She couldn't give it up—daren't! Only those privileges could help her in her ambitions. How could she practise, how could she race when she had to conform to every tiny rule and routine?

How was she to practice if she couldn't have the Comet in the school? It wasn't there at the moment; but it would be as soon as Julie had spoken to her father.

No, she couldn't—mustn't resign! Clearly now she saw that her future depended upon her remaining head girl almost as much as winning the races which would entitle her to drive the Comet in the Grand Prix.

She didn't see Miss Clifton again. She did not, for some time, see Alice & Co. But suddenly her ears and eyes were attracted by a commotion in the quadrangle outside. A great roaring of voices, a repeated calling of her own name.

She moved towards the window, and then quickly glanced out. Forty or fifty juniors were out there, ranging from the Second to

the middle school forms. They were headed by Grace Campbell, who carried aloft a great banner.

That banner said:

"PAT SUMMERS MUST NOT RESIGN!"

And the juniors, as they marched, were calling:

"Down with Alice Smailes! We want Pat Summers!"

"We—want—Pat—Summers!" went up a thunderously defiant echo.

"Good old Pat!"

"Pat for captain—always!"

Pat frowned a little, wondering how the junior school had got to know, never thinking in that moment of the tittle-tattling Renee Jones.

Her face softened a little; a rather misty look came into her eyes. If the prefects were against her, here at least was undeniable proof of the regard and affection in which the majority of the school held her.

Something seemed to melt within Pat suddenly. It was decent of the kids. All the same, it wasn't good for discipline, or for her future relations with the rebels of the Sixth, that they should create such a scene; that they should be howling the name of her rival in such derision.

Her brow contracted a little. Swiftly she flung open the window and leaned out. At once she was seen, the procession halting as if by magic under the window. A deafening cheer went up.

"Pat! Pat! Pat!"

Pat held up her hand.

"Please, girls—"

"Pat, you're not going to resign?" Grace Campbell shouted.

"Rather not! We won't let her resign!"

"Pat for captain! Pat all the time!"

"Oh goodness!" laughed Pat. "Please, girls, let me get a word in! No; I'm not going to resign—"

"Hurrah!"

"If you want me I'm going to stick by you—"

"Hurrah!"

A great roar arose. Hands waved in the air. Eyes sparkled, and faces flamed with enthusiasm. And then, round the corner of the school building, came four new figures—the figures of Alice Smailes, Amy Hemingway, Lila Horrocks, and Enid Farrow.

It was obvious at once that Alice & Co. had heard that. Alice's eyes glowed hatred.

"And who," she broke out, "says you're not going to resign, Pat Summers?"

"We do!" howled the juniors.

"Shut up, all of you! Pat Summers—"

But another roar went up, then a boo. Somebody started to hiss. Alice flung round in fury.

"Will you be quiet? Wait!" she cried. "Pat Summers is telling you fibs! She can't do anything else but resign now—"

"As it happens, Alice Smailes, I'm still head girl, and head girl I mean to stay, whether you remain on strike or not," Pat said steelily. "I've changed my mind."

Alice staggered back. There came a roar from the juniors. Something—it was a knotted handkerchief—sailed out from the group, hitting Alice in the face. It was followed by an indiarubber, then another handkerchief; and finally the juniors, indignant at the treachery of these girls, broke into a stampeding charge.

For a moment Alice & Co. stood bunched together, while Pat tried hopelessly to make her voice heard.

"Girls! Girls! Oh, my goodness—"

But forward the juniors stormed. What would have happened had Alice & Co. stood their ground it was impossible to say, but they did not stand their ground.

Amy Hemingway was the first to turn tail, bolting like a scared rabbit into the safety of the School House. For a moment Alice and the others hesitated. Then, as the juniors came nearer, they, too, vanished, leaving a whooping crowd of victorious juniors in complete and undisputed possession of the quad.

ALL very flattering and satisfying that should have been to Pat Summers—such an indisputable tribute to her popularity. But Pat was feeling neither pleased nor satisfied.

She was worried. For now there was open war between the prefects and the juniors. That day was a day of increasing resentment in the senior ranks, increasing bitterness among the juniors. Lines flew thick and fast.

All next day, indeed, there was a strong spirit of mutiny in the air, and Pat, because, however innocently, she was the cause of it, was worried. The juniors obeyed her willingly and eagerly, but their loyalty to Pat made them disloyal to Alice & Co. But Alice did not mind that.

Alice knew that as long as the school remained in this condition so the authority of Pat was weakened. It must, Alice argued, come to a point sooner or later when Pat must resign.

Pat felt worried, strained, and anxious. But when she went to see Julie in the sanatorium, the following morning, she allowed no trace of that anxiety to show upon her face.

In reply to Julie—still rather pale and shaken, and not yet able to get up—she assured her that everything was going swimmingly.

"Has my father come back from France yet?" Julie questioned.

"No," Pat told her.

"But when he comes," Julie said, a flash of determination in her fine eyes—"when he comes, Pat, you must bring him here. I am going to see him. I am going to tell him everything. I mean it, Pat, and after this—after this"—with vehemence—"I will never let you down again."

Pat smiled. Well, that was one ray of sunshine. The reformation of Julie, at least, was complete. Once Julie was fit and well again, then Julie would be a loyal little friend indeed, not only in the school, but out of it as well.

She left her, feeling happier for that interview. But the happiness was short lived. For when she arrived in her study again there was a letter awaiting her. It was from the Ivydale track committee, and it read:

"To Patricia Summers.—A special committee of inquiry will meet in the board-room to hear the case arising out of the complaint of Driver A. Preedy against you. The committee hereby request you to attend at six p.m. prompt. Your failure to present yourself to answer this complaint will, according to our rules, result in the suspension of your licence for the remainder of the season."

Pat read it with thin lips. She drew a deep breath. Well, it had come. To-night she would have to face the committee. She wasn't afraid of what she had done, but she couldn't help reflecting what failure might mean. The loss of her ambition; no chance to make good on the race track.

She must fix up with Miss Clifton, though. When the track committee said six p.m. prompt, they meant six p.m. prompt. Late-ness would only prejudice her case in advance.

At once Pat went off to seek Miss Clifton.

While at the gates—

Two figures stood there—a girl and a young man. The man was Bert Preedy. He was talking to Alice Smailes.

"And you've got to help me," he was saying.

"Only you can help me, Alice. If Pat Summers doesn't attend, then I win the case. I've already made it my business to see that Jim Mace and Jimmy Walsh, her only witnesses, won't be there. If Pat Summers isn't there either, then she loses the case without even having been heard, and that means the end of her motor-driving for this season, at least."

Alice, with a bitterly vindictive look in her eyes, slowly nodded.

"Leave it to me," she promised. "She won't be there!"

What reason is behind Bert Preedy's determination to keep Pat off the race-track? Alice and he seem to have a very deep motive underlying their scheming. Don't miss next Friday's splendid chapters of this story. Order your **GIRLS' CRYSTAL** in advance.

KENNEL-MAID AT PHANTOM ABBEY

(Continued from page 12)

grasp, and now his eyes were full of mistrust. Puzzled, Kitty touched his collar again, and another protesting whine escaped him.

"What is it?" she asked; and now her voice was soft and caressing. "Does your collar hurt you? Now be a good boy, and let me take it off. Perhaps you've got a sore under it."

As she made to undo it his struggles became wilder than ever. She could not understand it, but determinedly she persisted, certain there must be a sore place beneath.

Skilfully she set to work to win his confidence, and at last he became quiet and let her unfasten the buckle, though he continued to whine.

Laying the thick leather collar down on the floor, she pushed back his curly fur and examined his neck. To her surprise, there was no sign of any sore. Nor did he wince when she ran her fingers over his skin.

Then it occurred to her that the collar itself might be the cause of the trouble. She picked it up, and instantly Remus began to whine and paw at her excitedly.

"You are a funny fellow—a real mystery dog," she declared. "If only you could talk, I believe all this mystery would be cleared up. I'm certain you know who the Green Friar is, and that—"

She finished with a startled cry, for on examining the big collar she had made an unexpected discovery. There was a slit in the leather, and peeping out was the corner of a faded sheet of yellow paper.

The collar had a secret pocket in it.

The black retriever gave a loud bark, and now his whole body was trembling with excitement.

Kitty stared at the collar again. Suppose this old paper explained what connection Remus had with the abbey?

Eagerly she pulled open the slit, started to drag out the paper. The secret pocket contained a whole wad of them, and they seemed to be covered with thin, spidery writing.

Remus made no attempt to stop her. Indeed, his mistrust had vanished.

She pulled out the first sheet, and was about to smooth it open, when abruptly the watching dog's whole manner changed. His strong legs stiffened, his big head swung round, and a fierce, angry bark volleyed from his throat.

Kitty looked up in surprise.

"Why, what ever's the matter now?"

But Remus did not seem to hear. Suspiciously he glared across the room. His grim eyes were fixed on a big oil painting that hung on the opposite wall—the picture of an old man with deep, compelling eyes.

Suddenly he sat down, crouching as if ready to spring. The fur on his spine bristled.

Kitty jumped to her feet.

"What is the matter?" she demanded, surveying the picture in puzzlement. "That's only old granddad's portrait, you silly!"

But even as she spoke she became uneasy herself. There was something strangely magnetic about the portrait's eyes. They seemed to burn with a compelling intensity. Indeed, they actually seemed to be alive.

Kitty took another look, then caught in her breath.

"They moved!" she gulped. "His eyes—they moved!"

Hardly had the amazed shout left her than Remus gave another furious bark. Then, teeth bared, legs held stiffly, the big dog launched himself like a black thunderbolt at the picture on the wall!

What a wonderful pal Remus the mystery dog is to Kitty! What is the strange secret to which he seems to be such an important link? Will Kitty discover anything in connection with her grandfather's portrait? Don't miss next Friday's chapters of this splendid mystery serial.