

"Kennel-Maid at Phantom Abbey" **SPLENDID
SERIAL
INSIDE**

GIRLS' CRYSTAL

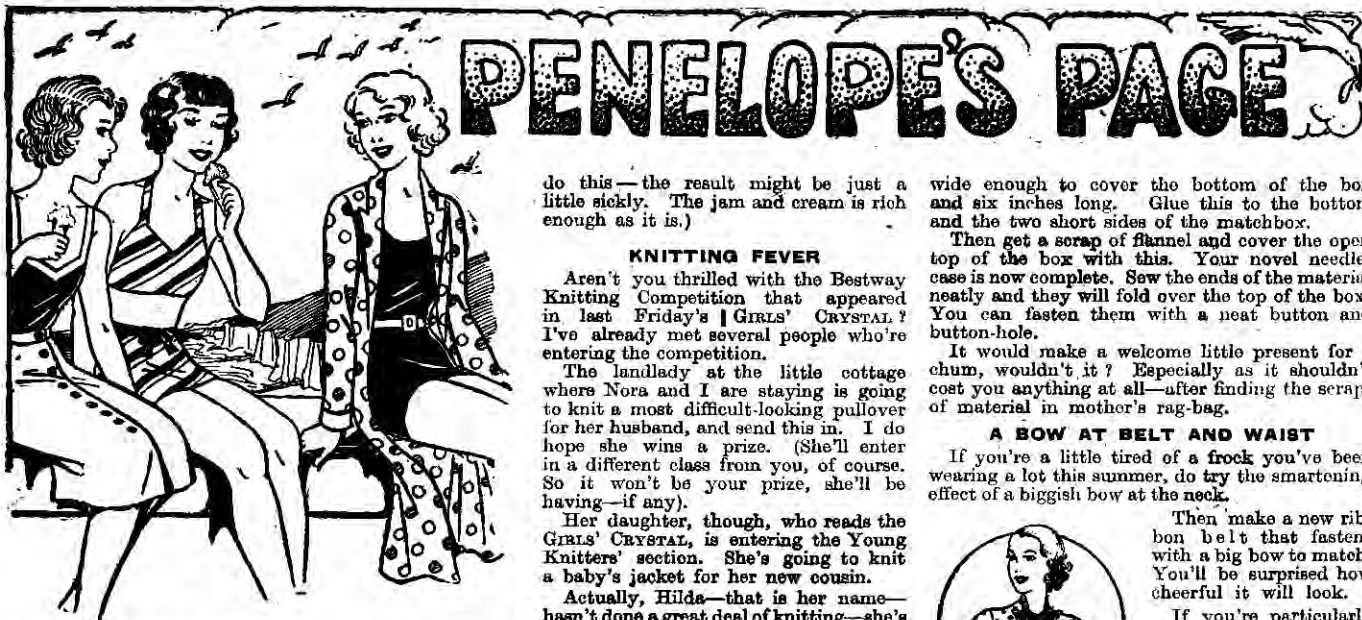
WEEKLY

2^D



**THE MYSTERY
SIGN IN THE
CAVE**

*A dramatic incident from the exciting
story "The Happy-Go-Lucky Hikers"
—inside.*



PENELOPE'S PAGE

do this—the result might be just a little sickly. The jam and cream is rich enough as it is.)

KNITTING FEVER

Aren't you thrilled with the Bestway Knitting Competition that appeared in last Friday's *GIRLS' CRYSTAL*? I've already met several people who're entering the competition.

The landlady at the little cottage where Nora and I are staying is going to knit a most difficult-looking pullover for her husband, and send this in. I do hope she wins a prize. (She'll enter in a different class from you, of course. So it won't be your prize, she'll be having—if any.)

Her daughter, though, who reads the *GIRLS' CRYSTAL*, is entering the Young Knitters' section. She's going to knit a baby's jacket for her new cousin.

Actually, Hilda—that is her name—hasn't done a great deal of knitting—she's too busy helping her mother throughout the summer months to have a lot of time.

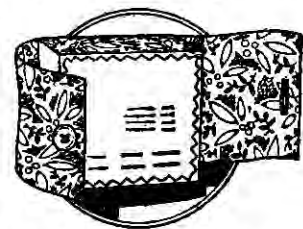
But when I told her that there would be a special consolation prize for every regular reader of the *GIRLS' CRYSTAL* who entered the competition—regardless of whether they win one of the money prizes or not—she resolved to have a shot. (So she's certain of at least one prize, in addition to her aunty's grateful thanks for the baby's jacket, isn't she?)

I do hope all you who enjoy knitting are entering—for the prizes are so generous—£3 is the first; £2 the second. Then there are 40 prizes of £1, and 50 prizes of 10s.

The closing date is not until October 30th, so you've got tons of time in spite of homework.

A NOVEL NEEDLE-CASE

I expect you're wondering what



this how-to-make notion is in the picture here. Well, I'll tell you before you go grey-haired worrying.

It's a needle-case, and guess what it is made from? One match box! And only the inside part of that.

If you like the idea, do save the next matchbox that is empty. Then cover the two long sides with a scrap of material. Glue this into position.

Next cut another piece of material that is

wide enough to cover the bottom of the box and six inches long. Glue this to the bottom and the two short sides of the matchbox.

Then get a scrap of flannel and cover the open top of the box with this. Your novel needle-case is now complete. Sew the ends of the material neatly and they will fold over the top of the box. You can fasten them with a neat button and button-hole.

It would make a welcome little present for a chum, wouldn't it? Especially as it shouldn't cost you anything at all—after finding the scraps of material in mother's rag-bag.

A BOW AT BELT AND WAIST

If you're a little tired of a frock you've been wearing a lot this summer, do try the smartening effect of a bigish bow at the neck.



Then make a new ribbon belt that fastens with a big bow to match. You'll be surprised how cheerful it will look.

If you're particularly clever with your needle, you might like to add a little touch of frilling to the frock as well. This frilling costs sixpence a yard from our favourite shop, you

know—already pleated and ready for sewing on.

A little round the sleeves would be very dainty, and some down the front of the bodice and round the neck would give a very smart coatee effect.

BREATH-TAKING.

Next time you've got a little breathing space between lessons at school, ask your chum, or the girl sitting next to you, what is the longest word she knows.

She'll think of several, I expect. But I'm sure you'll beat her and find your word is longer if you write down "inter-inter-excommunication." Doesn't it look staggering? But, of course, it's only excommunication with two "inters" in front of it.

Another word that's a perfect joy to write down is "interdisestablishmentarianism."

As you start to write it, it seems that your pencil will run right off the page without the word being completed. Don't ask me what it means, please. But you'll see, if you study it closely, that it is built up round the simple word "establish." From that you soon get "establishment," then "establishmentarianism," "dis-establishmentarianism," and lastly "interdis-establishmentarianism"—pew!

Anyhow, it's fun.

Good-bye, until next week.

Your own,

PENELOPE

HALLO, EVERYBODY!—I expect you've read that exciting book, "Lorna Doone," haven't you? If you haven't, and you find you can borrow it, do read it some time.

I read it ages ago, but this is the first time I've really explored "Doone Valley," where the action of the book takes place.

It really is a lovely spot.

My chum Nora and I went there by motor-coach. After visiting the church and going for a walk, we had a ripping tea in a barn, of all places.

But such a nice barn! There were no cows and hay in it, of course. It had been turned into a lovely tea-place, with smiling Devon girls to serve a delicious tea. Home-made scones and bread—real farm butter—milk more creamy than I have ever seen in London—Devon cream and home-made strawberry jam! Doesn't that make you wish you were in Devon with me?

Perhaps some of you have never eaten scones with jam and cream?

DEVON TEAS

I confess that the first time I had a "Devon tea" (in Oxford Street, in London), I wasn't at all sure what to do with the cream.

But I soon discovered.

You take a portion of the thick cream on to the side of your plate, and place some jam beside that.

Then you cut your scone, and smear quite a big piece of cream to one mouthful. Add a spot of jam to that—and convey mouthwards. (If butter is provided as well, you can butter the scone first, of course—but not very many people

SCAMP, THE SCOTTIE



SUSIE'S TANDEM ADVENTURE

By ELISE PROBYN



A SPILL IN THE COUNTRY

"A SECOND-HAND tandem for thirty-five bob! It sounds a bargain, Nellie, and it's just what we've been wanting. I'm going straight along to try it out!"

Bubbling with enthusiasm, Susie Bowling pulled her zipp-jacket on over her cycling shorts in the staff-room of Spollard's, gown and mantle manufacturers. Work in the machine-room was finished for the day, and on the bed beside Susie—where Nellie was sitting—lay an advert from the morning newspaper:

"GIRLS' TANDEM CYCLE for sale. Good as new, fine racing bus. Will accept 35s. Test invited. Call seven p.m.—Flossie Green, No. 12, Popley Road, Peckham."

"Pity I can't come along with you, Susie!" breathed Nellie. "If I could get someone to do my overtime for me—"

"Don't be a chump! We've both got to grab all the overtime we can to pay for the jolly old tandem—if we get it!" Susie said vigorously. "We'll lose our chance if I don't get off sharp. Cheerio, ducks! Here's wishing us luck!"

Stuffing the newspaper into her pocket, Susie hurried downstairs, pressed her way to the front of the pavement, and took a flying leap aboard the first Peckham bus that came along. The conductor scooped her to safety.

"Gels will be boys," he muttered, "and some of 'em will be corpses if they jump on buses that way!"

"I shan't want your buses much longer, lad!" said Susie gaily.

The ride to Peckham was soon over, in spite of the crowded streets. It was barely seven o'clock when Susie walked along Popley Road and knocked at the door of No. 12.

She heard two kiddies arguing inside as to whose "turn" it was to open the door; then an elder sister shooed them away, and came herself to the door.

"Flossie Green?" asked Susie.

"That's me!"

"I've come about the tandem you advertised."

Flossie Green beamed. She was a cheerful-looking girl with a large and rather clumsy

figure, and was obviously a good sort. Susie liked her at sight.

"You've called nice and prompt, and I don't think you'll be disappointed!" said Flossie, opening the door wide. "The tandem's in the garden. Will you come right in? Don't mind the place being untidy; it's the kiddies, you know. Now, look here, young Alf, you put that peashooter away—quick!"

Something went ping! past Susie's ear, but she ducked in time.

Chuckling, she followed Flossie through the kitchen, littered with clothes-horses and washing, and went out by the back door into the garden.

"Why are you selling the tandem? Not keen on the sport?" Susie asked, as Flossie began unlocking a shed.

"Oh, it isn't that!" Flossie said cheerfully. "Dad wants me to give it up, because he's afraid I'll have an accident!"

Susie understood as soon as Flossie wheeled the tandem out of the shed.

It was quite a good machine, and not at all old, but the mudguards were dented in half a dozen places, and the front forks bore signs of recent repair.

"Hallo, you've already had a smash?" Susie asked.

"Oh, one or two!" Flossie said lightly, and added with enthusiasm: "It's a real go-er when it's in top speed. It's geared as high as the fellows' bikes. Shall we try it out on the road together?"

"Rather!" enthused Susie.

She looked the machine over, and could find no fault except anything that a road-test might reveal. She waited while Flossie popped into

Susie thoroughly enjoyed her exciting ride on the second-hand tandem. Soaked as she and Flossie were when they landed up in the ditch, it didn't dampen Susie's high spirits. She was game for anything—even the strange adventure that followed.

the house and changed into cycling shorts. Then young Alf opened the side gate for them, and they wheeled the tandem out into the road.

"Who's going to sit in front?" Susie asked eagerly, ducking out of range of the peashooter.

"Better let me. I'm used to it!" said Flossie.

"Right-ho! Off we go—anywhere you like!"

Susie took the rear saddle. Flossie the front, and away they peddled under a volley from Alf's peashooter.

They weren't half-way down Popley Road before Susie knew one thing for certain. There was a serious fault somewhere, and it wasn't the tandem—it was Flossie Green's riding. Flossie was about the world's worst cyclist!

"Hey, you're wobbling all over the place!" called Susie.

"What?" howled Flossie.

"Don't wobble!"

"I'm not!"

With a crazy lurch, the tandem slewed round the corner into the main road. How Susie kept her own seat she didn't know. She positively marvelled at Flossie keeping hers. It was fool's luck and nothing else.

"Is this supposed to be a waltz or a foxtrot?" Susie said behind her.

"What?" shouted Flossie, who couldn't hear a word.

Susie laughed helplessly and gave it up. She kept a stout grip on her own handlebars. It was an exhilarating ride, and it was all the more thrilling for Flossie's reckless mis-handling.

Skidding here, zigzagging there, the tandem whizzed past every other bike on the road, and it held a breath-taking race with an infuriated tram-driver and finally beat him.

Susie enjoyed leaving Peckham behind, and thought it a splendid idea when Flossie scorched into Dulwich Park. There were no tram-drivers here to annoy. But there were certain by-laws about speeding. Susie heard all about these, in no uncertain terms, from the keeper who ordered her and Flossie out of the park.

"And I've a good mind to take your names and 'ave you summonsed!" he threatened, waving his fist at them from the gate.

"Just when we were getting nicely into our stride, too!" sighed Susie, dismounting for a breather. "I'll tell you one thing, Flossie. You can call this a deal!"

"You're going to buy the bike?"

"Rather!" enthused Susie. "I'll bring my friend along on Saturday to collect it and pay up the cash. And, I say, Flossie—are you in any hurry to get home now?"

"Not me!"

"Then what about coming out for a country spin? We can get into Kent easily from here, can't we?"

Flossie jumped at the suggestion. She said that Susie wanted more "practice" to get used to the tandem, and that she would be only too pleased to give her a couple of hours' coaching.

Susie hid a grin. She realised that Flossie meant well. But, unfortunately, Flossie continued to occupy the front saddle and take command.

All went well during the first fifteen miles'

run through the Kentish lanes. Flossie kept up a rolling wobble, and she used the brakes with a devastating jerk, but Susie certainly learnt a whole lot from her mistakes.

They were just leaving a picturesque little village when danger suddenly threatened.

The lane took a steep downward slope. Susie free-wheeled. She yelled to Flossie to put on her brakes. But the tandem whizzed on at a scorching lick, and it was gaining speed at every turn of the wheels.

Susie saw Flossie wriggle desperately, but instead of the usual jerk of the brakes, nothing happened.

"Where's the brakes?" roared Susie.

"Back on the road!" gasped Flossie.

"Eh?"

"They came off last time I—Ow, look out!"

Susie didn't have time to look out. All she saw was a sweeping bend in front of them and a ditch. Before she could wink her eye the tandem overshot the bend.

Splosh!

With a neat somersault, Susie landed head first in the ditch.

Squelch!

Less neatly, Flossie landed with a flat squat beside her. The ditch water rose up in an avalanche and half-drowned them both. Spluttering and gasping, Susie sat up in the mud with her chin just pecking out of the water.

She saw greenish bubbles breaking on the surface, then out of the bubbles Flossie's head slowly rose. Her hair was matted with mud and weeds, and she looked blandly amazed.

"We've f-fallen into a ditch!" she said weakly.

"Go on! You don't say so!" gasped Susie.

They looked at each other, and then suddenly they both shrieked with laughter. Susie was almost too helpless to scramble out of the ditch. She fell in again while trying to drag Flossie out. By the time they staggered up on to the road, they brought half the water with them—and all the mud.

"My only aunt! What are we going to do about our togs?" gasped Susie.

She rescued the tandem, which lay unharmed on the bank of the ditch, but with its brakes missing. It was hopeless trying to ride back to London without brakes. But the immediate problem was their clothes; they were soaked to the skin.

"There's only one thing to do!" reasoned Susie, mopping the water from her face and hair. "We'll have to pop along to the nearest house, Flossie, and see if we can dry our togs there. Look slippery—I'm cold! That looks like a house, down at the end of the road there."

It turned out to be a large and stately manor house, when Susie and Flossie drew near to the gates, wheeling the tandem between them.

"It's too posh, Susie; we can't knock here!" exclaimed Flossie.

"Can't we!" retorted Susie, promptly pushing open the gate. "I'm not walking any farther in this state. We'll knock at the servants' quarters."

Several posh cars were parked in the drive, and it was evident that the house had visitors. Susie trundled the machine round to the back quarters, found the tradesmen's entrance, and knocked at the door.

There was a long minute's wait, while Susie's drenched clothes clung coldly to her skin, and Flossie's teeth chattered audibly.

Then the door jerked open, and a woman in black, with a thin, nutcracker face, stood gaping at the girls.

"If you please, ma'am, we've had an accident," began Susie. "We got thrown off our bike into a ditch, and if you'd be kind enough to let us dry our clothes—"

"What?" The woman's nutcracker chin closed with a snap. "Are you aware that this is Lady Pottsworth's house? We don't have the likes of you here. The idea! Take yourselves off at once!"

She would have closed the door, but Susie promptly shoved her foot in the way.

"Then I'd like to speak to her ladyship, please!" she said, politely but firmly. "It's only a small favour we're asking."

The woman cast an exasperated glance

behind her, and it seemed to Susie that she was peculiarly anxious to get rid of them.

"I'm the housekeeper," she said, in a rasping voice. "I'm Mrs. Liffy. I don't allow any strangers inside this door. Besides—"

Susie was about to repeat her request, but Mrs. Liffy had paused. Her nutcracker face showed sudden signs of yielding.

"It's very awkward, but I'll see what I can do," she said, with a curious change of manner. "What do you want—somewhere to dry your clothes, and a change to wear while they're drying? Well, come in!"

Thanking her, Susie left the tandem at the door, and both girls followed Mrs. Liffy into the servants' quarters. She chose the ideal room for them. It was the boiler-room, where a huge furnace under a tank supplied the central heating for the manor.

"We're in luck's way, Susie!" breathed Flossie, as the housekeeper went away to find them a change of clothes. "I thought that woman was going to shut the door in our faces!"

"She wasn't very welcoming, but I think it's because she's busy," Susie said. "There's a party on. You can hear all the people upstairs."

Thankful to get out of her soaked clothes, Susie spread them one by one over the boiler. She had just wrapped herself up snugly in a sack, and was listening to the refined voices upstairs, when Mrs. Liffy came back into the room with a bundle under her arm.

Closing the door, Mrs. Liffy faced Susie with quite a fawning smile on her lips.

"I hope you didn't think I was inhospitable," she said. "I am one of those people who will give my right hand to help anyone, if I can."

Susie wouldn't have thought so by Mrs. Liffy's face, but she agreed cordially.

"Oh, yes," said Mrs. Liffy, "I know I'm too helpful to others; it is my nature. But the trouble is, I haven't nearly enough help in this big house. There is a party on to-night, and I have simply one maid to serve the guests, and a stupid one at that. I was worried out of my wits when you came here!"

"Quite! We understood that, ma'am. You've been very kind!" Susie said heartily.

Mrs. Liffy beamed, and now she held out the bundle of clothes she was carrying. Susie saw for the first time that they were servants' uniforms.

"These are the only clothes I can lend you, my dears, and I am going to ask you a favour," said Mrs. Liffy, with a wheedling smile. "One good turn deserves another, doesn't it? I'm wondering if you would please put these clothes on, and give me just a little help waiting on the guests while your own things are drying?"

Susie blinked at Flossie, and both felt flabbergasted. They had received a small favour from Mrs. Liffy, and in return she was asking them to act as servants at Lady Pottsworth's dinner-party.

True, it promised to be more amusing than sitting idle in the boiler-room while their clothes dried. But in any case, Susie asked herself—how could they possibly refuse?

"Certainly, ma'am!" she said dazedly, as she got her breath back. "Anything to oblige!"

MAIDS AT THE MANOR

SUSIE grew quite interested in the plan, as she donned the trim uniform, starched cap and apron and cuffs that Mrs. Liffy had given her.

"I'll have to wear my cycling shoes, but they're about dry by now," she chuckled. "Let's have a look at you, Flossie. Been in service long?"

She burst out laughing, for Flossie had got her cap on back to front. Susie adjusted it for her, and they both sailed along to the kitchen.

"I've told her ladyship," said Mrs. Liffy, smirking, "and she's very grateful to you, dears. I shouldn't be surprised if you get a nice reward from Lady Pottsworth. Now, which of you is going to carry this wine tray?"

Susie seized the tray swiftly, before Flossie's fumbling but awkward hands caused any mishap. Mrs. Liffy showed her the way up to the

dining-room. And with a solemn expression on her face Susie walked in with the wine.

The overworked maid beamed at her gratefully.

Keeping a poker face, Susie passed the length of the table, serving the elegant ladies and gentlemen seated at dinner.

"Will madam take white or red wine? And you, sir? A little of both?"

Susie realised immediately that this wasn't the right thing to say, because the whole company laughed. There was nothing starchy about them—perhaps because they were real ladies and real gentlemen. Lady Pottsworth herself was a dear. She had a booming voice, and she broadcast it all round the table that the cyclist-girls had got her out of a hole.

"I can never keep my maids!" she said. "That housekeeper of mine finds some fault and sacks them as soon as I get them!"

This was a very different version from Mrs. Liffy's, but it fitted in with Susie's own opinion of the housekeeper.

It was at this moment that Flossie came in—or rather barged in—carrying a large tureen of soup. Susie knew she was going to drop it. She could see it by the look of over-confidence on Flossie's face.

"Let me take that!" breathed Susie, and made a hurried movement towards Flossie.

But Susie forgot that she was wearing her studded cycling shoes, and she made no allowance for the polished floor. Her feet shot from under her. She toppled forward. She made a flying grab at Flossie to save herself.

Up went Flossie's hands. She staggered back in the open doorway, and the soup tureen went flying over her shoulder.

It crashed against the banisters, and a howl came from Mrs. Liffy on the landing below.

"Ow!"

It was echoed by a deeper sound, like the gasp of a man's voice.

"Oh dear! I'm afraid you've scalded Mrs. Liffy!" cried Lady Pottsworth, jumping up from the table. "I think I heard someone else, too!"

So did Susie. Ruefully she picked herself up from the floor and hurried out to the banisters. She fancied she heard a swift, shuffling movement below. When she gazed down, all she saw was Mrs. Liffy standing red-faced on the landing, the front of her apron spattered with soup.

"Ever so sorry, ma'am! Are you scalded?" Susie called to her.

"No, but I might have been disfigured for life!" gasped Mrs. Liffy, standing clear of the soup which was still streaming down.

"What about the other one? Is he all right, ma'am?"

"He? Wh-what do you mean?" spluttered Mrs. Liffy, shaking the soup off her apron. "There's no one else here!"

Lady Pottsworth gazed over the banisters and sighed with relief.

"Thank goodness you're not hurt!" she said. "It was just my fancy that I heard someone else!"

Susie picked up the tureen, and Lady Pottsworth assured her there was nothing to apologise for, and the incident was passed off with gracious good manners.

There were no more mishaps.

By the time the dessert course was reached, Susie was growing quite expert at the job, and so was Flossie. Mrs. Liffy smirked with appreciation when Susie carried down the last tray. It was loaded with the remains of jellies, trifles, luscious fruit salads, cream, and biscuits.

"You must look after yourself now, dear; I'm not going to let you go away hungry!" said Mrs. Liffy. "Would you like one of those biscuits?"

"I'll have some of this trifle and jelly, please—"

"Oh—er—if you prefer it!"

Susie reached for a plate.

"Do you recommend the fruit salad and cream, ma'am, for afterwards?"

Flossie came down at that moment with the other maid, and Susie served them both as liberally as she served herself. The housekeeper looked on with her nutcracker face reddening resentfully.

"You shouldn't leave it late, you and your friend!" she said to Susie. "You've got a long way to go, haven't you?"

"No hurry!" Susie said, and served out another portion of trifle all round.

She talked to Flossie, discussing their plans for the ride home. They would get brakes put on the tandem at the first garage, and with a bit of luck, the job ought to be done for five shillings, and they'd share the cost between them.

But while Susie talked, she watched Mrs. Liffy out of the corner of her eye.

It was queer how fidgety and impatient the woman was to get rid of them both. Was it just meanness? Did she begrudge them a meal that was costing her nothing, after all the help they had given her?

"Well—" Susie put her plate down at last. "I'll see if those things of ours are dry, Flossie!" she said.

It seemed to her that Mrs. Liffy puffed with relief.

Walking out of the kitchen, Susie crossed the passage towards the boiler-room. Her foot skidded on something slippery. She looked down and saw a patch or two of the soup which had been spilt.

Susie stared again.

Those patches were footprints. And they were a man's footprints. Susie wrinkled her brow. Then she hadn't been mistaken after all, and neither had Lady Pottsworth. It was a man's voice they had heard at the time of the mishap, and it meant that Mrs. Liffy had lied.

Pondering over this, Susie went into the boiler-room and inspected the cycling togs. They were certainly dry now. She held them up critically, and at that moment Flossie came in.

"Are they O.K., Susie?"

"Well, I won't go so far as to say that," Susie said, grinning ruefully. "Just look at 'em—ruined! This coat of mine would stand upright without me in it!"

"It was a pity about those brakes busting!" sighed Flossie. "It just shows, Susie, that an accident will happen, even with an experienced rider like me."

"That's right," Susie replied gravely, trying to keep a straight face.

They both took off the uniforms and changed into their own clobber, and although they were bone dry now, Susie felt as though she were encased in armour.

"Hang on here, and I'll find a brush," she said to Flossie. "We might get some of this mud off, anyhow."

She walked back to the kitchen, but it was empty. The housekeeper was upstairs, looking after Lady Pottsworth and the guests. Susie gazed about her in search of a clothes brush, but there wasn't one to be found.

Then, in the passage leading beyond the kitchen, she glimpsed the mirror of a hall-stand.

Susie stepped out along the passage, and stopped suddenly dead.

What was that sound? What was that stir?

It was like the furtive, panicky movement of a person in hiding. It came from the other side of a door facing the hallstand. Susie stood rigid. The sound wasn't repeated, but she fancied she heard a hoarse breathing. She was certain of the presence of someone there.

Susie's gaze flashed to the floor.

She saw a soupy footprint on the polished floor, then another. They were a man's footprints, and they led to that door opposite the hallstand.

Acting on swift instinct, Susie walked steadily back to the kitchen. She waited a few seconds, then noiselessly she crept forward to that door, knelt down, and peered through the keyhole.

Her heart gave a jump. Instinct hadn't deceived her.

Through the keyhole she was gazing into a sort of butler's pantry, its shelves lined with glittering silverware. A man was crouching tensely on his knees, his cap pulled down over his eyes, a carpet-bag beside him. With the hurried movements of a thief, he was seizing the silver right and left, and scooping it into the bag.

Susie didn't stop to think.

There was no key in the lock, but there was a heavy bolt on the door.

With one jerk, Susie shot the bolt home into its socket. A hoarse cry came from within, but her own voice drowned it.

"Burglars!" yelled Susie, at the top of her lungs, and now she was rushing back through the kitchen, her yells alarming the whole household. "Crook! Thief! Fetch the police! There's a burglar here!"

ALBERT ON THE TANDEM

THE peace of the manor was suddenly changed to pandemonium.

Doors burst open, voices screamed, guests came swarming excitedly down the stairs, with Mrs. Liffy leading the way, shrieking and brandishing a poker.

Susie bumped full tilt into her before she could stop herself. Unfortunately she bumped into the poker. It caught her in the ribs, and, with a winded gasp, Susie went flop on to the floor of the passage.

Mrs. Liffy fell sprawling over her head.

Susie blinked and rubbed her eyes.

She hadn't fainted, but everything had gone suddenly black. The lights had gone out. The whole house was suddenly in darkness.



Soaked to the skin, the two girls faced each other. "There's a house," said Susie. "Let's ask if we may dry our clothes there." Susie did not dream of the queer reception they would get!

"Take it easy, folks! Get a torch first!" yelled Susie, with what little breath was left in her. "The crook can't get away; he's lock—Ow, mind me! Ow!"

She squirmed on the floor while the guests came stampeding on top of her. It was like lying under a steamroller. Near by, in the darkness, Mrs. Liffy was suffering the same experience.

"I'm being killed! Ow! Ow!" she shrieked.

"Pull yourself together, Mrs. Liffy!" came Lady Pottsworth's booming voice, nearly raising the roof. "Can't you find the lights? The switch is down here somewhere, isn't it? The main switch!"

"Somewhere, I—I don't know. I—I'm past it!" moaned Mrs. Liffy.

Susie saw the flicker of a match in one of the guest's hands, and by its light she struggled to her feet. She grabbed the box from him.

"The crook's locked up; he can't get away!" she shouted above the din. "Stand where you are, folks, please, till we get a light on the subject!"

"My torch is in the boiler-room, Susie, if you can find your way there!" cried Flossie's voice.

Striking matches, Susie pushed her way through the crowd and rescued the torch. She shone its beam into the passage.

"Where's that main switch?" she shouted.

"Mrs. Liffy will show you!" cried Lady Pottsworth. "It won't be any good; the thief must have cut the wire!"

Susie helped Mrs. Liffy to her feet, and Mrs. Liffy looked as if she had been in an earthquake. She pointed a giddy hand towards the light switch. It was in the wall, right by the spot where she had been lying. But the wire wasn't cut. Susie touched the switch, and the lights blazed on immediately.

"I must have knocked against it in my fall—a terrible fall!" moaned Mrs. Liffy. "Oh—oh! I believe my back is broken! All through that clodhopper girl banging into me!"

But no one was troubling about Mrs. Liffy's back.

"Where's the burglar?" they shouted.

"This way!" cried Susie.

She rushed through the kitchen, with Lady Pottsworth and her guests swarming after her. She made a grab at the bolt of the pantry door, but the gentlemen guests pulled her back before she could open it.

"Careful—careful, girl! The scoundrel may

be armed!" they shouted. "Stand away! Stand away, all you ladies!"

One of the guests wrenched back the bolt, then drew himself swiftly away to the side of the wall.

"Come out, man! Come out quietly, and it will be better for you!" he commanded.

Everyone held their breath, but nothing happened.

Susie darted forward and flung open the door. Then a gasp left her lips. The window was open, and the burglar was gone!

"He's beat it!" howled Susie. "He's got away while the lights were out!"

"And he's got away with my best silver!" roared Lady Pottsworth.

She rushed thundering into the room. Her ladyship was normally a noisy person, and now she was simply deafening in her rage. Valuable plate, cutlery, everything of worth had been stripped from the shelves, and only the valueless stuff left behind.

Lady Pottsworth vented her fury upon the housekeeper.

"Didn't I tell you I thought I heard a man in the house? Why didn't you take the trouble to investigate? You're a perfect fool, Liffy! You can't take care of the house yourself, and you dismiss everybody else I engage to help you! This is the second robbery we've had since we've been short-staffed!"

Mrs. Liffy stood with her nutcracker face quivering with indignation.

"I've studied your own interests, my lady. I've always said that I won't have people here whom I don't know and can't trust. This only proves me right again!" And she flashed her eyes venomously upon Susie. "It's a funny thing this happens as soon as we get a pair of strange girls in the house!"

"What does that mean?" Susie asked dangerously.

"I say it's funny!" retorted Mrs. Liffy. "You come heer begging for shelter, and the next thing we know there's a burglar got into the house. Almost looks as if you had something to do with it, miss!"

"Yet I was the one who gave the alarm!" Susie went on in the same dangerous tone. "What's funnier still, Mrs. Liffy—the burglar would have been caught if you hadn't put the lights out!"

Mrs. Liffy almost seemed to start—but she concealed it under a flare of passion.

"What are you saying? What are you trying to accuse me of?" she screamed.

"I only accuse people when I've got proof!" Susie returned pointedly, but still calm. "All the same, it's funny you didn't see any man in the house—because he was mighty near you when the soup dropped!"

"Oh! Oh!" Mrs. Liffy's voice was a pained shriek. "Hark at her, your ladyship! Telling lies about me! Doesn't it prove she knows something about this burglary? She's trying to accuse me of—"

"Stop this row, the pair of you!" blazed Lady Pottsworth. "Liffy, you'll come with me at once to the police and report this robbery. You—Susie, or whatever your name is—you and your friend can get on your way. There's nothing more you can do here!"

"Thanks!" snorted Susie.

She didn't want telling twice. She grabbed Flossie by the arm and stamped out with her to the servants' door.

"I wish I'd never seen the rotten house," grated Susie. "And what's more, Flossie, I'd bet a month's wages I'm right about Liffy. She's a crook! She—"

With a shout Susie broke off.

"Hey, where's the tandem? It's gone!" She lurched up against Flossie. There was no doubt about it—the tandem was gone! Susie took one glance at the spot where they had left it, then her eyes flashed up to the window above. It was the open window of the pantry, and it told its own story.

"The crook's made off on our tandem, Flossie!" howled Susie. "He's pinched it!"

Flossie seemed to lose her senses, but Susie didn't. She heard a car starting up in the drive. Seizing Flossie by the arm she rushed her pell-mell round to the front of the house.

"Hi—wait for us, your ladyship! We're

coming with you to the police!" roared Susie. "The crook's pinched our tandem and all!"

The car seemed to be packed with people, and it was already moving off, but Susie took a flying leap on to the running-board, and somehow Flossie leapt aboard with her.

"The audacity!" gasped Mrs. Liffy.

"Make it snappy, driver!" yelled Susie.

"Giving orders now—hark at her!"

spluttered Mrs. Liffy.

The car streaked out through the gates, and the driver swung off on to the road to the village at full lick. Lady Pottsworth urged him on, and so did Susie. Their combined voices ought to have been heard at the police station, which was only a couple of miles away.

But that car didn't get as far!

Round the first bend it whizzed—and then the brakes went on with such a jerk that Susie narrowly missed being pitched off. The driver pulled up just in time to avert a collision.

The road was blocked! They had come straight upon the scene of an accident!

Policemen's lamps were shining. The officers were bending over someone. Their patrol-van stood parked at the side of the hedge. Something else was lying there, and at the sight of it a shout came from Susie.

"Our tandem! Look, Flossie! The tandem!"

But it was only the remains of what had once been the tandem! Both its wheels were buckled into hoop-iron, and the framework was just a shapeless wreck!

With a gasp of compassion Susie rushed to the group of policemen who were clustered round the driver.

"Poor chap, is he hurt?" she cried.

"No, he's all right!" said a sergeant, dryly.

Susie just had time to see an ugly man with a nutcracker face, sitting dazed in the middle of the road. Then she heard a screechy moan from Mrs. Liffy.

"Liffy!" boomed Lady Pottsworth. "It's your brother Albert!"

With a pounce Susie swooped upon a carpet-bag lying beside Albert.

"He belongs to Mrs. Liffy, does he? Well, you look in this bag, my lady," cried Susie, "and you'll find what belongs to you!"

"We've already inspected that property!" nodded the sergeant grimly.

Susie whipped open the bag, and Lady Pottsworth was gazing quivering at her valuable cutlery, plate, and the rest of the silverware stolen from her home.

It wasn't necessary to accuse Mrs. Liffy of helping her brother carry out this robbery—because Albert himself was accusing her, and they were both frantically blaming each other.

"I didn't dream you were going to steal anything, I didn't know you were in the house!" panted Mrs. Liffy.

"Yes you did—you let me in, the same as you did last time!" accused Albert. "You said it would be extra safe to-night, Mabel, because you'd got someone there you could lay the blame on to!"

"Ah, now I'm seeing daylight!" butted in Susie. "No wonder you changed your mind and let Flossie and me into the house, Mrs. Liffy. Your brother was going to do the little burgling job, and you were going to blame it on to us after we'd gone."

"How despicable!" Lady Pottsworth was aghast at such cunning.

The look the housekeeper turned on her brother should have rooted him to the spot, but it didn't. He was caught, and he didn't mind giving his sister away a bit.

"Come on, let's get going!" he said to the sergeant.

"Just a minute, No hurry. I'm not ready yet!"

The sergeant turned to Lady Pottsworth.

"You're lucky to have recovered your property, my lady!" he said. "This man Liffy has a car waiting half a mile down the road. He was on his way to it on this heret tandem, when he had a crash!"

Lady Pottsworth caught Susie thankfully by the hands.

"I owe everything to you, my dear. It was you who gave the alarm. This rascal stole your tandem to make his escape to the car—but in his panic he had a spill!"

Susie chuckled, and she gave Mrs. Liffy a nudge so that she wouldn't miss the rest:

"Not altogether in his panic, my lady. The full credit goes to our tandem. There weren't any brakes on it, you see. That's what Albert didn't know. Only we did—because that's what landed us in the ditch in the first place. Otherwise we'd never have called in at the manor to-night. The only question now"—said Susie brightly—"is who's going to pay for the repair of our tandem?"

WELL, the Liffys couldn't pay for it because they were both engaged in paying for lawyers to defend their innocent characters. But in any case, Flossie Green's tandem was past repair. Her ladyship recognised that at one glance. She gave a special reward of five pounds each to Susie and Flossie. And Susie now owns a posh tandem—complete with brakes—which she shares with Nellie Baker at Spollard's.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

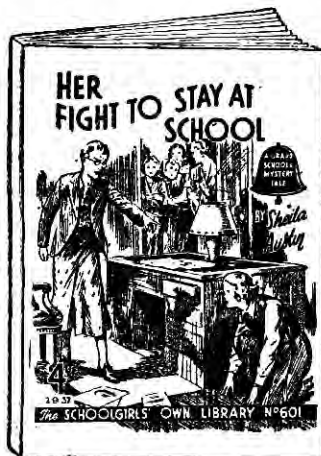
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GIRLS' CRYSTAL 18/9/37

The Shadow over the Holiday Camp



A thrilling detective story,
featuring Noel Raymond.

By PETER LANGLEY

THE INVISIBLE THIEF!

"FIFTEEN chalets empty, Mr. Raymond! If this goes on, dad and I will have to sell up."

Pretty, dark-haired Myrna Foyle spoke with a plucky smile, but her lips quivered as she looked away from the young detective—looked through the living-room doorway, where her crippled father sat in a wheel-chair, dejectedly scanning his accounts.

"Surely not as bad as that, Miss Foyle!" remarked Noel cheerfully. "I understand we're in for a fine September—and the visitors should flock here!"

Starting the holiday camp at Elsholm had been Myrna's idea, and for a time it had prospered. And then—

"Tell him the facts, Myrna," said her father huskily. "Mr. Raymond is a busy man; he'll be wondering why we sent for him."

Myrna glanced quickly at her father and, crossing to the door, turned the key in the lock.

"Just in case we're disturbed, Mr. Raymond," she explained. "People pop in for all sorts of things—cigarettes, confectionery, tea. We have a busy time—though not so busy as we'd like. You see, these thefts have been going on for several weeks now and rumours are beginning to get round. Five prospective visitors cancelled their bookings this morning!"

Noel whistled softly. "Bad as that, eh? And you've no idea of the thief?"

"None!" declared Mr. Foyle. "We've made inquiries, of course, and doubled the watch—the patrol, we call them. I daren't call in the police for fear of the scandal—not that they could do much good. The thief, who ever it is, is amazingly cunning. Makes his raids only at night—and while people are actually in their chalets!"

The young detective raised his eyebrows. "Sounds like the work of an expert burglar; has anyone ever caught sight of him?"

"No—that's the amazing part of it," put in Myrna. "He seems to come and go like a shadow."

Just then there came a furious knocking on the door.

"More trouble!" muttered Mr. Foyle, and he looked pleadingly at the young detective. "You'll help us out, Mr. Raymond?"

Noel nodded, his expression suddenly keenly alert.

"Wait!" he breathed, as the girl moved hurriedly towards the door. "Keep my name

out of this! Remember, I'm just a visitor, booking up accommodation here. Ted Smith's as good a name as any other. Don't consult me; go ahead as though I'm no account—and leave me to do the buttin' in."

Myrna nodded. As she unlocked the door, a stoutish, red-faced man bounced in furiously.

"Why, Mr. Garret—what ever is the matter?" gasped Myrna.

The newcomer waved her aside. "Matter? Enough's the matter! I want a word with your father—ah, there you are, Foyle! What sort of place do you call this? Can't trust one's belongings out of one's sight—"

"You've been robbed?" inquired Jim Foyle huskily.

"Robbed! I'll say I have," spluttered the irate visitor. "Gold watch, wife's rings, silver cigarette-case—and all in a night! Thirty quids' worth of stuff, if a penny!"

Myrna drew in a sharp breath that was almost a sob, as she glanced appealingly at Noel.

The young detective smiled blandly, carefully polishing a monocle and inserting it in his eye.

"Jove, sounds excitin', what?" he commented. "Jolly old jewellery vanishin' into thin air!" He beamed at the angry Mr. Garret. "Did you lock an' bolt the door—an' so forth?"

The other glared. "Who are you?" he demanded. "What business is it of yours?"

"This—this is Mr. Smith, from London," put in Myrna hastily. "He's just called to inquire about booking a chalet."

Mr. Garret snorted.

"Well, if he stays here, he'll be a fool! No one's safe in this place. We'll all be murdered in our beds next. My wife and I aren't staying here another night; and what's more,

I'm not paying the bill till my property's been found—or till we've been compensated for the loss. The best thing you can do, Mr. Foyle, is to send for the police."

But Noel intervened. "Oh, we can send for them later!" he drawled. "Let's have a look into things ourselves first of all."

Mr. Garret snorted, but Myrna's father trundled his wheel-chair forward.

"Yes, we may be able to find the missing property," he said.

"I suppose, Mr. Garret," remarked Noel, "that you didn't see or hear anythin' of this Johnny?"

"Well, it's funny you should say that," was the answer, "but my wife did say she heard a sound in the small hours of the morning—like someone whistling. It made her nervous, and I got up and bolted the door. But I'll swear there couldn't have been anyone else in the chalet then; and if there had been anyone hiding, they couldn't have got out, because the door was still bolted in 'the morning.'"

Noel's eyes narrowed with sudden interest. "Whistling," he thought. "That's interesting—very." Aloud he said: "An' when did you first discover the things were missing?"

"As soon as I got up this morning," announced Mr. Garret. "My wife missed her rings first—then I couldn't find my cigarette-case and watch. I came along right away to complain."

By now they had reached the chalets—row upon row of gaily painted huts, each completely self-contained and set in its own small patch of green, with windows facing on to the attractively laid out gardens of the holiday camp.

A little group of holiday-makers, the men in white flannels, the girls in summery frocks, were loitering near one of the chalets—drawn there by curiosity.

The young detective was keeping up his pose as a somewhat fatuous young man with time on his hands and an inquisitive disposition.

He beamed pleasantly at the group through his monocle, then turned his attention to the chalets themselves.

They were compact little residences, consisting of a single room, with one or two beds, tables and chairs, and a loft for storing luggage.

Each had an attractive porch, with a small window on either side.

The possibility of anyone being able to break in and steal while the tenants were actually at home seemed very remote.

Yet apparently this had been done—and on at least a dozen occasions in the last few weeks!

Mrs. Garret, a plump, excitable woman, confirmed her husband's story—adding one or two details of her own. She had been awakened in the early hours of the morning by sounds that made her nervous; in addition to the faint whistling, mentioned by her husband, there had been a scraping sound—and a dull thump.

Every precaution was taken to protect the belongings of the guests at the Holiday Camp. The grounds were patrolled at night; doors and windows were kept locked. Yet the amazing disappearances continued. Money, jewellery and watches vanished as though into thin air.

She had aroused her husband, and he had put on the light; but nothing had appeared amiss and, after bolting the door, he returned to bed—without bothering to look if anything was missing.

"But I'm certain my rings were still in the box on the bedside table, where I always put them," she declared. "And my husband always leaves his watch and cigarette-case in his jacket pocket at night—and that was hanging at the foot of the bed. I can't understand it!"

"Well, I've got my suspicions," put in one of the onlookers, a sharp-featured, rather loudly dressed man, who occupied the chalet next to the Garrets. "If you take my tip, Mr. Foyle, you'll question that carpenter fellow who works about the place."

"Jesse Hodgson?" gasped Myrna, her cheeks rather pink. "Why, how can you say such a thing, Mr. Calder? The old man's been with us since we started, and he's as straight as a die!"

The sharp-featured man shrugged.

"Maybe; I'm not arguing one way or the other. But I'd like to know what Hodgson was doing up and about in the small hours of this morning?"

An interested murmur went up from the onlookers.

Noel glanced sharply at the speaker.

"So you were awake then?" he inquired.

The man flushed.

"What about it? I felt rather restless—couldn't sleep. I got up and glanced out of the window. It was just three o'clock, because I happened to look at my watch. It was pitch-dark outside; but I could see a light in Hodgson's cottage, and someone moving about. Then the door opened, and Hodgson came out; I recognised him by his limp. I didn't think anything of it at the time, but went back to bed."

The murmurs increased; all eyes were turned towards the whitewashed, old-fashioned cottage situated beyond the pleasure gardens in the most uncared-for part of the grounds.

A bent, grey-haired figure, in shirt-sleeves, could be seen at work in a tiny strip of garden adjoining.

"It's a shame to put it on poor old Hodgson!" declared Myrna.

There were murmurs of sympathy from several girls in the group.

"You'd better fetch Jesse along, my dear," muttered Mr. Foyle, in worried tones. "Let him speak for himself."

The girl hurried away, her head held high. Noel, meanwhile, had not been simply an idle spectator; his keen eyes and ears had missed nothing of importance. With one foot on the step of the chalet, he pretended to be tying his shoelace, while he took a swift survey of the interior, scanning the floor, the walls, and the ceiling.

By the time that Myrna returned, accompanied by the grey-haired carpenter, he had come to certain conclusions.

Jesse Hodgson had kindly, wrinkled features, which, at the moment, were clouded with anxiety.

"What's this, sir?" he demanded, halting in front of Jim Foyle. "Miss Foyle's tellin' me there's some talk of me bein' dishonest—"

"No, no, Hodgson!" put in Mr. Foyle hastily. "It's just that we're making some inquiries about these mysterious thefts. There was another one last night—a number of valuable things were stolen; and Mr. Calder here"—he indicated the sharp-featured man—"mentioned that he saw you moving about in your cottage in the early hours of the morning."

"That's right, sir." There was no trace of hesitation in Jesse Hodgson's frank reply. "I was up—and for a reason I'm not ashamed. It's Poucer, my cat—the best mouser as ever was! He's been rare bad, sir, ever since his foot was caught in a trap, three weeks ago. I thought it was on the mend, but last night the poor thing was that restive I had to go out to him. I've had him in the shed outside, but last night I decided to bring him in for more comfort, like. I didn't go no farther than my own garden."

There was a murmur of sympathy, and the sharp-featured Mr. Calder looked a trifle discomfited.

"We've only your word for it, Hodgson," he

rejoined, his eyes narrowing. "What was to prevent you from slipping up here in the dark, and creeping into Mr. Garret's chalet?"

The old man glared, and Noel intervened quickly to avert a scene.

"I say, y'know," he remarked pleasantly, "I've been thinkin'. I don't see how anyone could have entered Mr. Garret's chalet last night—or in the small hours of the morning—without leaving traces. It was rainin' heavily from nine o'clock onwards, till daylight this morning. You can see where a big puddle formed outside the porch; it's hardly dried up now. It would need a pretty smart jumper to cross that puddle without steppin' into it. If the thief had stepped into it, he'd have left muddy footprints on the porch. There are no marks there—look for yourself."

An interested murmur greeted this argument.

"But someone must have got in!" protested the sharp-featured man. "Unless you're suggesting Mr. Garret's telling lies about his stolen property."

"Tut, tut," put in Noel, raising his hand and turning blandly to the red-faced tenant of the chalet. "I happen to know Mr. Garret's tellin' the truth. Is this your watch, sir?"

Unexpectedly he held out his other hand.

With a startled ejaculation, Mr. Garret pounced on his property—a massive gold watch, slightly dented, and its face shattered as though by a blow.

"Where did you find it?" he demanded, as a surprised gasp went round the group.

"Under the chalet steps, lyin' on its face—an' obviously dropped there by the thief," explained Noel pleasantly. "Naturally," he added, turning to the bewildered onlookers, "Mr. Garret wouldn't have broken his own watch and thrown it outside where it was found. Just as certainly Jesse Hodgson couldn't have got in at that time—"

"Why not?" demanded the sharp-featured Mr. Calder.

"Because," explained Noel calmly, "it was exactly three o'clock when you saw Jesse Hodgson moving about in his cottage; and Mr. Garret's watch stopped at a minute to three—as the thief dropped it while escaping! Feller couldn't be in two places at once. Besides, as I pointed out, the thief couldn't have got in through the door without leavin' traces; he couldn't have got in through the windows, because they were shut; an' there's only a small ventilator in the roof, about the size of my arm."

"But what—what does it all mean?" whispered Myrna Foyle, her face very pale. "Who could have got in? It's happened before, when the doors have been locked—and always at night. I've questioned the patrol, and he swears he's seen no one about at those times. It—it's uncanny—"

Her words were interrupted by a muffled scream. The door of one of the adjacent chalets was flung open, and an elderly woman dashed out, still in her dressing-gown, her hair awry.

It was still early—barely nine o'clock—and many of the less energetic campers had not yet risen.

"Mrs. Humphries," gasped Myrna, "what—what is it?"

The woman stared round her distractedly, her hands clutching at her neck.

"My necklace!" she sobbed. "It was my husband's present! I never leave it out of my sight. It's been stolen from me while I was asleep!"

And, removing her hands, she revealed to the horrified onlookers a long, zigzag scratch, where the necklace had been snatched from her by the ruthless fingers of the invisible thief!

NOEL KEEPS WATCH

COOLLY and urbanely, Noel took charge, without assuming any air of authority. Tactfully he contrived to soothe the distracted woman, putting certain careless questions.

What he learnt was sufficiently amazing. Mrs. Humphries swore that the door of her chalet had been both locked and bolted. She was of a nervous disposition, and did not

like sleeping alone; but her husband had been obliged to return to town on business, and she had taken the precaution to lock herself in.

A swift search of the chalet revealed only one clue of any significance. This was a curious, blurred imprint on a brass lamp-bracket protruding from the wall several feet above the bed.

The bracket was dusty, and the impression was not that of a hand. It looked rather as though a thick rope had been coiled round the bracket.

The young detective examined it closely, kneeling on the bed; and there was a strange gleam in his eyes as he finally left the chalet.

Seeking out Myrna Foyle, he found that girl almost in tears.

"This—this is going to ruin us, Mr. Raymond," she declared.

Noel pressed her hand reassuringly.

"It may not come to that, Miss Foyle," he said. "I want you to leave this to me. So far, no one knows I'm a detective; I'm just an interfering young fellow, with more leisure than sense. I want you to let it leak out that I've got money—and valuables. I'm going to take one of the empty chalets—next door to the one occupied by that fellow Calder, the one who accused old Hodgson. By the way, how long has he been staying here?"

Myrna stared.

"For nearly a month now, I believe—Oh"—she started—"you don't suppose that he—"

"I'm not supposing anything yet," interrupted Noel dryly. "What's worrying me is how anyone contrived to get into those chalets. I've spent the last hour examining them, while the campers were at breakfast. I tried the floors and walls for concealed trapdoors; I even climbed on to the roof! Old Hodgson, who caught sight of me, obviously thought I was crazy, though I believe the old chap's grateful to me for having taken his part."

"Oh, he is!" declared Myrna, smiling faintly through her tears. "He was terribly upset at being accused of dishonesty; he's been to sea for most of his life, and only left his ship because of an accident to his foot. I think it was horrid of Mr. Calder to try to throw suspicion on him."

Noel nodded gravely, lighting a cigarette.

"I think I'll have a chat with Hodgson," he said. "He may be able to help me."

But before seeking out the old carpenter, Noel did a little reconnoitring on his own. He paid particular attention to certain bushes and trees that lay between the chalets and the swimming-pool—one of the amenities that had made the holiday camp at one time so popular.

It was his theory that the "invisible" thief must have reached the chalets by a devious route—as he would have been spotted by the watchful patrol had he attempted to cross the open grounds.

And the only way to reach the chalets, under cover, was via the swimming-pool.

Noel found one or two curious traces in the bushes; several twigs had been snapped and leaves crushed—some of them out of his reach!

He was thinking furiously by the time he reached the pool.

A merry crowd was assembled there, in spite of the startling events of the morning.

Noel was greeted by several smiles and nods; he was accepted as a wealthy and rather eccentric young man, who proffered the unconventional surroundings of a holiday camp to the more formal atmosphere of a hotel.

And it was his purpose to play up to that impression.

He greeted several of the young men, proffering cigarettes in his gold case—making some show of a bulky leather wallet as he purchased refreshments at the kiosk adjoining the pool.

Then he entered one of the huts, as though intending to change for a swim. Instead, he climbed on to the seat, and peered through the narrow ventilator at the back.

To the left he had a glimpse of the road, and Jesse Hodgson's little cottage; to the right he could see the main camp buildings—the long dining-room, the library, and reading-room.

Satisfied by his scrutiny, Noel left the hut and sauntered away from the pool.

He overtook the sharp-featured Phillip Calder, and entered into casual conversation about the weather. Calder glanced at him rather askance; he had not forgotten how Noel had taken Jesse Hodgson's part. But he accepted one of the young detective's cigarettes—and, unknowingly, left this thumb-mark clearly imprinted on the gold case!

Noel wrapped the case carefully in his silk handkerchief, before paying a visit to Jesse Hodgson's cottage.

He found the old carpenter busy in his workshop at the rear, fastening new locks to chalet doors.

"An' we need 'em, by all signs!" he muttered, shaking his grizzled head. "It's a nice state of affairs when a body can't sleep sound, for fear of some thieving scoundrel creeping in unawares. Then to accuse an old fellow like me of havin' a hand in it! Dunno what the world's comin' to! It was good of you, sir, to stand up for me like you did!"

"Not at all!" returned Noel cheerfully. "You always find people ready to make mischief out of the most innocent actions. By the way, how's the pet?"

"You mean old Pouncer, sir?" Jesse Hodgson's rugged features cleared. "Much better this morning, thank you, sir. That foot of his ought to be healed pretty soon. Like to see him, sir?"

"Rather!" rejoined Noel, smiling at the old man's obvious eagerness. "Always did like cats."

Hodgson led the way to an adjoining shed, pushing open the door.

Noel saw a big black Persian, one of its fore-feet bandaged, lying on a heap of straw. It looked sleepy and well-fed, and it purred contentedly as Noel bent to stroke it.

There was a saucer of milk at its side and a plate of meat—practically untouched. A paper bag on a shelf apparently contained fresh provisions. The old ship's carpenter was obviously attached to his pet.

Noel questioned the old man about the routine of the holiday camp, the times of meals, and other points of interest.

"You're meanin' to stay, then, sir—in spite of this 'ere scare?" inquired the old man.

Noel grinned, patting his pockets.

"Why not? I'd like to see any jolly old thief try to break into my chalet! I fancy I'd be more than a match for him—what?"

"I reckon you would, sir," replied the other admiringly. "I fancy you're a wide-awake gent, if ever there was one."

"Thanks!" rejoined Noel, cheerfully accepting the compliment. "I'll sleep with one eye open to-night—and if anyone starts any funny business, I'll be ready for 'em! But keep that to yourself; don't want to put the chappie on his guard."

A few minutes later he left the cottage and strolled across the grounds—to join in a strenuous game of tennis with some of the younger set.

For the rest of the day Noel entered wholeheartedly into the life of the holiday camp—all the while keeping his eyes and ears very much open.

After supper, he made his way to the chalet that had been reserved for him. Carefully closing and locking the door, he examined the sum-total of his day's investigation.

A few finger-prints on various objects in his possession; these he carefully labelled, after tracing them on a sheet of fine paper. Then there was a piece of broken twig, caught in which was a length of coarse black hair. This he had found in the shrubbery near the swimming pool. Finally he took a paper bag from his pocket, and emptied into his hand a number of smooth, round objects—the size of pebbles. He stared at them with a grim smile.

"We're getting warmer," he murmured, "but even now it doesn't make sense! Well, to-night we'll see—what we will see!"

Just then there came a gentle tap on the

door; Noel hastily concealed his various "finds," and rose quickly to unlock the door.

Myrna Foyle stood outside. She looked pale and worried, and she carried a tray, with a vacuum flask of coffee and some sandwiches.

"I—I thought you might like some refreshments, as you're determined to sit up all night, Mr. Raymond," she said, with a faint smile. "I do hope everything will be all right—"

"Thanks awfully," said Noel, as he took the tray. "Don't you worry, Miss Foyle; if there's another attempt to-night, I mean to catch the fellow responsible!"

The girl gave a little sigh of relief; rather hesitantly she slipped a hand into her pocket, taking out something that glistened in the faint light.

Noel raised his eyebrows as he saw that it was a gold bracelet set with stones.

"It belongs to Miss Crawford—one of our visitors," explained Myrna. "She asked me to mind it for her—but—I'm scared. Mr. Raymond, would you take charge of it, please? I'd feel so much safer if you had it."

Noel grinned boyishly at the compliment; he took the bracelet, slipping it into his pocket.

against the mists of sleep. A distant clock was striking one.

Instinctively the young detective's hand crept under his pillow; he was convinced that there was someone—or something—in the chalet beside himself!

Whether a sound had reached his ears he could not say; the pale moonlight streamed through the little window, but there was no sign of anyone in the room.

And then Noel stiffened, a soft hiss escaping his lips. His eyes, still dazed by sleep, had turned towards the wall opposite; and there, grotesquely silhouetted in the moonlight, was the shadow of a hand!

Revolver in hand, the young detective sprang from the bed; he heard a scuffle—a thud—and a faint, peculiar whistle.

At the same instant, the shadow vanished—and Noel leaped for the door.

He saw that the black thread was unbroken, as he swiftly pulled back the bolts and flung open the door.

From the near-by bushes came a stealthy rustling.

"Stop," shouted Noel, "or I'll fire!"



A startled ejaculation escaped Noel's lips. The bracelet he had promised to look after for Myrna had gone. The mystery-thief's latest victim had been Noel himself!

"Don't worry," he said, "it'll be as safe as houses! I'm taking special precautions to-night, Miss Foyle."

A few minutes later the girl departed, and Noel set about his preparations.

First he locked and bolted the door and secured the windows. Sufficient air came into the chalet by way of the narrow ventilator in the luggage loft, and Noel was prepared for a little discomfort.

Across the door and windows he attached several lengths of fine black thread. Finally, he laid his gold cigarette-case and wallet on the table, in full view of the window—after attaching them first to a piece of thin, stout twine, the other end of which was secured round his wrist.

Then, fully dressed, he lay down on the small camp-bed and waited, a revolver within reach beneath the pillow.

The hours dragged past, and nothing happened; in spite of himself, Noel began to feel sleepy. He got up and looked out of the window—but, though it was a moonlit night, there was no sign of anyone stirring.

He drank a cup of strong black coffee and ate a few sandwiches before returning to the bed.

But the coffee seemed to make his drowsiness worse, instead of waking him. He began to find it an effort to keep his eyes open. Almost before he knew what had happened, he was dozing.

Noel sat up with a sudden start, fighting

He leaped for the bushes as he spoke, whipping out his torch. But though he made a swift and thorough search, there was no sign of the ghostly intruder.

The young detective raced back to the chalet; his cigarette-case and wallet were still on the table—attached to the twine. Evidently the mysterious thief had been unable to get away with them, though it was obvious from their position that he had tried.

Swiftly Noel examined the gold case by the light of his torch; a grim, bewildered expression flashed into his eyes.

There were marks on the polished metal—the imprint of a hand; but it was no ordinary hand!

There came the sound of voices and hurrying footsteps; his shout had aroused other members of the camp. They were crowding round the door, and, among them, Noel noticed the sharp-featured Mr. Calder. He was the only one who was fully dressed.

Myrna Foyle pushed her way through the group.

"Mr. Raymond, what—what's happened?" she gasped.

Noel shrugged, his eyes hard as he stared round the group of startled campers.

"Our ghostly friend has paid me a visit," he remarked grimly; "but I fancy he got away empty-handed. I suggest we make a search of the grounds; he can't have gone far."

Myrna drew a deep breath of relief.

"Then, the bracelet you're minding for me—it's safe?" she whispered.

The young detective started. In his anxiety to trap the thief he had almost forgotten the bracelet. He slipped his hand into his pocket, and a startled ejaculation was torn from his lips.

The bracelet had vanished; the mystery thief had not, after all, got away empty-handed!

And Noel was to blame.

ENTER—THE MYSTERY PROFESSOR!

MYRNA FOYLE'S grey eyes were tearful with reproach.

"You mean you're leaving us—without clearing up the mystery, Mr. Raymond?" she breathed. "Without finding the stolen property?"

Noel shrugged. There was much he would have liked to have said, but he knew that other ears might be listening.

It was the following morning, and the young detective, suitcase in hand, was taking his leave.

"I'm afraid so, Miss Foyle," he said loudly. "You see, I've several urgent engagements—social an' otherwise. Besides, these thefts are gettin' on my nerves! Awfully sorry, an' all that, but I've a train to catch!"

He raised his hat with a flourish, and grasped the girl's reluctant hand. A moment later he was striding away towards the gate.

Myrna stared after him for a moment, biting her lip; then she returned to the house.

Out of sight of the others, she opened her hand. A little slip of paper lay crushed in her palm. Opening it with shaking fingers, she read the hastily scrawled message:

"Cheer up! All will be well. A lot may happen in the next twelve hours. N. R."

A momentary gleam of hope crept into Myrna's eyes as she went out to pacify the agitated campers.

It was after lunch that a new visitor arrived—in a luxurious car, driven by a chauffeur. He was a grey-bearded, eccentric-looking man, and he brought a quantity of luggage, including a large square box, which he refused to allow out of his sight.

While he went into the office to book up accommodation, the chauffeur—actually Noel's manservant, Parker—chatted with some of the curious campers.

He informed them, confidentially, that his boss was Professor Rainham, a wealthy and eccentric collector. Tired of hotels, the professor had decided to try the unconventional life of a holiday camp.

"Between you an' me, the old chap's a bit—" Parker touched his head meaningly. "Carries his collection of antique jewellery around with him in a box; won't let it out of his sight. He's just askin' for trouble!"

The news spread rapidly. By tea-time the eccentric professor and his priceless collection were the talk of the camp.

Behind his grey beard and tinted spectacles, Noel Raymond smiled dryly as he overheard various snatches of conversation. He ambled about the grounds, chatting to all and sundry; while the mysterious brown box was locked in his chalet, in spite of Mr. Foyle's urgent advice.

Noel had not taken the Foyles into his confidence, for fear that they might inadvertently give the game away. He was anxious at all costs to keep his identity a secret.

As the evening drew on, an air of restrained anxiety was apparent among those left in the camp. Even the younger and more light-hearted visitors were subdued. None knew when the mysterious night-prowler would strike again—and who would be the next victim.

After supper the pseudo professor entered his chalet, locking and bolting the door. Soon the rest of the campers retired.

But there was one person who had no intention of sleeping that night.

Just before midnight Myrna Foyle crept from the house, her trembling hand grasping an old-fashioned pistol belonging to her father.

At all cost she meant to protect the eccentric

new visitor—even if it meant standing guard throughout the night!

It required a lot of pluck for Myrna to have taken this step; but she had been nerved to it by sheer desperation.

Noel Raymond, in spite of his mysterious promise, had not returned. Her crippled father could do nothing. There were the men employed about the camp; but by now Myrna felt she could trust no one. She meant to rely on herself.

It was a dark, windy night, and the moon was hidden by banks of cloud. Myrna took up her stand near the professor's chalet.

Through the partly drawn curtains she could see a dim light burning in the room. The professor's bearded figure was plainly visible in the bed; and, to her horror, Myrna saw that he had left his mysterious box, standing open, on a chair by the bed!

Myrna's heart thudded painfully as her trembling fingers closed on the old-fashioned pistol. She had never handled a weapon in her life, but she hoped to be able to scare off the mysterious thief—if he appeared.

But when—and how—would he appear?

A distant clock commenced to boom midnight. The girl stiffened, her eyes wide and dilated, peering through the window of the chalet.

She thought she heard a faint scuffling sound—a thud.

Then, abruptly, a stifled scream was torn from her lips. Her horrified eyes saw a grotesque, shadowy figure moving inside the chalet. It seemed to swing itself from the ceiling above the professor's bed, as though about to spring on him.

Wildly Myrna fired her pistol, shattering the window; a scream for help escaped her lips as she turned and ran blindly for the nearest chalet.

HAVE YOU WON A PRIZE?

The names of the lucky winners in our recent "Story Competition" appear on page 14.

A figure leaped from the shadows, seizing her by the arm. A choking cry escaped Myrna's lips as she turned—to stare in blank amazement into the bearded features of the eccentric professor!

"All right, Miss Foyle," whispered Noel, whipping off his beard. "That chap in the bed's only a dummy! I've been outside all the time."

With a little sob of relief Myrna caught at his sleeve.

"But—but there's something in there!" she breathed. "I saw him moving—"

"Excellent," snapped Noel, his eyes grim. "We'll have him in half a jiffy. Ah—here come the others."

The startled campers, aroused by the sound of the shot, were streaming out of their chalets. The sharp-featured Calder was among them. Then old Jesse Hodgson appeared, limping from the direction of his cottage, stick in hand.

"What's happened, sir?" he demanded hoarsely.

"There's been another theft," snapped Noel, staring round the group. "Or an attempted theft. And this time the thief's not escaped. He's here, now, within a few yards of us!"

The campers exchanged startled glances, staring at one another suspiciously. Calder looked uneasy.

"What are you getting at?" he demanded. "Are you accusing us?"

Noel smiled grimly.

"No one present could possibly have entered that chalet without being seen," he remarked surprisingly. "Miss Foyle's been watching it—and so have I. Yet the thief is among us—if invisible!"

"But that is sheer nonsense!" spluttered Calder angrily.

"I'm not so sure," rejoined Noel. "Kindly see to it that no one moves from this spot. I'm just going to ascertain if anything's been stolen."

He entered the empty chalet and emerged, staggering under the weight of the mysterious box—its lid now closed.

He placed it carefully on the ground.

"I want you all to witness what this box contains," he remarked. "Kindly step nearer—all of you—while I open the lid."

Curiously, the little group pressed forward. Bending, Noel pressed a concealed spring in the box; the lid flew open.

A startled shout went up from the men—a scream from the girls. Something small and hairy sprang from the box, and, chattering in fear and excitement, made a bee-line for old Jesse Hodgson, scrambling up to his shoulder.

"Great Scott, a monkey!" shouted Calder.

"Precisely," snapped Noel, straightening swiftly, "and he's returned to his owner!"

With a furious snarl old Jesse Hodgson turned—and with amazing agility made a dash for the bushes.

But Noel was too quick for him. He leaped at the man, bringing him to the ground and snatching off his grey wig.

Hodgson glared up furiously; the others could see now that he was a middle-aged man, with close-cropped dark hair, and a cunning face.

He tried to put up a fight, but the next moment a pair of handcuffs had clicked on his wrists.

NOEL smiled round the group of bewildered campers. Myrna and her father were there, but Jesse Hodgson was not present. He had been marched off into custody by two constables, hastily summoned by phone.

"The man was clever," explained Noel, "but not quite clever enough. He was once a sailor—as he told you—but he did not leave sea because of an accident. He's badly 'wanted' for various thefts from his shipmates and officers.

"He'd trained his monkey to steal—and pick pockets; and when he took the job here, he saw a chance of making a nice little harvest.

"The 'injured' cat was simply a blind; he needed some excuse in case it should get round that he was keeping an animal in his cottage. Unfortunately cats don't eat nuts—and it was finding a bag of nuts in the shed adjoining the cottage that first clinched my suspicions!

"That was Clue No. 1. You see, I had decided, already, that it was literally impossible for any man—or woman—to have entered the chalets and committed the thefts. Then, he made a mistake in letting me stroke his cat; I found that its bandaged paw was no more injured than the others!

"Finally, I traced the way by which the monkey must have come—via the swimming-pool and the shrubbery. Still I hadn't sufficient proof to expose the man; so I set my final trap—with the aid of a spring-box, baited with various pieces of cheap and glittering jewellery.

"Hodgson's method wash to smuggle the monkey into the hut during the day—in the luggage-loft. The creature slept there till it was dark, then, in obedience to its master's whistle, it crept down into the chalet, stole what it could, and escaped via the ventilator.

"I strongly suspect that Hodgson must have contrived to slip a sleeping-draught into my coffee last night; but the monkey left the mark of its hand on my cigarette-case—and gave me my final clue."

Myrna's eyes were shining as she held out her hand.

"I don't know how dad and I can ever thank you enough, Mr. Raymond," she breathed. "All the stolen jewellery's been recovered; it was hidden in his cottage. And dad thinks that the publicity is going to help us."

"Splendid!" replied Noel cheerfully. "But look here, Miss Foyle, before you're quite booked up, you might reserve me a chalet for the remainder of the season. I'm going to run down here for week-ends, when I need a real change!"

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

"THE SECRET OF THE PINK ROSE"—That's the title of next Friday's thrilling detective story. Don't miss it.

KENNEL-MAID at PHANTOM ABBEY



By
GAIL
WESTERN

BRIDGET'S BOOBY-TRAP

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 made friends with Remus, a homeless black retriever, and in his collar she found a note in her grandfather's handwriting. This hinted at riches which might be hers, providing Remus won the Lorne Abbey Cup.

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 dogs—two Pekingese, two young greyhounds, and a comical little Scottie named Pogo.

Bridget laid a booby-trap in the old ruins, and one day she and Kitty heard the sound of a crash, followed by excited barking from Remus.

"Tis the Green Friar!" exclaimed the Irish girl. "Bedad, Remus has got the Phantom Monk trapped!"

Eagerly the two girls went to investigate.

ON tiptoe the two girls crept across to the ruins. Their hearts were thumping and their faces were pale. Even Bridget, though she pretended to be eager to get to grips with the Phantom Monk, was secretly quivering with apprehension.

Kitty pluckily smothered her fears. One fact alone gave her comfort. Remus was in the Abbot's Kitchen. That loyal dog had the spectre cornered. While he was there they were not likely to come to any harm.

With Bridget at her side, Kitty stepped through the crumbling doorway. Inside, it was dark, but clearly she could see the trap the Irish girl had rigged up. The big tin bath now lay overturned on the stone floor, empty. Then she heard an excited bark, and saw Remus turn to welcome her.

"Good dog—hold him," she gasped; then abruptly she stopped, staring in amazement.

For it was a middle-aged man, wearing rough tweeds and leggings, who cowered back against the wall. Water streamed off him and his face was contorted both with anger and fear.

Suspicion in her eyes, Kitty faced the man. "What are you doing here?" she demanded. "Who are you?"

The man glared, mopping at his wet clothes with a huge coloured handkerchief.

"I'll tell you fast enough—once you've called off that dog," he snarled.

He clenched an angry fist and took an aggressive step forward. Instantly Remus gave a rumbling growl. Next moment the dog would have hurled himself at the menacing stranger, but Kitty called him back.

"Down, Remus—down," she ordered.

The black retriever obeyed, but as he sank back on his haunches he kept his gaze riveted on the man, as though to warn him what would happen if he dared touch his beloved mistress.

Bridget flourished her stick.

"Don't listen to his blarney, me darlint. Let Remus guard him while I go for the police. 'Tis the Phantom Monk he is. I tell you, even if he isn't togged up as a ghost!"

"Phantom Monk!" The man stared blankly. "What nonsense is this?" he demanded. "Do you think I've nothing better to do than to dress up as a spook in order to frighten a couple of girls?" He laughed harshly. "I came here on business," he went on. "Business connected with that dog!" And he glared at the retriever.

Kitty stared incredulously.

"Come to see me about Remus!" she exclaimed. "Then why didn't you come to the front door?"

"I did go to the front door," was the unexpected reply, "but I got no answer. Then,

hearing voices, I started to stroll across the garden to look for you. But that brute"—he glared again at Remus—"went for me like a mad thing and chased me in here. Then—"

He broke off, scowling at Bridget's booby-trap and mopping angrily at his dripping coat.

"Then I stumbled against that trap," he ended savagely. "Look at me—look at my clothes! You'll be sorry you ever tried to fool Ralph Tyler."

"Ralph Tyler!" echoed Kitty in dismay. She recognised the name. This furious man must be the tenant of the little cottage farther along the road.

"Yes—Ralph Tyler. A good friend, my girl, but a mighty bad enemy, as you'll find to your cost. I came just to make a neighbourly complaint, but after what's happened I'll not rest until I've seen that brute destroyed!"

Kitty's face went white. Already there had been one unjust complaint about Remus' behaviour; surely she was not to receive another! "Oh, please don't be angry," she gulped. "It's all been a silly mistake. You see, the Phantom Monk's been trying to scare the life out of us. That's why we fixed up that booby-trap. It wasn't meant for you at all."

Appealingly she clutched him by the arm. "Remus isn't really dangerous. Actually he's as gentle as a kitten. He must have taken you for a—for a burglar or something. Please forgive him. Let me have your coat. We'll take it indoors and dry it."

But the cottager refused to be appeased. His scowl remained.

"You can't get round me," he growled. "Miss Bligh's told me about you and your ways. And she's terrified of that dog, too! Well, I'm going to support her in her complaint."

Kitty and Bridget exchanged horrified glances. Once again they had Judith to thank for this unpleasantness.

The Irish girl gave an indignant sniff.

"Shure, and 'tis no sportsman you are if you don't accept Miss Kitty's apology," she declared. "After all, Remus hasn't done you any harm."

"No harm!" The man laughed angrily. "I like that! No harm, indeed! Why, the brute's rooted up half my garden, and last night he got amongst the hens and killed two of my best layers!"

"It's not true!" Hotly Kitty rushed to her pet's defence. "Remus wouldn't hurt a fly!" "Of course he wouldn't," agreed Bridget, and she glared at the cottager. "How do you know it was him?" she demanded. "Did you see him?"

"No, perhaps I didn't. But it was him all the same. Everyone knows what a brute he is. Why, only yesterday he attacked Miss Bligh. A brute like him oughtn't to be allowed to roam around."

Stealthily the ghostly arm cut through the shaft of moonlight. The long fingers of the hand stretched downwards . . . hovered over the book Kitty had come to the library to fetch. The Green Friar of Phantom Abbey had appeared again!

"You're cruelly misjudging him," protested Kitty desperately.

But Ralph Tyler refused to listen. His mind seemed to have been made up. Snatching up his hat, he stamped past the two girls and strode away.

Kitty gulped. There were tears of resentment in her eyes as she stooped and flung a fond arm around her pet.

As Remus licked her cheek, her lips set angrily. What a mean thing Mr. Bligh's daughter was!

Kitty blinked back the tears, and her arm tightened around Remus. Bridget put a comforting hand on her shoulder.

"Don't you fret, me darlint!" she urged. "The police won't take any notice of that man. If you ask me, he's as bad as Judith Bligh. Bedad, but he may be the Green Friar, after all!"

But Kitty shook her head. She couldn't believe that. Indeed, the whole business baffled her.

"I don't know—I give it up," she murmured wearily. "I only wish—" She broke off as she glimpsed something lying on the floor. It was a book dealing with dog shows. "I suppose Mr. Tyler must have dropped it," she said. "Take care of it, will you, Bridget? I expect he'll call back for it. But I must see to Nippy and the others."

Leaving Bridget to go into the kitchen to prepare the food, Kitty called Pogo, the comical Scottie, and Mrs. Fergusson's other four dogs to her.

Snapping on their leads, she led them to the old stables that had been converted into comfortable kennels. During the next hour she was busy, grooming them and feeding them.

Remus watched her every movement. His long tongue lolling out, and his jaw curled up as though into an amused grin. He seemed to think it funny that so much attention should be needed—especially as far as the two Pokes were concerned. For Kitty spent a long time on them, combing their silky coats, treating their delicate ears, and generally waiting on them as if they were a couple of ladies about to go to a ball.

But at last all five had been groomed and fed. Having locked them up in their quarters for the night, Kitty went indoors to have her own supper. Remus went with her, for he was allowed to dine with the family.

Kitty gave him an anxious look, as she watched him contentedly squatting on the kitchen floor, chewing at an enormous beef bone Bridget had found for him.

"I think you'd better be locked up at nights, old lad," she said. "We can't afford to take any risks—not after what Ralph Tyler threatened. Besides, I'll feel safer with you in the house—just in case the Green Friar should start prowling around again."

Bridget laughed.

"Shure, and we've seen the last of the ghost, me darlint! But what about that book of Mr. Tyler's? He hasn't called back for it."

Kitty pushed back her chair and rose to her feet.

"Perhaps I'd better pop round with it," she said. "He may have calmed down now, and I might be able to convince him that Remus really is harmless. Where did you put the book?"

"In the sitting-room, me darlint. You'll find it on the table."

Crossing to the door, Kitty went into the hall. It was in darkness, and she had to grope her way to the sitting-room. But once the door was open she could see clearly, for a shaft of moonlight shone through the french windows. It fell directly on to the old walnut table that stood in the centre of the room, and Kitty nodded with satisfaction as she saw the book lying there.

She took a step forward, then stopped. She hardly knew what caused her to pause, but unaccountably she shivered. Some sixth sense seemed to warn her of danger.

Clammy and oppressive was the atmosphere of the sitting-room. Except for that single shaft of silver light the apartment was in darkness. Eerie shadows lurked amid the ancient furniture, and though she told herself she was

being silly, Kitty could not prevent her heart from thumping wildly.

Frozen with some vague, unknown fear she could not place, she stood there; then she gave a gasp. An icy breath seemed to fan the back of her neck. She had the awful feeling that someone—or something—was standing behind her.

She steeled her quivering nerves, and, with a frightened gasp, she looked around. But she could see no one; hear no one.

Resolutely she walked towards the table, and then stopped again, her heart leaping to her throat, utter panic seizing her. For from the darkness had appeared a glowing arm.

Stealthily, silently, the phantom arm cut through the shaft of moonlight. The long fingers of the hand stretched downwards—hovering over the book Kitty had come to fetch.

THE ABBEY CUP

SPELLBOUND, Kitty stood there, helpless, fascinated despite herself by that uncanny spectacle. Then, abruptly, the forbidding silence was broken. From the kitchen came a shout:

"Can't you find it, me darlint? Shure, and I'll bring you a lamp!"

The sound of Bridget's cheery voice broke the spell. The blood rushing back to Kitty's pallid cheeks, and, with a gulp, she plunged forward.

"Bridget!" she shrieked. "He's here—the Phantom Monk!"

And impulsively, hardly knowing what she was doing, she made a frantic snatch at the book. In her blind haste she cannoned against the table. With a crash it went tumbling over, and the book clattered down on the carpet.

Kitty fell to her knees, clutched it, and gave another desperate shout as again she felt that frightening, icy breath fanning her face.

"Bridget!" she gasped. "Oh, Bridget!"

There came an answering shout from outside, and the Irish girl's footsteps pattered on the hall floor. Then the door was thrust open, and a stream of lamplight drove back the frightening shadows. At the same moment there came a challenging bark, and Remus bounded into the room.

"Seize him, Remus!" Kitty gasped. "Seize him!"

The black retriever gave a threatening growl and glared around. As for Bridget, she stood in the doorway, the kitchen oil-lamp held above her head, an expression of bewilderment on her plump face.

"What is it, me darlint?" she asked. "What's the matter?"

"The Phantom Monk—he was in here! I saw him!" faltered Kitty. "He was trying to—"

Her voice faded away. Incredulously she stared around. Except for Bridget, Remus, and herself, the room was empty. Of the Green Friar there was no sign.

Bridget put down the lamp, and hurried forward, putting a comforting arm around the other girl.

"There, there," she whispered. "'Tis a black house, this is. No place for girls to live in. Every shadow seems to be alive."

Kitty stumbled to her feet. She eyed the Irish girl desperately.

"I did see him, Bridget—I really did!" she insisted. "I didn't just imagine it. He was trying to steal this."

She held up Ralph Tyler's book, and Bridget's eyes opened wider than ever.

"Steal that!" she exclaimed. "Bedad, and what would a ghost be doing with a book on dogs?"

"I—I don't know. I suppose it does sound silly. But he was trying to grab it, Bridget—honestly, he was!"

The Irish girl nodded reassuringly, though in her inmost heart she still thought Kitty had imagined it all.

"Well, he can't have got far," she declared. "As the window's fastened and as I was in the doorway, there's only one way the spalpeen could have gone."

She looked significantly across the room, and Kitty nodded.

"You mean through the secret room behind granddad's picture," she whispered.

Nervously she looked across at the entrance to the secret room they had found. Now a pretty chintz curtain covered the broken picture, and around it Remus was snuffling. Kitty gazed at him eagerly.

"Find him, old lad," she urged—"find him!"

But, though the intelligent retriever sniffed to and fro for several minutes, he failed to pick up any scent of the spectral intruder. This failure deepened Bridget's doubts.

"You must have been mistaken, Miss Kitty," she said. "If he had been here, shure an' the dog would have soon sniffed him out."

Kitty put a quivering hand to her head. She did not know what to think. Nor was her puzzlement lessened when she and Bridget at last summoned up sufficient courage to go into the secret room.

As a precaution, they had fastened the trap-door in the floor by means of a chain and padlock. The chain was still in place; the padlock showed no signs of being tampered with. Bridget smiled.

"'Tis impossible for him to have skeddaddled this way," she declared, "and there's no other way out of the room. Bedad, didn't we both tap all the panelling ourselves, just in case there should be another secret door?"

Kitty nodded. Nevertheless, she still felt convinced that that awesome green arm had not just been a product of her imaginative brain.

Accompanied by Remus, she and Bridget returned to the kitchen. A fire burnt there, and very cheerful the room looked, with its gleaming pots and pans, its homely furniture, and its pretty cretonne curtains.

"I'll take Mr. Tyler his book back to-morrow," she said.

As she spoke, she idly opened it, flicking over the pages. The book gave details of the various dog shows that were held in the country, and photographic plates pictured some of the more famous trophies to be won. Curiously Kitty looked at the pictures, and then suddenly she gave an excited cry and sat bolt upright in her chair.

"Look—oh, Bridget, look!"

"What is it, me darlint?"

The Irish girl came running forward, while Remus pricked up his ears.

"This picture—it shows the Lorne Abbey Cup! The cup granddad mentioned in that message we found in Remus's collar!"

The picture showed a slender silver cup, exquisitely worked and ornamented with medieval designs. Underneath it appeared the caption:

"THE LORNE ABBEY CUP."

Presented in 1889, to the Shires Dog Show, by Nathaniel Graham, Esq. To be competed for annually."

"Nathaniel Graham!" exclaimed Kitty. "Why, that was granddad! And, by the look of it, this cup must, at one time, have belonged to the abbey!"

On the opposite page full details of the cup appeared. It seemed that years ago, before Lorne Abbey had been dissolved as a monastery, the cup had belonged to the local abbot. It had come into the possession of the Graham family when they had inherited the property. Kitty's grandfather, a lover of dogs, had presented it to the committee of the Shires Dog Show.

Each year the cup was awarded to the owner of the best dog in the show, and, according to the rules of the competition, only dogs that had won championships in minor shows were allowed to enter for it.

"Granddad's message said that if we want to learn the secret of the abbey, Remus must win this cup!" cried Kitty. With sparkling eyes she surveyed Bridget. "Oh, wouldn't it be wonderful if the darling could win it!" she exclaimed.

Bridget nodded, but her thoughts were following another channel. She was wondering if, after all, Kitty had been right when she had said that the Green Friar had tried to steal the book.

"Perhaps the spalpeen was scared you would

look through it, and learn about the cup," she said. "Bedad, but 'tis mighty queer that a ghost should be interested in dog shows!"

"Ghost or not, he's not going to prevent us from discovering the truth," declared Kitty, and impulsively her arm went around Remus' neck. She gave him a hug and gazed down at him with fond eyes. "You're going to a dog show next week, old lad," she asserted.

"Next week?" Bridget stared in surprise. "You mean you're going to enter him in the Harborough Show?"

Kitty nodded.

"Yes; one of the Pokes is entered, and Remus is also going to have a shot at winning a prize. Of course, it's no good thinking of entering him in the championship class. The poor dear wants fattening up before we can think of that. Besides, there's the question of his pedigree. But he can go into the all-comers' class and—"

Kitty paused, her eyes sparkling.

"Oh, Bridget!" she cried. "I am thrilled! I'm certain Remus is a thoroughbred! I'm certain he can become a champion. Won't it be wonderful if he does manage, eventually, to win the Lorne Cup!"

Her heart thumped at the mere thought. The prospect filled her with pride. She loved the big stray she had adopted. For his sake she wanted him to become famous. But there was more at stake than fame—according to that mysterious message she had found in Remus' collar. Excitedly she recalled what her grandfather had written:

"Where the Green Friar walks, there riches are to be found. But first Remus must win the Lorne Abbey Cup."

Kitty gave another thrilled gasp and her arm tightened its hold on the black retriever's neck.

"Riches!" she cried. "And you can win them for us, darling! Oh, I know you'll help us—I know you're capable of winning that cup!"

Remus lifted his head. For a moment his soft brown eyes regarded her steadily, then he gave an excited bark—a bark that seemed to suggest that for her sake he would do his best!

THE GREEN FRIAR AGAIN

AFTER the fright Kitty had received, Bridget insisted that she should move her bed into the front bed-room.

Both of them would feel safer if they were together, and, as a final precaution, Remus slept on the mat outside the door.

But the night passed peacefully. The Phantom Monk did not appear again.

Next morning, almost as soon as it was light, the two girls got up, for they had a busy day before them.

While Bridget got the breakfast Kitty took her pets for an early morning scamper, then, while they were having their morning meal, she cleaned out their kennels and put down new straw for them.

After breakfast she went to Harborough to enter Remus for the forthcoming show. On the way she called in at Ralph Tyler's cottage to return his book. His housekeeper opened the door. She was a surly looking woman, dressed in faded black, and wearing a white apron.

"Well?" she demanded.

Kitty held out the book and smiled. "Mr. Tyler dropped this yesterday," she explained. "I'm Kitty Graham from the abbey, you know."

"From the abbey, are you?" The woman sniffed. "Well, it may interest you to know that Mr. Tyler's gone into the village to report your dog—gone to the police he has!"

She snatched the book, and without another word slammed the door. Kitty stared in dismay. So the cottager's threat had not just been bluff!

Kitty's cheeks flamed indignantly as she turned away, and they flamed again when she returned home, to learn that the village constable had paid a second visit to the abbey.

Bridget's eyes flashed as she told Kitty of the call.

"The red-faced blue-bottle actually said we ought to keep Remus shut up!" she snorted.

"Shut up!" Kitty gasped. "Why, it would break the poor darling's heart! He's so used to being free. I never heard of such a thing. Why should he be cooped up all day?"

Bridget nodded fiercely.

"That's what I told the spalpeen. I asked him how he'd like to be tethered to a chain all day! Bedad, but I fairly ticked him off!"

Despite herself, Kitty laughed. She could guess that the country policeman would get no change out of the fiery Irish girl. Then abruptly her face grew serious.

"Ralph Tyler isn't going to take his complaint to court, is he?" she asked.

"Not this time, me darlint. But that ninny of a constable says a summons will be issued if there's any more complaints. He said that if that happened, Remus might have to be destroyed!" Bridget snorted, and angrily flourished the broom in her hand. "Bejabbers, but 'tis myself would like to see anyone try to hurt that dog!"



"Mr. Tyler dropped this yesterday," Kitty explained, and held out the book. "I'm Kitty Graham from the abbey, you know." The woman scowled. "Well, it may interest you to know that Mr. Tyler's gone into the village to report your dog—to the police," was her retort.

And with a threatening scowl she turned away to get on with her work. Kitty shared her indignation; nevertheless, during the next few days she kept a watchful eye on the big retriever.

Busy days they were, and happy ones, too. Kitty was eager to do well at the Harborough Dog Show. Success there would mean a lot to the abbey kennels. The publicity might even bring her more clients.

Though she did not neglect the other dogs, nevertheless, she devoted most of her time to Gerald, the Pekinges who had been entered, and to Remus.

No matter how good a dog might be, she knew that skilled care and management counted a lot. So the two dogs received extra attention. Each evening they had a dry shampoo, for she was too cautious to give them a bath. Even the slightest of colds might imperil their chances.

The Peke, already in tip-top condition, did not need special grooming, but Remus, as the result of the wild life he had led before Kitty had adopted him, was in rather a neglected condition.

Every evening he had a special meal of chopped-up liver and oatmeal. This food quickly helped to make his coat glossy. He also had to have his nails attended to, and Kitty paid particular attention to his teeth.

At first Remus was rather disgusted by all this fuss. His comical expression of disdain made his feelings quite plain.

But Kitty was firm and determined.

"You don't want to disgrace me on Wednesday, do you?" she said. "You want to please me by winning, don't you?"

At her coaxing voice the big retriever whined and wagged his tail. Fondly he returned her look, and after that she had little trouble with him. Though he still did not approve, yet if all this silly fuss pleased his beloved mistress—well, he supposed, for her sake, he'd have to put up with it!

The result was, by the eve of the show, Remus was almost in perfect condition. Kitty was delighted with his appearance.

"You'll simply romp home to-morrow," she declared, as she made him comfortable for the night. "Why, you'd even stand a chance in the champion class!"

She sighed wistfully, as, with a final pat, she left him curled up in the kitchen and went upstairs to bed. How wonderful it

would be if, one day, she could enter him in a championship competition!

But Remus was thinking of much more mundane things. Already fast asleep, he was dreaming of a big store of juicy bones he had buried at the bottom of the garden.

In imagination he was already digging them up, and he grunted in anticipation of the feed he was to have. Happily he dreamed on, but suddenly his dream took an unpleasant turn.

He arrived at his secret store, only to find a hated figure digging there with a spade. The Phantom Monk!

In his sleep Remus growled. Angrily he kicked out with his legs and—crash!

The washing-basket in which Kitty had insisted he should sleep overturned. Remus awoke with a start, still growling at the remembrance of that dream.

Then his dream turned into grim reality. For there, at the kitchen window, he glimpsed that familiar, eerily glowing shape. A furious bark rumbled from his throat, and he made a frantic bound across the room.

Looking more ghostly than ever, the Green Friar stood there. Then suddenly he thrust out a spectral hand and pushed open the window.

Remus gave a triumphant bark and took a mighty spring upward. The window-sill

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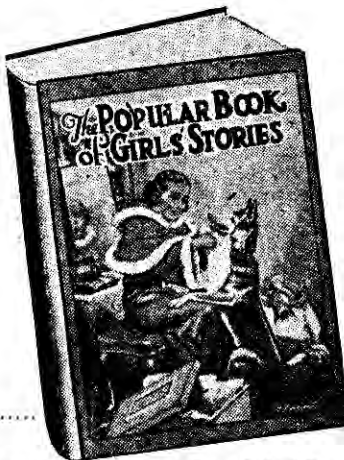
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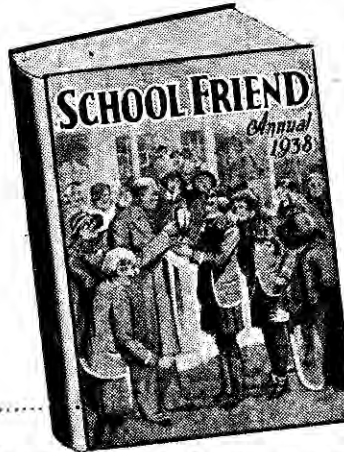
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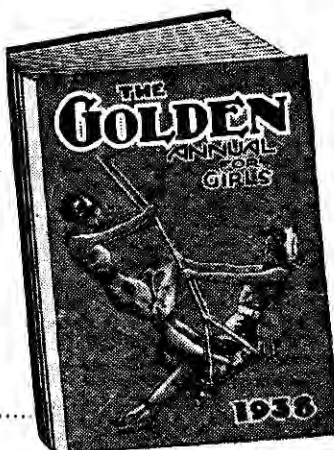
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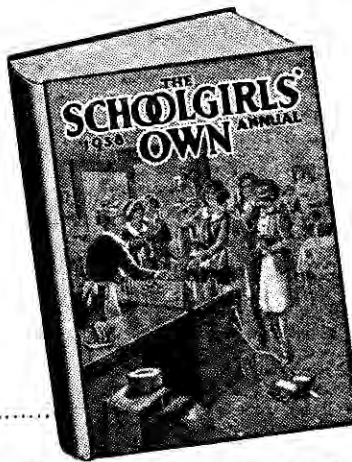
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was high up. He could not reach it. But as he saw the glowing phantom glide away, the retriever became desperate.

Beside the window stood a chair. On to it Remus jumped, then, gathering up his muscles, he took another leap. This time his front paws gained the window-sill. For a moment he hung there, barking and wriggling, then he managed to drag himself up.

One final bark and he was through the window and out in the garden. The Green Friar had by now reached the boundary fence. There he paused, his face grinning mockingly.

Teeth bared, eyes ablaze, Remus gave pursuit.

Remus was still a good distance away; the Phantom Monk was out of his sight.

But the dog's wonderful instinct did not falter. He knew the direction in which his enemy had gone.

Just once he paused, sniffing the ground as if to make certain that he was right.

Then, ears back and eyes keen, he gave a deep-throated bark. He was on the scent; soon he would have caught up with the figure he hated.

Little did the dog guess that his thunderous barks had awakened his mistress. Sitting up in bed, Kitty listened in alarm for a second or two, then, jumping out, she crossed to the window and peered out.

In bewilderment she stared. She could not see the Phantom Monk, but the madly running retriever was clearly in sight.

"Remus!" she exclaimed. "But how did you get out? How—"

She broke off, a sudden fear clutching at her heart. The dog had jumped over the fence and was now racing madly across the field beyond. He seemed to be heading straight for the cottage tenanted by Ralph Tyler!

"Oh my goodness!" she gasped. "If he goes in there that wretched man will think he's after his chickens!"

With frantic haste she dressed and went downstairs. Letting herself out through the front door, she went rushing after Remus.

"Remus!" Kitty shouted desperately. "Come back at once! Remus!"

But for once her pet did not obey. His eyes were fixed on the spectral figure that stood by the entrance to Ralph Tyler's chicken-run.

"Remus!" shouted Kitty again, as she came running across the field. "Come back! You silly dog, don't you realise that—"

But that was as far as she got, for suddenly she glimpsed that terrifying figure that stood in the garden. Never had the Green Friar looked more ghostly.

In the darkness his green robes took on an unearthly glow. His shimmering figure seemed transparent. Was it imagination, or could Kitty really see the mesh of the chicken-run through his luminous gown?

For a moment longer the Phantom Monk stood there, then silently he glided into the run and disappeared into that old shed that served as chicken house.

From inside there came a series of frantic squawks. The hens, sensing that some deadly enemy was amongst them, fluttered around in utter panic.

Then came another furious bark from Remus. He leaped over the fence, and like a black streak, hurled himself across the garden.

"Remus!" shouted Kitty, and now her voice was a frenzied scream.

But the agitated retriever did not even hear her. With another bark he plunged through the open door of the chicken-run, and went racing after his ghostly enemy!

Will Remus be able to catch the Green Friar? Or will Ralph Tyler find the retriever in his chicken-run? Don't miss next Friday's instalment of this fine tale. Order your **GIRLS' CRYSTAL** now.



The Happy-go-Lucky Hikers

THE SECRET OF THE CAVES

By ELIZABETH CHESTER

THE GIRL WHO PUZZLED THEM

"COME on, slackers! Who is for hiking, and who for sitting in a stuffy picture theatre?"

Wendy Topham looked about her in the typing-room of the electrical engineering firm that employed her. It was Friday evening, and work for the day being over, the girls were tidying up their tables and putting the covers on their machines.

A thin drizzle of rain was falling, and Clementina Gervaise shivered and pulled a grimace.

"If I were a duck I'd just love it, Wendy," she said. "But I'm not. Me for the stuffy pictures—thanks!"

"I mean to-morrow afternoon," said Wendy, with a smile. "Even I'm not proposing to go out this evening for a hike. Fay, I know you will come."

"Rather!" cried the slim, pretty girl she addressed.

"And you, Jill?"

"You bet I will!" said Jill, looking up from a book she was reading. "And wherever we go it must be far enough away to give us a good appetite. Just listen to this recipe!"

"Order!" said Wendy again. "And listen, everyone. Whoever comes hiking to-morrow can eat Jill's recipe, or the result of it. And if anyone doubts that Jill's a good cook, look at her. Was there ever such a good advertisement for whatever it is she eats?"

Jill smiled good-naturedly as several girls chuckled. For Jill was certainly plumper than the rest.

"In fact, we are all good advertisements for hiking," ended Wendy. "So who else is going to join us to-morrow?"

She looked round, but as usual, most of the girls had an excuse. Some of them played tennis; some were practising for the hockey season; others had already arranged to go out with their friends.

Alice Brady, a newcomer to the office, however, did not say anything. She stood by the door, putting on her hat and coat. Wendy regarded her hopefully.

"How about you, Miss Brady?" she asked.

Alice Brady did not reply. Indeed, she seemed not to have heard.

"Miss Brady," said Wendy more loudly. "Her name is Brady, isn't it?" she asked the others.

Then the girl looked up swiftly, colour in her cheeks.

"Oh, were you talking to me?" she asked, in a rather frightened way.

"I was," smiled Wendy. "I asked if you would care to come hiking with us to-morrow."

"Hiking? Oh, I'm afraid not. I—I have something rather important to do."

"Nothing is more important than hiking,"

said Wendy. "We'll take our food with us—bags of it, for you wouldn't believe how hungry you get. We haven't decided where to go, so you can decide. You can choose a ramble over the moors, a mountain climb, or a trip to some caves."

"Caves?" echoed Alice Brady, and flushed, then paled.

She echoed the word in an odd manner, as though it had some special importance, almost as though she were afraid of it.

"Needn't go in caves if you don't like," said Wendy promptly. "You decide, and we'll go."

Every eye was on Alice Brady now, for although she had not signified her intention of going, Wendy seemed to take it for granted that she was.

"Have you—have you ever explored underground caves?" Alice asked. "Have you ever thought of going to Morgenham?"

"Morgenham!" echoed Wendy. "Why, yes, we have thought of going there. But those caves stretch for miles, and Fay was rather scared—"

"Not exactly scared; but I've heard of people being lost in them," said Fay.

"So you weren't going," said Alice Brady; and she spoke in relief, as though she were glad that they were not going.

Wendy thought it was rather odd. There was something about this girl that had puzzled her from the start—a furtive manner that aroused her curiosity.

"Have you been to the Morgenham caves yourself?" asked Wendy.

"I? Oh, no! I haven't even been near the place," said Alice Brady quickly. "I mentioned them because—well, some people like exploring caves, and I thought you might like to go there." She gave an embarrassed laugh, and snatched up her small attache-case. "Well, I must be going," she added, and hurried off, her cheeks red with confusion.

"What a queer girl!" exclaimed Fay.

Wendy & Co. were delighted when the Mystery Girl at the office changed her mind and decided to accompany them on their Saturday afternoon jaunt. Happily they set out to explore the underground caves, little guessing that Alice Brady had a secret reason for joining them.

"Why she didn't even stop to take a peek in the mirror to see if her hair's tidy."

"And she's left that pot of marmalade on the floor," added Jill. "I'd better see if I can catch her. She bought it at lunch-time, so I should think she wants it."

Jill picked up the pot and a list that lay beside it. It was a neatly typed list, left like the pot of marmalade in the haste of departure.

"Hallo, a shopping-list! Pretty long one, too. Looks as though she's expecting a siege, or storing up a larder for the winter! She is a funny girl!"

"Very funny!" mused Wendy. "Wonder why she scurried off like that?"

A girl who stood by the mirror turned. She was unpopular, and seldom spoke without giving offence to someone.

"Don't you know why she goes on like that?" she said.

"I don't, and I don't suppose you do," said Wendy, who never stood any nonsense, or listened to silly scandal.

"No?" sneered the girl. "Well, ask her why she left her last job, and if you want to see her go as white as a sheet, just say that someone looking like a detective wants a word with her."

Wendy flashed her an indignant look.

"What a mean thing to say! I don't see why you should know any more about her than we do, Miss Scaithe."

The door of the office was suddenly banged open, and Alice Brady entered. She was panting, and her eyes showed that she was scared.

"Oh, your marmalade and the list!" said Jill.

Alice Brady took the list, looked suspiciously at them all, and crumpled it in her hand.

"I—I've changed my mind," she said. "I would like to go hiking with you to-morrow. Is it all right?"

Wendy stared, completely startled by this staggering change of front.

"Why, of course; glad to have you," she said.

"And can we go to Morgenham?" asked Alice. "I'd—I'd like to explore the caves."

"Right-ho! And don't forget to bring your togs—shorts and walking-shoes. I've got some spares," said Fay. "They're rather dinky shoes—"

But Alice did not wait to hear about the shoes. She said a hurried good-night and again departed. The Happy-Go-Lucky Hikers exchanged puzzled looks. Though they were all delighted that Alice had changed her mind, yet they were intrigued by her curious manner.

WHAT WAS ALICE'S SECRET?

"GETTING tired, Alice? Like us to ease up for a bit?" asked Wendy considerably.

It was Saturday—the afternoon following the scene in the typing-room—and the Happy-Go-Lucky Hikers were on their way to the underground caves at Morgenham. Alice Brady had not changed her mind again. She had gladly accepted Fay's offer of clothes,

but she had brought some shoes of her own and a large rucksack.

Alice had seemed almost hysterically excited in the train, and at every station she had looked up and down the platform as though she were expecting a friend, and she had not withdrawn her head until the last possible moment.

But now that they were in the open country she seemed a good deal calmer and less nervous.

It was a long walk and a lonely one to the caves, but Wendy had a map, and she knew how to read it. For five miles they walked along, and then Alice faltered as if she were tired. Wendy looked at her sympathetically.

"Your rucksack is a bit on the heavy side," she said. "I expect that's why you're feeling a bit tired. How about changing over?"

"Oh, no!" said Alice. "I'm all right."

"You're bending over as though you're carrying a ton weight on your back," smiled Jill. "What's in that haversack?"

Alice went red, and for a moment she did not answer. Then she frowned irritably at Jill.

"What you have in yours, I suppose—just my food, a change of shoes, a camera, and—and—oh, one or two odds and ends!"

It was the first time her nervousness had shown during the walk, and Wendy was taken aback.

"Oh, all right! Just as you like!" she said easily. "We'll go a bit slower."

But Jill and Fay surveyed the rucksack with increased curiosity. They both wondered why Alice was looking so agitated and uncomfortable.

They walked on for another mile, and then Fay stopped, fanning her hot face with her hanky.

"Let's have a breather," she said.

"Oh, not here!" said Alice. "We might as well stop where there's a view. The top of Cloud Cap Hill is the place."

"Cloud Cap Hill?" asked Fay. "Where's that? I thought you'd never been here before?"

"I—I haven't!" stammered Alice, once more looking confused. "But I've read about the caves, and I—I fancy that the hill is near here."

Wendy opened the map, studied it, and gave a start.

"You're quite right—it is; just a little way on," she said, in surprise.

"Lucky guess!" laughed Alice.

It was a rather unreal laugh, forced, and without a hint of amusement.

Wendy side-glanced at her, puzzled, and then she asked a question.

"Let's see! Is it to left or right?" she asked.

"Oh, the right," said Alice—"at least, it may be. I—I don't really know."

Wendy made no comment, but now she was certain that Alice had been here before.

They reached Cloud Cap Hill, and found it a long climb. From its summit they could see the entrance to the underground caves.

Those caves had only recently been uncovered, and had not yet been fully explored, which made a visit to them all the more exciting.

"They say that all sorts of queer fossils have been found there," said Wendy, as they looked down at the entrance—"prehistoric skeletons."

"Ugh!" shivered Fay. "How horrid!"

"We might find something like that," said Jill, quite excitedly, "to add to the museum. We have a museum of odd things we find hiking," she explained to Alice.

Alice nodded, and said that it was a good idea.

"But I don't think I should care to go very far in," she murmured. "I've heard there are ghosts, and last year a man was lost there for three days. He went nearly mad with thirst, and—"

"Hey, whoa!" cried Fay. "We're doing this for fun. If that is the kind of place it is, I'm not going to take more than two steps inside, thanks!"

Alice nodded.

"It's best not to be too rash," she said, speaking more freely than she had done before. "It's safe up to about a hundred yards, but then there are divisions and a kind of catacomb; tunnels wander off in all directions—least, so I have heard," she added hastily.

"You must have read a good deal about it," said Wendy dryly.

"Oh, I have! I—I knew someone who came here for a holiday!" said Alice, going rather white.

She rose and moved on, and although the others would have preferred to rest a little longer, they went with her.

Alice led confidently for perhaps fifty yards, and then, as she came to a clump of trees, she stopped abruptly.

"What's wrong?" asked Wendy.

She saw Alice look towards the trees intently. A man sat there on an old stump. At sight of the four girl hikers he rose and walked towards them. Although he was dressed in tweeds and wore a cap, his gait and build were too soldierly to suggest that he felt really at ease in such clothes. A uniform, Wendy thought, would have suited him better.

"Walks like a policeman," said Fay.

Alice turned quite white, and again Wendy wondered the reason for her strange agitation.

"'Afternoon, young ladies!" said the man genially. "Can you tell me which are the caves?"

Wendy pointed them out, and showed him the path.

"We're going there ourselves," she said.

"Just a little hiking expedition?" he asked, with a smile, looking from one to the other.

"That's all," said Wendy. "And we seem to be the only ones that have thought of it."

"That's so," he assented. "Does you good getting a breath of air. I suppose you're like me—cooped up in a city office all the week?"

"Yes. We are typists," said Wendy.

"Then it makes a change," he remarked amiably. "But don't let me delay you. Thought you might know about the caves; that's why I asked, though—"

He paused. "Well, as a matter of fact," he went on, "I thought I recognised one of you. None of you happens to be named Watkins, I suppose—Alice Watkins?"

"No," said Jill. "There's no Watkins here, but—"

She looked towards Alice, who seemed deathly pale.

Wendy, quick as a flash, cut in.

"What's this Alice Watkins like?" she asked.

"Oh, she's about your height; got very dark hair, and has a birthmark on her throat. If you do see her in the caves, don't say I'm looking for her. I want to give her a surprise. I'm her uncle. Just stand on one of the mounds and wave a white hanky. I'll be here, watching."

Wendy held her breath, and her heart thumped because of a startling idea that had come to her.

"We will," she said.

Alice had already moved on, and now Jill and Fay followed. Wendy was last, and as she moved off the man called to her.

"Just a minute," he said.

Wendy walked back to him, and his expression was grave.

"If you go into those caves," he said, "don't be scared if you fancy you hear someone in there. You seem to be the leader of this party, and I don't want to scare you, but there may be someone in those caves."

Wendy took the bull by the horns.

"You are a detective, aren't you?" she said.

He gave a slight start.

"What makes you think that?"

"Oh, the general look of you!" said Wendy, with a faint smile. "And your story doesn't ring true. My idea is you are after someone—that girl Watkins. You think she's hiding in the caves, don't you?"

He regarded her intently, and then smiled.

"You're not such a fool, eh?" he said.

"Well, you're nearly right—but not quite. She isn't hiding in the caves. But never mind—I must ask you to keep to yourself what you've guessed. And—just keep your eyes open."

Wendy nodded and turned to go after the others. But the thought that was in her mind was that Alice always wore a scarf, and that the roots of her hair, showing along her side parting, were tinged with dark—almost, in fact, as though her fair hair came out of a bottle!

It was nobody's business if it did, of course. But Wendy, hurrying to catch up the

others, realised that a scarf could hide a birthmark on the throat—and blondness that came out of a bottle could hide dark hair, except when it started to grow at the parting.

Wendy, just for a moment, was tempted to address Alice as Miss Watkins, but she managed to conquer the temptation; her better nature won.

But when she saw the strained look on that girl's face, she was more than ever sure that Alice Brady was Alice Watkins, and that Miss Scatthe's scandal was not far from the truth.

There were detectives on Alice's trail. That was why she jumped at every sound, why she was irritable and so white and peaky-looking.

"Poor kid!" muttered Wendy. "And she's walked straight into the trap. They're waiting here. They knew she'd come because—"

But why they had known that she would come—why, indeed, she had come, Wendy could not guess. Of one thing, however, she was assured—it was not just for the hiking that Alice had come. She had meant to come here, but she had been afraid to come alone.

And now, whatever the trouble in store for her, Wendy, Fay and Jill would be witnesses—and perhaps partners.

LOST IN THE CAVES

"Ugh!" shivered Fay.

They stood in the entrance to the caves. There was no one in attendance, but there were notices of all kinds, and the words that was most commonly repeated was "DANGER."

It was dangerous to go into the caves without lights, and it was urged that no one should venture farther into the caves than a hundred yards.

"In fact," said Jill, as she read the notices, "it would be better if we didn't go in at all!"

"Rats!" said Wendy. "It'll be safe enough if we're careful. Come on. You aren't afraid, are you?"

She turned to Alice. That girl shook her head, though she looked white and anxious.

"Of course not," she said.

Wendy stepped through the arched entrance, and walked on for a few yards. The walls seemed damp, and they echoed her steps. Stalagmites and stalactites gave the cave an eerie, fairy-tale appearance, and added to its awesomeness.

"Look, icicles!" shivered Fay, following Wendy.

"Not ice—stone," said Wendy. "They look like icicles, but they're made by dripping water that turns to stone."

"I've seen a bowler hat turned to stone—petrified," said Alice in an awed tone.

"Thank goodness I'm not wearing mine!" murmured Fay, with a giggle. "Do herets turn to stone, too? I'll take mine off!"

Wendy walked on, and then called out to get the echo.

"Hallo, there!" she called.

"Hallo, there!" answered the echo.

Alice pushed past Wendy.

"They say there's a ghostly echo. It answers slightly different from what you say," she said.

Wendy blinked.

"An echo can't do that, surely?"

"Jolly clever echo if it can," said Fay.

"Who killed cock robin?" she yelled.

"Robin," the echo answered.

"There—it didn't say 'I said the sparrow,'" or anything clever," said Fay. "It's just a common echo."

"Perhaps it works only on one word," said Alice. "Coooooo-eeeeee!" she called.

The echo answered "Coo-eeee" and then "oooooo."

Wendy gave a little jump of surprise.

"That's queer," she admitted. "Let me try. Coooooo-eeeeee!" she called.

"Oo-eeeeee," answered the echo, and added "ooooo!"

It was odd, and they tried it with other calls, but the echo played no more tricks.

"What I should call a one-track mind," said Fay.

Wendy flashed her torch in the darkness.

The light revealed stalactites and a long, high-roofed cave. It was an immense cave, and at the end tunnels and smaller caves branched off in all directions.

"Don't go too far, Wendy!" urged Jill anxiously. "I'm sure some of these stalactites will fall!"

"Lend me your torch," said Alice to Wendy.

Wendy lent it to her, and Alice crept forward. She went another twenty yards, despite their entreaties to return. Then suddenly the torch was switched off.

"Alice!" called Wendy.

There was no reply, so Fay brought out her torch and flashed it. But the rays did not pick up Alice. She had disappeared!

"Alice!" shouted Wendy.

The echo answered, and they stood still, astounded.

"The crazy duffer!" muttered Jill. "What did she do that for? Why doesn't she answer? She can't be out of earshot!"

Wendy, pale and grim, moved forward, but Fay caught her arm.

"No, you don't. It's bad enough to have one disappearing, let alone two. And Jill and I don't want to be left here."

"We certainly don't," said Jill. "If one goes, we all go."

"All right—come on then," urged Wendy. "Alice jolly well deserves to be lost, acting in this senseless way. But I think she's just trying to scare us, that's all!"

Jill gave a sudden jump as they walked forward.

"Did you see what I saw—a gleam of light somewhere ahead—over to the left?"

"I saw something—a glow," admitted Wendy.

There was a moment's silence.

"Yell again," said Fay, with a shiver.

"She must answer if she's there. It'll guide her back, though how she got out of hearing so quickly I don't know."

They yelled, but only the echo answered them.

"She's trying to scare us," said Fay, white and shaken. "And I call it a mean trick. My goodness, she's the last girl I should have guessed as a practical joker."

"And you'd be right," said Wendy quietly. "This isn't a joke. Alice has disappeared—and that's what she meant to do."

"Meant to disappear. You mean she wants to run away—wants to hide?" asked Jill, in wonder.

"No," said Wendy. "Someone else is hiding here."

"Who?"

"The echo."

"The echo!" exclaimed Fay, staring. "Wendy, you've gone potty! Quick—rush her into the fresh air, Jill! I knew this was a bad place!"

Wendy shook herself free, and gave a little laugh.

"I mean that it wasn't the echo who answered when we called; but someone in hiding. That 'coo-ee' call was a signal."

"The countersign came, and Alice took my torch, and gave us the slip. My goodness, I see it all now, of course!"

"See what?" asked Jill blankly.

"That packed rucksack that she got so badly-tempered about," said Wendy excitedly. "I'll bet you anything you like that when she comes back, it will be with a practically empty rucksack."

It sounded crazy—mere guesswork to Fay and Jill; but then they did not know what the detective had told Wendy, or they, too, might have been able to put two and two together.

"Aren't we going to find her—or do anything?" asked Jill.

"She doesn't want to be found. We'll wait," said Fay.

And then there came a terrifying sound—a scream! A scream that echoed eerily in the distance.

"Help, Wendy—help!"

Wendy, torch in hand, ran forward. Jill and Fay followed, keeping close to her.

"No; not all together," said Wendy.

"Quick—the rope! It's long! I'll trail it behind me! Keep one end, and stay here, you two!"

Wendy, leaving them holding one end of the rope, rushed on. Until she reached the rope end, she would be in communication with her friends.

She turned through the cave opening on the left, where they had seen the glow of light. Soon she reached the end of her rope, and, as she paused, she saw a six-foot drop in the floor of the cave. Thinking Alice might have stumbled and fallen, she peered over the edge of the drop, flashing her torch, but there was no sign of the missing girl.

"Alice," she called—"Alice!"

The walls echoed the name mockingly from all angles, but no other answering sound came. But the memory of that terrible scream lingered in Wendy's mind.

Once over the drop she could not see the rope her chums held, but, at least, she could see the edge of the drop.

"I've got to take a chance," she told herself, and clambered over the edge, dropping to the rocky floor beyond. "I'm all right!" she called to her friends.

"Right-ho!" yelled Jill. "But, for goodness' sake, don't get lost!"

Wendy walked on, searching right and left with her torch. The cave seemed to tower

sign of Alice, and though she called there came no answer.

She looked back. She could no longer see the wall down which she had jumped.

"Hallo, there! Jill!" she called. "Jill!"

There was no answer. Wendy ran back through the cave, and turned left, then right. She turned back, ducked under another spiky mass, and called again. Still no answer.

Out of the rays of her torch all was inky blackness now, and her torch seemed to flicker.

"Golly, I'm lost!" she muttered.

Her heart was thumping wildly, and she tried to retrace her steps. But the cave twisted and turned. She couldn't remember which way she had turned, and, though she groped her way onward for five minutes, she failed to discover the wall of rock over which she had jumped when she had left Jill and Fay.

Wendy sat down on a slab of rock and turned off her torch. Black darkness came. She could not see her own hand in front of her face. But, at least, she was saving the torch. If she ran about hither and thither flashing it, the battery would be used up; the bulb might burn out, and then—



"What's in your haversack?" Jill asked, when the chums realised that the load was rather a lot for Alice. Jill had meant it just as a friendly question, so she was not prepared for the red flush that mounted to Alice's cheeks.

miles above her. It was as high as a church, lofty and impressive and silent. The stalactites seemed like giant's fingers poised to snatch her, and a shiver ran through Wendy.

"Alice, for goodness' sake, where are you?" she muttered. "This place gives me the creeps!"

The walls of the cave were damp, and now she could hear water trickling, going drip, drip, drip, monotonously.

Every dread thing she had read about the caves came back to her mind. She thought she heard a rumble, and feared to see a wall fall in behind her. At every step she took she looked back, to make sure that she could still see the wall over which she had jumped.

"If I get lost they'll never find me," she told herself.

And then a voice came faintly:

"Help!"

Wendy, guided by it, hurried down a side tunnel. She ducked under a spiky stalactite and peered about her. But there was no

Without a torch in this inky blackness she would have to grope. She would be utterly lost, completely helpless.

Presently the darkness seemed a weight; it was scaring her, and she switched on the torch. Rock—rock everywhere. She was in a prison of stone, and close by as she saw now was a fossilised fish in the rock floor. It had been there thousands of years, and perhaps hundreds of thousands. Time here was endless.

"A trail—I must leave a trail, then I shan't retrace my steps. Bread-crumbs," she mused. "They'll do."

As she rose to take bread from her haversack, she saw a black line on the floor. It was not a natural black line, but ran at the foot of the rock, straight and taut and clear of the ground.

Wendy knelt and examined it. To her amazement, she saw that it was cotton thread. She tugged gently, and found that it was taut. In both directions it ran out of sight.

It was damp but not sodden, and, on examining it closely, she decided it was new.

"A trail—and a clever one, too! A trail of cotton leading—where?"

She followed it excitedly, turning left or right as it went. Wendy did not take her eyes from it for more than a moment at a time; she just followed it. But whether it led her farther into the heart of these catacombs, or out, she did not know. But the level of the floor seemed to be dropping, as though she were going down into the bowels of the earth. Then suddenly she stooped. She could hear a strange sound from the rock below, a thudding noise, and she pressed her head down, listening.

It was a rhythmic thud-thud she heard, like running footsteps. Presently it came nearer, and she wheeled, flashing on the torch.

"Wendy!"

It was Alice's voice, shrill with fright. Wendy, springing up, flashed the torch towards the sound of the voice, and picked up Alice in the beam.

"Come quickly!" she gulped, and she clutched frenziedly at Wendy. "Oh, please come quickly! My brother—"

"What's happened?" asked Wendy.

"He and Travers—Travers ran away, and my brother followed. They're lost! Oh, Wendy—"

Alice's voice ended in a sob, and, dropping to her knees, she buried her face in her hands.

"Alice, what is it all about? Is it your brother hiding here? Did you bring him food?" asked Wendy.

Alice took her hands from her face.

"How did you know?"

"I guessed," said Wendy. "But who is Travers?"

"The real thief!" said Alice fiercely. "He's the one the police want, not my brother! It's him they should have shadowed, not me. They've hunted me—even though I changed my job—yes, and my name—and dyed my hair—they tracked me. But now we've proof. Travers is here, and with the money—"

Wendy guessed at the truth.

"The money your brother is supposed to have stolen?" she asked. "He's hiding from the police, and you brought him food, is that it?"

Alice nodded.

"I wouldn't tell you, but now that Travers is here, it's different. He's the real thief. Ray said that Travers would hide the money here, and he came to find it and wait. But now they've run on, and they'll never get back. Ray won't be able to find the thread again—"

"Where does this thread lead?" asked Wendy.

"One end to the entrance. A hundred and thirty paces from the entrance it starts—and then it just goes on and on. My brother had five reels of cotton. How long is that? He may have used one reel, or five—I don't know. But if you see an arrow mark over the thread, scratched on the rock, it points the entrance."

"Then let's go on."

In silence they followed the thread, and suddenly Wendy gave an excited cry and pointed.

"Look, there it is!" she cried.

For, chalked on the rock was a big arrow-head. According to Alice, it pointed towards the entrance, therefore, to find the lost men, they must go in the opposite direction. Clinging to the thread, Wendy led the way. On and on through the blackness, twisting and turning, and then, suddenly, they both pulled up dead. From the distance sounded voices.

"Yes, we're lost!" came a breathless, angry voice. "Both lost! But I know the way out, and you don't, Travers. You can stay here or confess—whichever you like!"

"I'll never confess! You can never prove anything—never! If the worst comes to the worst, I'll say I found this money on you. I'll say you were hiding here—as you were. You ran away—and that's proof of your guilt. The police are looking for you—and they'll find you with the spoils!"

Alice ran towards the sound of voices.

"You've confessed. I've heard you—I've heard you! I'm a witness!" she cried.

Wendy followed more guardedly. She saw the man Travers glaring at a bundle in his arms—the stolen money! He confronted Alice in sneering scorn.

YOUR EDITOR'S CORNER



"Girls' Crystal" Office,
The Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street,
London, E.C.4.

MY DEAR GIRLS,—Aren't you all having an exciting time?

There was the staggering news of the "Bestway Knitting Competition" last week, and now this week appears the list of prize-winners in our recent Voting Competition! (You'll see the names of the lucky winners on page 14).

I know lots of you are real knitting experts, but even if you're not, you're sure to be entering for the Knitting Competition. A prize, you know, is to be awarded to every single entrant who is a regular reader of this paper—regardless of whether she wins one of the superb money prizes or not!

I'm almost beginning to wish I could enter—I'm sure I could manage, after a few weeks, to knit a very appalling kettle holder, or something! Don't you think I could?

A SPECIAL OCCASION

Have you noticed that this is number 100 of your favourite paper? I expect you have, for I know how observant you are. I think a birthday cake with a hundred candles on it would be a nice way of celebrating, don't you? But since Penelope is away, perhaps we'd better have something special for tea when she comes back.

Meanwhile, I'm sure you'll agree that this number is a worthy one for such an occasion. Do, when you write to me, tell me what you think of the stories, won't you?

COMING NEXT WEEK

Next week's number of the *GIRLS' CRYSTAL* is one that you'll revel in from cover to cover.

"The Secret of the Pink Rose" is the title of the detective story featuring Noel Raymond. It's one of those mysteries that will baffle you completely—and saves up a grand surprise until the end.

There are plenty of surprises for you in next Friday's story featuring our lovable Susie. This is a story you won't be able to put down until you've read the very last word.

Another complete story of "The Happy-Go-Lucky Hikers" will also appear, as well as splendid instalments of our three serials.

I must also mention our Annuals, which you'll see advertised on page 14.

These four books are now on sale—four books that you'd love to own among your treasures.

Ask your favourite newsagent to let you see them when you visit him to place that regular order for your *GIRLS' CRYSTAL*. You'll just long to own them, I warn you! So if you've a birthday round about now, what about whispering to mother or to father, or to aunt, the magic word: "Annuals." They make lovely presents.

Good-bye until next week!

Your sincere friend,

YOUR EDITOR

"Pah! His sister! A pretty trumped-up plot! There's no other witness!"

And then Wendy stepped forward.

"Oh, yes, there is!" she said. "I'm a witness. Also Detective-Sergeant Brown, of Scotland Yard, who was shadowing Alice."

Travers' jaw dropped. He did not guess that the name was invented; that this was a bluff.

"Oh!" he gulped.

He turned and ran, and Wendy switched off her torch. Scared by the sudden darkness the runner stopped and groped blindly about him.

"A light—show a light!" he called.

Wendy switched on the torch, and he came towards her.

"All right—I'll come," he said. "Where's the tea?"

"He's gone back to the entrance, but he's heard you confess," bluffed Wendy. "Come on, let's get out of here!"

Guided by the trailing thread, she led the way back through the winding caves.

THE sergeant's name was Johns, but he was a detective right enough, and, having regard to Wendy's evidence and the large packet of stolen money, he arrested Travers on a charge of robbing the bank that employed him.

Jill and Fay, scared, had left the cave and signalled to the detective, and then gone with him into the catacombs.

It was while he was deciding what to do for the best that Wendy and the others had returned.

"I'm afraid I must ask you to come along to the station, too," he said to Alice's brother.

"Can't I have a bite of something first?" asked Ray. He was unshaven, haggard, and hungry-looking.

"Of course!" agreed the detective.

"Now for your recipe, Jill," said Wendy. "Where's the spirit stove? I bet it's a new way of boiling eggs!"

But it was a Welsh rarebit, and when made, the ravenous hider in the caves was allowed to have it all. He wolfed it. There was no other word to describe it, and then he gulped down hot tea eagerly.

"Oh, Ray," gulped Alice, with tears in her eyes, "thank goodness I came! But I nearly didn't. I was scared—oh, you don't know how scared I was! I expected detectives to be waiting. Then I thought that if I came as a hiker I wouldn't be suspected."

The detective smiled.

"Making these other accessories—eh?" he said. "But, by gosh, it's lucky you did, for without Wendy you'd have been lost all right, all of you."

"Yes—Ray had wandered away from the thread," shivered Alice. "It was while he was chasing Travers, and he hadn't his torch with him. They'd both have been lost."

Afterwards, the Happy-Go-Lucky Hikers accompanied the detective to the nearest town, there to catch their train home.

Travers eventually paid the penalty for his crime, and Alice's wrongfully accused brother was given compensation and taken back into the service of the bank where he and Travers had been employed.

Travers, Ray, and his sister had explored the caves earlier in the summer, and when he had discovered that Travers was the real thief, Ray had guessed that he had hidden the money there. So he had gone there himself, to hide from the police, and also because he had known that, sooner or later, his treacherous friend would return for the loot.

Wendy, Fay, and Jill spent quite a long time afterwards piecing together the clues, explaining away the queer things Alice had said and done—and now, in the light of their new knowledge, accounting for them. But Alice, thereafter, was such a changed girl that she hardly seemed the same person. No longer nervy and irritable, she was as merry as a lark, and often she joined the Happy-Go-Lucky Hikers in their week-end rambles.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

Next Friday Wendy & Co. encounter an unexpected adventure while visiting a Fun Fair. Make certain of reading all about it by ordering your *GIRLS' CRYSTAL* now.

GIRLS' CRYSTAL
18/9/37

STELLA and the SHEIK of MYSTERY



By RENEE FRAZER

THE YOUNG SHEIK IN DISGUISE

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 mysterious sheik was not her friend, later she turned against him.

While crossing the desert to search for Mr. Conway, Stella and Joyce were captured by Omar and taken to his desert palace. They were rescued, and Omar was wounded while protecting Stella. Professor Barrington, who led the rescuers, was going to send back the sheik to Cairo, a prisoner; but when Stella entered his tent at night in order to try to discover the truth about him Omar had vanished.

Stella went in search of him, only to fall into the hands of Al Raschid. The dreaded chieftain's right-hand man, she discovered, was the young sheik in disguise, and, with a thrill, she realised that he meant to help her.

"OMAR!"

The broken whisper escaped Stella's lips as she stared incredulously into the bearded face of the desert Arab—the man whom the chief had addressed as Ahmed, his lieutenant.

The handsome boyish features beneath the disfiguring beard were visible to her now as he held her; those dark, compelling eyes—at once fierce and gentle—could belong to no one except Omar, the young sheik—her erstwhile friend whom she imagined had betrayed her!

Her heart gave a sudden, wild leap. In a blinding flash of enlightenment, she realised that he had been her friend from the first. The rest had been a pose—forced on him by circumstances over which he had no control.

What strange mystery and intrigue lay behind his actions she had yet to learn; but one thing she knew for a certainty. It was Omar who had rescued her father from the clutches of his villainous uncle, Al Raschid!

Who but the young sheik could have evolved and carried out that daring plan—substituting one of Al Raschid's own bodyguard for the prisoner.

And now, in the nick of time, he had come

to rescue her, disguised as the scoundrelly chieftain's right-hand man!

The sheer daring of the plan took Stella's breath away.

On all sides they were hemmed in by Haroun Al Raschid's fierce, unscrupulous followers—men who treated killing as a pastime, at the bidding of their scoundrelly chief.

If Omar was discovered plotting against his uncle, he could expect no mercy. Al Raschid would not spare even his nephew in his desire for revenge.

She remembered his reference to Omar as a "cunning young fox." Obviously he had his suspicions of his nephew even then.

Stella's heart turned cold as she thought of the consequences of discovery; not so much for herself, but for the young sheik.

She tried to whisper an urgent warning; but his slim, brown fingers closed over her lips.

"Have no fear, Desert Star," he breathed huskily, "all is arranged! Beyond the trees I have a trusty horse waiting—as fleet-footed as the night itself. Before dawn comes we shall have joined the party I sent ahead in charge of my sister—and your father. I have kept my promise, Stella."

Stella closed her eyes, her lips trembling—conscious only of the reassuring strength of the arms that held her, of the wonderful knowledge of her father's safety.

For the moment she felt that nothing else mattered.

Then she became more aware of the peril that surrounded them; of the fierce dark faces watching her and her disguised captor as he carried her through the crowd.

"Make way!" he exclaimed harshly in his native tongue. "Make way for the prisoner! To-night we shall hear her cries as she shrinks beneath Al Raschid's whip!"

Stella barely gathered the trend of his words—but the raucous burst of cruel laughter that greeted them was unmistakable.

She shuddered in spite of herself, covering her face with her hands. The action called forth renewed laughter and jeers.

They all thought he was the desert brigand's right-hand man. Only Stella knew that he was the young sheik Omar. And he was playing his dangerous role in order to rescue her from her cruel captors!

Through her fingers she saw the surging crowd hemming them in, and Omar's dusky face, his lips tight-set, a dangerous glitter in his eyes.

"Make way, dogs," he exclaimed, "by Al Raschid's orders!"

A sullen mutter went up from the crowd as they parted to let him through; they hated and feared Al Raschid's bullying lieutenant, Ahmed—the man whom Omar was impersonating.

Suddenly one fellow, more daring than the rest, stepped across the young sheik's path to leer into Stella's frightened face.

His eyes flashing, Omar grabbed the unwary Arab by the scruff of his neck, flinging him headlong.

Instantly there was an uproar; rifles were flourished, knives were drawn. An ominous crowd hemmed in the young sheik and his white-faced burden—though still keeping a respectful distance.

Omar had whipped out the pearl-mounted pistol from his belt.

"Any dog who comes a step nearer," he snapped, "will die the death of a dog. Stand back!"

The muttering throng was momentarily cowed by the glitter in his eyes, his menacing gesture. Then someone at the back threw a missile—a piece of jagged stone; it caught the young sheik on the side of his face, drawing blood, and momentarily dislodging the thick black beard.

A loud yell arose from those in front—a yell taken up like a pack of wolves by the others.

"A spy!"

"An impostor!"

"Kill him!"

A hail of missiles followed the first stone, one of them striking Omar's bandaged head and causing him to stagger.

Stella flung up her arms instinctively to protect him, and received an ugly gash on her hand.

"Canaille!" breathed Omar, between his teeth. "They've asked for it!"

He emptied his pistol into the crowd; then, flinging it into the face of a huge ruffian who attempted to snatch Stella from his arms, he floored another man with his fist and leaped through the gap, racing for the trees with Stella in his arms.

A rain of bullets spattered around them—striking the rocks and embedding themselves in the ground.

But the rabble who composed Al Raschid's following, with the exception of his personal bodyguard, were hopeless marksmen.

With long, bounding strides, the young sheik reached the shelter of the trees.

There his horse was tethered—the magnificent steed Stella had come to know so well. In a trice, he had lifted her into the saddle and sprung up behind her.

A moment later they were away—riding like the wind, through a wilderness of scattered rocks and stunted cacti—past frowning sandstone cliffs—and finally out into the barren desert.

For perhaps a quarter of an hour the young sheik rode without slackening rein; then Stella noticed that he was swaying slightly in the saddle—his hands seemed to grip the reins almost convulsively, the knuckles gleaming through the tight-drawn skin.

Anxiously she stared up into his face—to catch in her breath in sharp dismay and pity. For Omar's face was pallid beneath his dusky hue; the bandage had slipped from his forehead, and a thin trickle of blood made its way over his high cheek-bone.

"Omar!" she gasped. "You can't go on—like this!"

A twisted smile curved the other's lips as he reluctantly drew rein.

"I—I'm sorry, Stella," he muttered. "The dogs bit deeper than I suspected. In a moment—I'll be all right."

He raised his hand to his head; then, with a groan, he seemed to crumple up all at once, falling forward.

Stella, pale to the lips, flung her arms round him to prevent his slipping from the saddle. Then, using every ounce of her strength, she contrived to assist him to the ground, dropping to her knees at his side as he lay motionless on the ground.

"Omar!" she whispered brokenly.

With an effort, she pulled herself together; this was no time for tears! Rising quickly to her feet, she stared back across the desert in the way they had come—fearing some signs of pursuit.

But the sand-dunes stretched unbrokenly as far as the eye could see, with here and there a stunted palm. For the time being, at least, they were safe.

Swiftly she turned to the patient, motionless horse, seeking the leather water-bottle attached to the saddle. A moment later she was allowing a little of the liquid to trickle between Omar's lips.

Watching him anxiously, she saw his eyelids flicker; then he stirred slightly, opening his eyes.

He stared at her, dazedly at first, and then with a wry smile.

"Forgive me, Stella," he muttered. "This is not what I had planned—but we are in the hands of Allah. Take this"—he fumbled at his girdle, producing a bulky leather pouch—"you will find instructions—and a message—for your father."

His words came with difficulty; his hand tightened on her arm.

"Farewell, Stella—and Allah go with thee. We—we may not meet again. Go—quickly!"

With a faint sob, Stella slipped an arm round his shoulder.

"I'm not going without you, Omar!" she breathed.

But he did not reply; his head had fallen limply on her arm. His breathing was very faint.

THE PYRAMID OF THE SPRING

CHOKING back a sob, Stella stared round her wildly. The shadows of the night were creeping over the desert. At all costs she must get the young sheik away from here—to some place of safety.

And as her desperate gaze searched the surrounding wastes, she heard the magnificent horse whinny faintly.

Almost as though the faithful creature understood, it was pawing the sand, straining its neck towards its young master.

A lump rose in Stella's throat; to lift the young sheik back into the saddle seemed beyond her strength. Then, in a flash, she saw a possible solution.

Owing to the nature of the sand-dunes, some parts of the ground were many feet below others. Close to where she stood was a sheer drop of several feet into a sandy hollow.

Grasping the horse by the bridle, she led it down into the hollow; its saddle, now, was only a few feet from the level of the higher ground.

Exerting the last ounce of her failing strength, Stella half dragged and half carried the unconscious boy to the edge of the dune,

and lifted him across the saddle, mounting behind him.

With a joyous whinny the horse pawed the ground, and set off of its own accord—heading out across the desert.

Stella was trusting blindly to the horse's instinct; at least it might take them to some oasis, however small, where there would be water and shelter.

Water! That was the main thing. Searched indelibly in her mind was the dread recollection of that parched, torturing thirst that had haunted Joyce and herself on their journey to the Oasis of the Moon.

She wondered whether her absence from the camp had been discovered, yet—what Joyce would say, and the professor.

But, strangely enough, Joyce and the past seemed dreamlike—unreal. Her one thought was for the brave young Arab who lay motionless—perhaps dying—across the saddle of his horse; the boy who had saved her father's life.

On they went—into a world of silence and darkness; one by one the stars came out, till the whole sky shimmered like diamond-encrusted velvet above them.

And still there was no land-mark—nothing that looked in the least like trees or an oasis.

Then, after nearly an hour's riding—it seemed to Stella like an eternity—the horse threw up its head, its nostrils quivering.

Stella strained her smarting eyes, staring over the sands. There was something—a dim shape that might be a clump of trees!

Stella dared not urge the horse into a gallop, for fear of its unconscious burden; but with an impatience she could hardly contain, she watched the shadowy mass draw nearer—gradually disclosing itself to be a heap of colossal sandstone rocks, forming a rough pyramid, and half buried in the drifting sand.

Her heart sank; sudden despair took the place of hope. She had expected to find trees and an oasis—instead, she had come across a barren heap of rocks—the ruins of an ancient pyramid!

But the horse was pressing forward with unmistakable eagerness; and as they came nearer to the pile of rocks, Stella saw something else—something that brought incredulous hope surging back to her.

Around the base of the pile of rocks grew moss, coarse green grass and other curious desert plants that thrive only in the vicinity of water!

And as she drew still nearer, Stella heard a strange gurgling, rippling sound that bespoke the presence of a hidden spring—in the depths of the pyramid itself!

Hardly daring to credit her amazing discovery, Stella slid to the ground and peered into the dark opening.

In the dim light she saw a spring gushing from the earth itself and forming a deep pool in the centre of the great stone chamber. Where it overflowed she could not imagine; possibly it merely soaked away into the desert sand.

Returning to the waiting horse, she contrived to lower the injured boy gently to the ground, half carrying and half dragging him into the dim mouth of the pyramid.

Then anxiously searching the horse's saddle-bag, she found a satchel of provisions—biscuits and dates—sufficient, with care, for perhaps a day or two.

The young sheik had come prepared.

Stella gently readjusted his bandage, bathing his forehead with some of the ice-cold water from the spring. Then, helping herself to a few biscuits, she sat down at his side to await the dawn.

As the first glimmer of daylight appeared on the horizon, the young sheik became restive. He raised himself on his elbow, muttering in his delirium.

"The pouch—is it safe? The message—Conway must get the message. Stella!"

"I'm here," whispered Stella, bending over him.

Omar opened his eyes, staring at her wonderingly.

"I dream," he muttered. "Her face haunts me still."

Stella held some water to his lips; he drank greedily, and then fell back in a stupor.

Then Stella groped for the leather pouch

with which he had entrusted her. It was bulky and curiously weighty.

She opened it, taking out a sheet of paper and a sealed envelope. She saw that the envelope was addressed to her father!

Placing it on her lap, she unfolded the sheet of paper.

There was some kind of diagram drawn roughly across it, with names dotted here and there. A straggling line Stella took to indicate the course of the Nile—Egypt's mystic river.

Most of the scribbled names were quite unintelligible to Stella—with two exceptions. In the left-hand corner, close to the mark of a coiled serpent, were several little marks in a cluster, possibly indicating a camp, and beneath them were the names:

"Yasmin—Conway."

Stella's eyes shone eagerly. That must be the place where Omar's sister was encamped with the released prisoner, awaiting her brother's arrival.

And about three miles to the south was another mark—a triangle—and the words:

"Pyramid of the Spring."

According to that, they were only a few miles from their friends. For a moment Stella's hopes rose—to sink again even more swiftly. Only too well she knew that three miles under the burning sun of the desert would be an almost impossible undertaking with the young sheik in his present condition.

And she dared not leave him; she must stay by his side and nurse him till he regained his strength, or, at least, until he was in a fit condition to mount his horse.

The leather pouch was still weighty, and, curiously, she shook it out on her lap.

From it rolled two gleaming objects that flashed a deep crimson in the rays of the rising sun.

Stella caught in her breath sharply, her face paling slightly as she recognised them.

They were the priceless ruby amulets that were linked so strangely with the mystery surrounding her father and the young sheik.

Only a few days ago she had seen them in the young sheik's hands, but under strangely different conditions. Then she had been his prisoner, hating him, suspicious of his every movement. Now he was ill and helpless, utterly dependent on her, and she knew without a shadow of doubt that he was her friend.

But the sight of the amulets brought back painful memories; no doubt the letter addressed to her father would explain them, but that she could not open.

Hastily she thrust the letter and the amulets back into the wallet, keeping out only the chart.

The desert day drew on to the burning noon, and the young sheik's condition grew worse. He was in a high fever, which was brought on by the wound in his forehead.

Only once or twice, in more lucid periods, he stared at her strangely, as though wondering why she was there.

Then, in the afternoon, he dropped into a heavy sleep, while Stella stood anxiously by the entrance to the pyramid, staring out across the burning sands towards the horizon, waiting and watching vainly for any moving specks that might indicate that their friends were coming in search of them.

Towards the cool of the evening Omar awakened, and, to her relief, Stella found that his fever had abated. He obviously recognised her, though he was too weak to speak. Once or twice he made a motion towards his lips, and Stella brought him water.

His improvement increased as the evening shadows crept on; he was able to speak in a whisper.

"Stella—the key!" he muttered, again and again. "The key!"

"What key, Omar?" asked Stella anxiously. "There was no key in the wallet."

The young sheik shook his head.

"The amulets!" he whispered. "The letter to your father—it must be in his hands by to-morrow, or it may be too late—"

He closed his eyes, his hands clenching as though he strove to fight against his weakness.

Stella, biting her lip, stared out across the desert into the brief twilight.

Still no signs of rescue. If only she dared set out on her own, and try to connect up with Yasmin and the rest of the party! But

she could not leave the young sheik alone here, hemmed in by the unknown perils of the desert.

It was as it grew dark that something happened to give a fresh impetus to Stella's determination.

She had been standing by the opening, staring out across the desert, watching the moon rising, a silver disc behind the distant sandhills.

Suddenly she felt something touch her foot, and, looking down, an involuntary scream was torn from her lips.

Gliding between her feet was a long, green snake, its wicked eyes gleaming like pin-points of light.

Stella felt paralysed, unable to move. After that first scream her lips were too parched to utter a sound. With a dreadful fascination, she watched the snake raise its head as though to strike, and then something totally unexpected happened.

A slim, brown hand reached out from the doorway behind her, and, with a lightning movement, caught the snake behind its venomous head, dashing it against the stone wall. The creature fell, lifeless, to the ground, and, with a cry, Stella turned.

THE DESERTED CAMP

THE young sheik knelt there, breathing heavily as he supported himself against the wall. His drawn features revealed only too plainly the supreme nervous effort that had enabled him momentarily to throw off his weakness in the face of Stella's desperate peril.

In a moment Stella was at his side, supporting him, her eyes filled with tears.

"Omar," she choked, "you—you saved my life—a second time!"

The young sheik smiled faintly.

"It is good, Star of the Desert!" he breathed. "Allah willed it. I have been useless to you, a burden on your hands, but this makes some amends. Now you will leave me and seek your father. The message must reach him!"

"I won't leave you, Omar!" declared Stella. "We're both going. I'll help you on to your horse. Please—please try, for my sake!"

A twisted smile curved the boy's lips.

"For your sake, Stella!" he muttered.

He raised his head, whistling faintly.

In an instant the intelligent horse was at their side, whinnying softly with pleasure. Omar tried to struggle to his feet, but could not manage it.

Stella had to support him, and she dreaded that he would never be able to reach the saddle. But at last, with her help, he contrived it, and this time Stella mounted behind to support him, while Omar grasped the reins he knew so well.

Very gently the great horse set off, as though realising its young master's weakness—a walk at first, and then a canter, prompted by a slight touch of the rein.

The feel of the horse beneath him and the cool night air of the desert revived the young sheik amazingly. His shoulders no longer dropped; his head was thrown back with something of its old arrogance.

"A mile or two, Stella!" he muttered, over his shoulder. "Watch out for three palm-trees, standing close together on a knoll. The camp is just beyond."

It was perhaps half an hour later that they came in sight of the three trees, their feathery fronds silhouetted against the night sky.

Stella gave a little cry of delight, but the young sheik's strength was obviously failing him.

"The camp, Stella!" he breathed, as they approached the knoll. "Leave me here with Black Hawk while you rouse them. The sound of hoofs may alarm my sister Yasmin."

Even at that moment the young sheik was concerned for his sister, and Stella felt her heart go out to him. She could not believe that she had ever thought him to be a villain.

Pressing his hand, she slid from the saddle and hurried towards the clump of palms.

And there, in the moonlight, she saw the white tents of Yasmin's encampment—silent and peaceful in a tiny oasis.

Stella's heart gave a violent bound.

In one of those tents lay her father. In a few minutes they would be in each other's arms.

She started to run, stumbling on the shifting sand in her eagerness.

As she approached the camp she wondered that there were no sentries on guard. They were leaving themselves dangerously open to attack.

Hurrying up to the largest tent, she pulled back the flap and peered within. Then a cold hand seemed to clutch at her heart.

The tent was empty, and in a state of wild disorder, as though its occupant had left in frantic haste.

White-faced, Stella darted to the other tents, to make the same discovery.

The camp was deserted, and by the trampled state of the sand, and the objects lying scattered about, it was obvious that there had been an attack of some kind, or a precipitous flight.

FOR several minutes Stella stood motionless, almost stunned by her discovery. She had been banking all her hopes on finding her father here, and now—

"I could have sworn they would be safe here!" he breathed huskily. "There has been treachery!"

His eyes flashed; his teeth gleamed whitely behind his drawn lips.

"Stella, thou must wait here," he breathed. "Stay within the camp. I must follow the trail alone. Do not fear; I shall be back within an hour."

"But, Omar, you can't!" gasped Stella. "You—you're ill!"

"That weakness has passed," retorted the boy huskily. "I have tarried too long. My name will be dishonoured if I cannot undo the wrong that has been done. Let me go, Stella; await me in the camp. There is no danger here now."

He raised his hand in a swift salutation, as he applied the spurs to his horse.

Stella drew back, realising the uselessness of trying to dissuade him.

With straining eyes she watched him out of sight till the muffled thudding of the horse's hoofs was no longer audible.

Numbly Stella sat down to wait. Seconds came and went. Minutes that seemed an eternity passed with pitiless slowness. Still



Amazed, Stella stared into the tent. It was empty and in a state of wild disorder—as though the occupants had left in frantic haste. Had her father and her friends been attacked?

A deserted camp that told its dread tale only too well; a swift attack by night—shots and screams. And her father—oh, Heaven! Had he managed to escape? She clung desperately to that frail hope.

Blindly, with dragging steps, she made her way back to Omar, wondering how she could break the news to the injured boy.

The young sheik was seated on his horse, staring towards her with restless, anxious eyes.

Somehow he seemed to guess that all was not well.

He leaned from the saddle as she approached.

"Stella, what is it? What is wrong?"

Stella reached up, catching at his hand.

"Omar," she cried, "the camp—it's empty! Something—something dreadful's happened."

She saw the young sheik stiffen, his face suddenly pallid beneath his tan.

"Allah!" he breathed.

He spurred his horse suddenly to the crest of the knoll, staring down into the hollow. His hands were clenched on the reins, the knuckles gleaming whitely through the drawn skin.

Stella waited, every nerve keen and expectant as the hour's waiting was over at last.

But the hour in which he had promised to return dragged on into two—into three. The moon rose high in the sky, silvering the desert. And still the young sheik did not return.

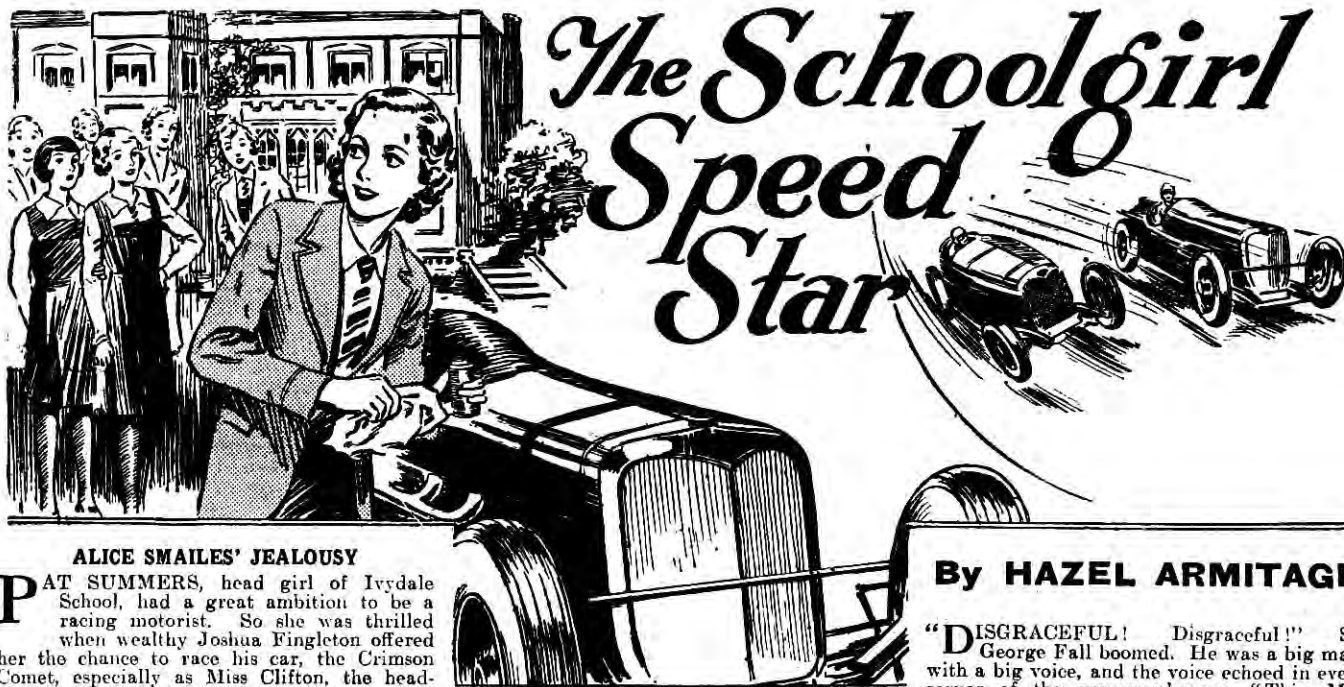
Stella could wait no longer. The suspense was almost killing her.

Desperately she set out on foot, following the clearly marked trail of the horse's hoofs. Clutched in her hand was the precious wallet, containing the ruby amulets and her father's letter.

For perhaps a mile she stumbled on, her feet sinking into sand-drifts, the immensity of the silent desert seeming to close in on her.

Sudden, blind fear gripped her heart—the terror of lonely spaces. She broke into a stumbling run, not daring to look behind, heedless of what danger might lie ahead.

What has happened to the sheik, and to the occupants of the camp? Has Al Raschid captured them all? And what will Stella be able to do? You must not, on any account, miss next Friday's thrilling instalment of this glamorous story.



ALICE SMAILES' JEALOUSY

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 headmistress, 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, and, as a result, she and the unruly Fourth Former became friends.

Pat learnt that her next race was to be in London, and Mr. Fingleton told her that he hoped to secure permission for some of the Fourth Formers to stay in London with her.

Mr. Fingleton stood treat in the school tuck-shop, and all were enjoying themselves when Alice Smailes, furious at Pat's popularity, flung the contents of her glass full in the head girl's face.

AS Pat Summers staggered back, momentarily blinded by the shower of fizzing lemonade that shot from Alice Smailes' glass, a cry went up from the assembled juniors.

Alice Smailes, to do her justice, had not intended that. Perhaps, too late, she regretted the furious impulse which had precipitated the action.

It had been her hatred of Pat, her deep-rooted dislike of all that Pat did, her envious jealousy of Pat's popularity—all those things had been bubbling within Alice Smailes, and had been behind that action.

While Pat staggered back, Alice turned deathly pale, dumbfounded, for the moment, at the foolish rashness of her own action.

But if Alice Smailes had desired to create a row, she could not have found a better means. From the juniors went up a cry of protest. Julie Fingleton, passionately indignant at this insult to her heroine, made to throw her own glass of lemonade back at Alice.

Just in the nick of time Pat saw what Julie had in mind. Just in the nick of time she jerked back her hand. Alice missed Julie's retaliating deluge, but Amy Hemingway behind her was not so fortunate. With a spluttering gasp, Amy gave back as the lemonade hit her in the chest.

"Why, you little beast!" she mouthed. "You—"

And there and then she made a furious rush at Julie. But Julie, convalescent as she was, did not flinch. Grimly, firmly, she stood her ground. As furious Amy's fingers fastened upon her shoulder, round swept Julie's hand, and smack! came Julie's palm against Amy's cheek.

And then—uproar! "Leave her alone!" cried Grace Campbell. "Good old Julie!" cheered Chrissie Elvin.

"Girls," Pat said, and her eyes gleamed as the juniors reluctantly fell back, as the rebel prefects, in an angry, glowering knot, faced her, "let's have order! Alice, in the first place, that was a particularly silly thing to do! I hope you are going to apologise!"

"Then," Alice bit out, "go on hoping!" "Cat!" cried a voice.

"What?" "Cat!" the voice repeated. "Nasty-tempered, spiteful cat!"

"Why, you—" Joshua Fingleton, deciding that Julie had had enough, quietly led her away.

Then suddenly Alice made a rush. She made a viciously futile grab at Evelyn Terry. Evelyn impishly dodged, with the result that Alice went sprawling on all fours on the gravel.

"Ha, ha, ha!" "And then—"

"Girls!" cried a trembling, agitated voice. "Girls, how dare—What—Oh, my goodness! Patricia, restore order, please—at once! The—the governors are here!"

And, as if by magic, everyone stood still. They all turned. Pat, felt her own features turn pale.

For there was quivering Miss Clifton, the headmistress of Ivydale, and with her were the whole board of governors of Ivydale School!

Pat and the Fourth Formers were all dismayed at the news that Alice Smailes was to accompany them on their trip to London. But to their surprise the spiteful prefect made no attempt to spoil their fun. It was a deep, crafty game she was playing!

By HAZEL ARMITAGE

"DISGRACEFUL! Disgraceful!" Sir George Fall boomed. He was a big man, with a big voice, and the voice echoed in every corner of the governors' room. "This, Miss Clifton, is supposed to be a school for the daughters of gentlemen. The girls we saw were behaving like a crowd of young bears in a—bear-garden, egad!"

And Sir George puffed out his balloon-like cheeks and glared at Miss Clifton.

The scene was the governors' room a quarter of an hour later. The governors were in session. Miss Clifton was there. Pat was there. So, too, was Alice Smailes.

Julie had been packed off to the sanatorium again, and her father, Joshua Fingleton, was with her. The air of the governors' room was heavy.

"But, please, may I—" Pat began.

"Young lady, you will speak when you are spoken to," Sir George said portentously. "We shall be ready to hear what you have to say in a few minutes. There seems to be something wrong here. You, as head girl, are supposed to be helping maintain discipline, what? That was a fine example, wasn't it—standing there while your own prefects were being made a laughing-stock of by the whole of the Lower School!"

Pat bit her lip. "What is this trouble between the prefects, and who is responsible for it?" Sir George went on. "You are the girl motorist, are you not?"

"Yes," Pat admitted.

"H'm! H'm!" Sir Geoffrey looked down his nose. "And you," he said to Alice—"you are the ringleader of this strike among the prefects, I hear. What is your defence?"

Alice smiled slyly.

"My defence," she said, "is the way Pat Summers favours the juniors. Because of her motor-racing exploits, the juniors regard her as a heroine—perhaps rightly," Alice said virtuously, knowing this would sound fair-minded on her part.

She smiled. Pat clenched her hands. The governors frowned and Sir George looked fierce. For ten minutes they questioned Alice, who most cleverly gave her answers. For ten minutes they questioned Pat. Then Sir George said:

"Very well, you girls may go. Miss Clifton, please remain. Hallo! Who's that?" he added, as a knock came at the door.

The door opened. Joshua Fingleton, looking rather surprised, stood there.

"Oh, I'm sorry! I've stepped into the wrong room." Then he saw Sir George. "Well, well, isn't it Sir George Fall? My old friend of the Plathian Club? Why, George, how are you? But I'm intruding?" he added quickly.

"No, no; come in!" Sir George beamed. It was obvious that he and Joshua Fingleton were old friends. "Now, girls, please go," he

said testily, waving a hand towards the door. "Remain in your studies. If you are wanted again, we will send for you."

Alice smiled a sour smile. Pat, with a sympathetic glance at the worried Miss Clifton, passed quietly through the door. Quickly she stepped along the corridor to her own study, ignoring Alice as that girl would have lingered. She had not been there more than twenty minutes when she was sent for again.

It was obvious then that the governors had come to some decision. Miss Clifton was no longer there; neither was Joshua Fingleton. Sir George frowned.

"I might as well let you know at once, Patricia Summers," he said bluntly, "that we, the governors, are not satisfied at the way discipline and order seem to be conducted in this school! So—"his lips came together—"so," he added, "we have decided to give you a fortnight—as a sort of testing period. In that time, Patricia, I hope to see a change—complete harmony between head girl and prefects, for one thing."

"If this does not succeed," he added, with a quietness that somehow was much more impressive than all his previous blustering, "then we shall feel ourselves called upon to make drastic changes. It may mean that we shall have to find a new headmistress—and most certainly a new head girl!"

Pat found herself turning pale. By her sides her fingers bit into her palms. But she said nothing. What could she say, indeed?

"And that," Sir George declared, "is all! Except one more thing. This concerns a request from Mr. Fingleton, my friend, and it may help to smooth out matters at the same time. I learn from him that you are racing his car, the Comet, in London next Saturday. In connection with that race, Mr. Fingleton has asked that a dozen girls from this school—among them his own daughter—shall be allowed to go with you, at his expense. Naturally," he added, "as head girl, you will be in complete charge."

Pat's lips parted. Her eyes shone then. "And—and I may take whom I like?" she asked.

"Whom you like—yes. Except"—and he paused—"for one person. This seems to me an excellent opportunity to restore good feeling between you and your prefects. We have, therefore, decided," Sir George went on, "that you will take another prefect to help you, and that prefect shall be Alice Smailes! I hope, Patricia, that you and Alice will make use of the interlude to get on better terms."

Some of the happiness fled from Pat's face. She looked at him appealingly.

"Oh, but, Sir George, couldn't I take Lena Grange?"

"You will take the girl we have named!" the governor said. "Please go, and send Alice Smailes along at once!"

And Pat, with her happiness rather chilled, with a strange, uneasy feeling that this glorious treat would, after all, turn out to be a treat not so glorious, went.

A CHANGED ALICE!

THE next day, what joy, what jubilation there was in Ivydale—particularly in the Lower School. And what envy—what heartaches!

For Pat, though she made up her list of guests to London as thoughtfully as ever, could not, of course, take every one of her admirers.

Very many had to be disappointed, and the disappointed ones, while appreciating Pat's difficulty, would hardly have been human if they had not grumbled.

More mournful and disappointed than ever were those grumblers when the whole programme was made known—and it was made known by Pat after a further interview with Joshua Fingleton, who called next day to see Julie.

The party was to go off on Friday afternoon. They would stop at the Regent Hotel, near Park Lane. In the afternoon they would be conveyed by a special coach to the racing-track, in the evening be entertained at a London theatre, with a pleasant drive back to school on Sunday afternoon, after spending the morning in London.

Pat was as thrilled as the juniors. She still felt vaguely uneasy about Alice; but, after all, there were plenty of her own loyal friends in the party.

Meantime, she was all agog with excitement about the Crimson Comet, which, once again, was in her own charge—which might, if she fulfilled her bargain with Joshua Fingleton, eventually be her own!

Three more races, including the one on Saturday, she had to race; and from one of those, at least, she had to snatch a victory in order to enable her to compete for the Grand Prix later on.

But the Comet would do it—the Comet must! How lovingly and longingly she tinkered with it next day, adjusting this, tightening that, polishing and rubbing till the car shone like a mirror.

In the evening she took Grace Campbell out for a run along the arterial road, and was delighted at the Comet's smooth running—at the effortless ease with which it accelerated.

On Thursday she spent half the afternoon in studying the entrants for the race. Among them was the driver of the Alvis which had defeated her in her last race, driving the same car.

And Pat's eyes glinted at that. Last time only sheer bad luck had snatched victory from her hands. This time she would show him what the Comet really could do!

Friday came, with half the school on tenterhooks of excitement.

And, also, an amazing change in Alice!

These last few days Pat had seen little of Alice Smailes. As if subdued by the visit of the governors, she had kept herself very much to herself.

Pat had got out of the habit now of asking the rebels to do things for her, and so had had very little to do with Alice & Co. While the junior school, most tremendously occupied by anticipating their own delight and discussing Pat's chances in the race, had found no cause for friction with the prefects.

Apart from that, Julie, pronounced fit and well once more, had returned to the ranks of the Fourth, and Julie, as the daughter of the donor of the week-end treat, found her company much sought after.

Everything, indeed, seemed once again to be going swimmingly for Pat Summers. Apart

from that little doubt about Alice, Pat was happiness itself.

Great was her excitement that Friday morning when, without waiting for breakfast, she rushed off to the garage to inspect the Comet, to see that the last specks of dirt and oil were removed.

She was engaged in polishing the cowl when Alice Smailes appeared.

Pat looked up. The tune she had been humming faded on her lips. Then she blinked a little as she noticed that Alice was actually smiling.

Pat was almost dazed when Alice, with all the cordiality in the world, said:

"Morning, Pat! Giving the Comet a last look over?"

"Why, yes," Pat said wonderingly.

"She looks marvellous!" Alice enthused.

"Doesn't she," Pat said, but her open stare implied a question.

Alice read it, and flushed a little.

"Looks," she said, "as if we're all going to have a good time."

She came into the garage rather hesitantly.

"I—I just felt I—I had to come to see you," she mumbled. "I meant it—it would have been too beastly going off on a glorious trip like this still being at loggerheads. If I've been a cat in the past, Pat, I'm sorry! Will you shake hands?"

Pat smiled. Alice in that moment looked so contrite, so utterly repentant, that it was hard to think even for a moment that she might not be in earnest.

"Why, Alice, that's fine!" Pat said—"lovely!" and dimpled. "Shake hands! Rather!" And she did—with such a warm-hearted clasp that Alice winced. "Dash it, we shouldn't be at loggerheads, you know! Pull together—oh? Wish me luck!" she added, a twinkle in her eyes.

"Oh, Pat, I—I do!" Alice said warmly. "I—I most sincerely do! And I was thinking. The Comet's going by train this morning, isn't it?"

"Yes," Pat agreed.

"And I dare say you'd like to go with it?"

Pat sighed.

"Wouldn't I just! But I happen to be in charge of the party, you know."

"But that can be arranged, can't it?" Alice



Just as Pat and Julie were setting off to the track, Alice Smailes came forward. "Good luck! Go in and win, Pat!" she said with a laugh. Pat was astounded. What a sudden change this was in Alice!

asked eagerly, "After all, there's no reason why I shouldn't take charge of the party. If you want to travel with the Comet, why not do so—and when you get to London, come on to the hotel. I can meet you there."

Pat paused. Memory of Alice's previous treacheries caused within her a moment of sharp suspicion.

But that was mean, she told herself. Alice, at the moment, was only trying to help. And what mischief could she do, anyway?

Pat would so dearly love to travel with the car, too.

She laughed.

"Well, that's nice of you, Alice. You don't mind?"

"Pleased!" Alice said.

"O.K.! Then I'll tell the party," Pat promised.

And she did—not that the party was frightfully enthusiastic, but anything—anything on this happiest of mornings to make old Pat happy.

And so Pat, instead of travelling with the crowd, went off to the station with Julie Fingleton instead.

Pat wouldn't have been so happy if she had known that the moment her back was turned Alice immediately rang up Bert Preedy, and that for a quarter of an hour after that, the two were in deep and earnest conversation!

THE TELEGRAM

SATURDAY! The morning of mornings! The day of the great race!

If Pat had had any doubts about Alice Smailes' sincerity yesterday, they were completely banished by Saturday.

Julie was still inclined to be suspicious. It was noticeable, too, that Grace Campbell & Co. did not extend the same frank, open-hearted cordiality towards the prefect as Pat.

Yet Alice's conduct had been blameless. Alice, indeed, had shown herself most surprisingly as an altogether different girl.

On the train yesterday she had actually thawed to the extent of standing treat to all the juniors in the restaurant wagon.

At night in the hotel it was she who had pleaded with Pat to allow them to stay up until ten o'clock, so that they could see the first part of the cabaret entertainment.

It was Alice who, just as Pat was off to the track on Saturday morning with Julie, came forward, and with a smile said:

"Pat, good luck! Go in and win! And mind"—with a laugh—"that you bring that trophy back with you. We shall be there, you know, so don't let us down!"

"A change, eh?" Pat laughed when, next to Julie, she sat in the taxi speeding towards the new Jubilee Racing Track. "Wouldn't recognise her for the same girl, would you, Julie?"

Julie shrugged.

"You wouldn't," she said, "but all the same. I don't trust her. And I don't think," she added, "that I shall ever trust her again, Pat, after the way she tried to put me up against you."

Pat laughed. Silly little Julie—but oh, so loyal and lovable a little Julie! She didn't believe her, though perhaps that sentiment did find some distant echo in her own mind.

But everything was too good in this most happy of worlds to harbour resentment, and until Alice really and truly showed that she was trying some deep game, she was more than prepared to take her at her new and changed value.

In any case, why worry? Never mind Alice—never mind anything! The race was before her, and until that was won or lost, she was unprepared to think of anything else whatever.

The track was reached. Joshua Fingleton himself greeted them. He kissed Julie fondly, cordially shook hands with Pat.

"Well, do your best, Patricia," he said. "I'm expecting and hoping you will win. On the other hand, remember the bargain. If you're going to be my driver in the Grand Prix, you've got to win at least one more race. Let this be it!"

"It won't be my fault if it isn't," Pat laughed.

"And it won't," put in Jimmy Walsh, who was also there, "be the Comet's fault if it

isn't. Jove, Miss Summers, but isn't that car a clinker! I gave her a test run this morning over three laps, and although nobody was timing me, I'll swear she broke the record for the course! She's a beauty!"

Pat laughed again. Off then with enthusiastic Jimmy she went to inspect the Comet. How the mere sight of that had the power to thrill her. What a wave of emotion overwhelmed her as she affectionately glanced at it.

The Comet! Her car! Or the car—if she succeeded—which would be hers! One more race to win, and then—

In a fever of impatience she spent the rest of the morning. At Joshua Fingleton's invitation they had lunch together in the track restaurant. There she met Jim Mace, again called for duty in her own pit—and with Jim was Malcolm Cobb, who was almost as enthusiastic as Pat herself.

The Comet, he declared, was the best car in the race. Only one other could touch it, indeed, and that was Claude Heffer's giant Mercedes Benz.

Everybody, with the best wishes in the world, was offering her advice. Pat absorbed it all, but mentally was resolved on fulfilling her own particular game—which was to go all out from the start, get as big a lead as possible and hang on to it. There were going to be no risks taken in this race if she could help it!

Lunch was over. Heart thrilling, she went out to take a look at the track. From the top of a rapidly filling stand she surveyed it, and something seemed to catch in her throat.

It was bigger than the Ivydale Track—far, far bigger, with a whole mile circuit to the lap.

A track such as she had always dreamed of. The same track, in fact, where, if she were successful in fulfilling the terms of the agreement between herself and Joshua Fingleton, she would race in the Grand Prix!

What a rehearsal for that race this afternoon would be!

And then came a shouting of her own name. And there, fling into the privileged seats before the press-box, came Grace Campbell & Co., led by a smiling Alice Smailes, who waved a gay and encouraging hand to Pat as she saw her.

It was not till then that Pat realised she had not thought even of dressing for the race.

Off then she went to change into a new suit of white overalls, piped with crimson, that matched the Comet's colour so perfectly.

"Waiting for you, Miss Summers," Jimmy Walsh called, as she stepped out of her dressing-room.

Pat laughed. Now again she experienced that feeling of excited nervousness. In five minutes the race would begin. Hurriedly she started towards the track where, the cars—ten monsters, each looking capable of breaking any sort of record—were lined up, but the Comet, beautiful and glowing between the Benz and a splendid, cream-coloured Alfa Romeo, was conspicuous among them all.

Her thoughts in a whirl, Pat found herself vaulting into the cockpit, found herself adjusting her goggles, toying with the tape-bound wheel.

No longer was she Patricia Summers, head girl of Ivydale School. She was Pat Summers, the girl motorist!

If only, she thought, her father could have been there! How he would have enjoyed this! From the seat beneath the press-box came a deafening shout in shrill, schoolgirlish voices:

"Pat! Pat! Good luck, Pat!"

Laughing, Pat waved her hand. Then came the starter's "Ready!"

She set the engine going, one keen, anxious eye upon the flag. A roar from the crowd, a breathless hush. The flag dipped. Then:

"They're off!"

Off they were, and what a start! With a thunderous roar, the whole ten streaked away in a line. And then in a moment Pat was icy cool, calm and collected, her nerves steadying to steel, her eyes clear, unblinking, never leaving the track ahead.

Into first, second, third gear she changed. The speedometer needle quivered. Thirty—forty—fifty—sixty—

Now here was the first bend, with the Benz taking the lead. Pat was in third place then, but she wasn't worrying. Round the bend—just a little carefully—one must test them first. Along the straight, the Comet roaring like an express train, the Benz still leading, with the Alvis lying close behind.

Now the second bend—still cautiously. No need to let the straining Comet out until she had the feel of the track! Then straight again.

Now, down with your foot, Pat!

The shriek which came from the stand she did not hear. The Comet, roaring like a live thing, was leaping forward. Twenty yards ahead was the Alvis, going all out. Fifty yards farther on was the huge Benz, roaring like an aeroplane.

Here was the bend again—and Pat, pursuing her old trick, caught up the Alvis, ran a wheel to wheel race with it down the straight, and at the next bend realised, with a thrill of excitement, that she was leaving it behind. Then she set out to catch the Benz.

What a duel! The crowds watched fascinated. Up in the stand, Grace & Co. shrieked themselves hoarse. Could the Comet do it? Could it—could it?

One lap—two laps—the gap between the two only lessening by inches. Three, four, five laps—and look, there was Pat coming up, overhauling, going like the wind.

Six laps—with ten yards between them, the Benz driver straining every nerve. Seven laps—and Pat only five yards behind him. Eight laps, and there they were on the straight, running wheel to wheel!

Phew! Was there ever such a race?

Then the bend. They roared round it, wheel to wheel again—down, the straight, the Comet behind. Pat gained a yard then, only to lose it on the next bit of straight, and then to make it up again on the next bend.

Nose to nose, tail to tail, on they roared, the Alvis hopelessly in the rear now, and plain to everyone that the race was between the Comet and the Benz.

Ten, eleven laps—on again. Pat was clenching her teeth now. Her eyes were hard. The wind was taking her breath away, her ears full of thunderous noise. The bend again. Up she went, taking it high and swooping down.

"Gosh! What daring!" Malcolm Cobb muttered, and Joshua Fingleton, beside him, his own face twitching with excitement, nodded.

But Pat had the lead now. Only yards, it is true, but it was enough.

Fourteen laps, and there was the Benz a good ten yards behind. Fifteen laps, and it suddenly disappeared into its pit for refuelling, leaving Pat to race on a good lap ahead of the Alvis.

Yet she was anxious. A glance at her instrument board showed her that her own petrol was getting low.

Round she went again, flinging out an arm as she passed Jim Mace's pit as a signal that she would stop.

She saw Jim waving something in the air. The Benz refuelled, had taken to the track again.

Pat pulled into the pits.

"Petrol!" she gasped quickly, and with anxious eyes surveyed the Benz, mentally calculating how much of her lead she would have retained by the time the Comet had received its supply of new petrol.

Then Jim darted forward.

"Miss Summers, this is for you!" he said. "A telegram."

Pat took it from him.

She read—and then her face turned deathly white:

"Father met with accident. Come at once. "DR. TONES."

What dreadful news for Pat to receive just at this time, when she has a good chance of winning the race! Does it mean that Pat will have to drop out? Don't miss next Friday's chapters of this fine serial. Order your **GIRLS' CRYSTAL** at once.