

Kennel Maid at Phantom Abbey

**DON'T MISS THIS
FASCINATING
MYSTERY STORY**

GIRLS' CRYSTAL

WEEKLY

2^D



THE HOUSE OF SECRETS

See the engrossing complete story featuring the "Happy-Go-Lucky Hikers," by Elizabeth Chester—inside.



PENELOPE'S PAGE

OF NOVELTY NOTIONS



HALLO, EVERYBODY!—It's come! It's come!

(Oh, yes, I forgot to tell you for about the hundred and third time that this is your Penelope here—and now perhaps you'd like to know what it is that has come!)

The costume that I told you about last week is what my burbling is centring around.

You'll remember that once the costume was grey—and now I have had it dyed. It arrived this morning—a lovely boot-polish brown, quite the newest shade of Autumn, London Brown, as it is called.

Immediately I tried my costume on: first the skirt and then the jacket. Of course, the jacket looked a bit comic with my petti showing up top—for I hadn't bothered about a blouse in my "trying-on" eagerness.

I told you that the girl at the dyeing-shop (please note the "e" in dyeing; I don't want to give the impression that the shop has now closed down!) warned me the costume would shrink.

It had—and was I glad? For, you see, it was a spot too big for me.

The fit was perfect over the hips, and the jacket looked as if I had been poured into it! The skirt was still too long, though, but it didn't take any time at all to turn this up and do an invisible hem, such as you are supposed to have on tailor-made costumes. You did know that hems to frocks or skirts should never be machined, didn't you? It's one of those rules that hasn't changed since Beau Brummel led men's tailoring fashions—and it doesn't seem likely to change.

I promised to tell you what blouse I would wear with it. Well, I have made a pale blue silk one, and have crocheted a pale blue silk "skull-cap" to match.

I'm now engaged on knitting an apple green jersey in wool for the chillier days, and shall make another cap from the wool oddments over from this.

Do you think the blue-and-brown, and green-and-brown will look rather sweet?

A TENNIS BRIDE

Wouldn't you have loved to have been present at Miss Dorothy Round's wedding last month?

The famous tennis star, champion of Wimbledon, was married to Doctor Douglas Little at Dudley in Staffordshire, and the happy bride did not forget to wear "something old and something new; something borrowed and something blue."

She wore a favourite petti that she'd worn before for "something old." New silver sandals to match her silver brocade gown was the "something new." "Something borrowed" was her mother's brooch of diamonds and sapphires, while the "something blue" was not forgotten either.

I know all you schoolgirls who're keen on tennis are great admirers of Miss Round—or Mrs. Little, as we must call her now. I am, too; so let us all wish her every happiness.

BOWS OF RIBBON

Do you love collecting oddments of ribbon? I find I simply can't bear to throw away even the tiniest scrap, whether it comes from a tiny box of chocolates, or it is over from a piece I have bought.

I roll these ribbon oddments up, tuck them in a drawer and think: "Oh, they'll be useful for something, someday."

Then, of course, I forget all about them—and seldom find a use for them. (Except at Christmas. They all come into their own then—but that's only once a year!)

But here is a way of using up any ribbon oddments you may have in order to make a frock look prettier.

If you've a frock with pockets on it—whether two pockets or four—a little bow on each would be very perky, and cheer the frock up no end, if it's a last year's one.

Cut your ribbon oddments into equal lengths—about eight or nine inches each—and tie them into little bows. Then stitch these bows on to the pockets, catching them at the back without bringing your needle right through to the front of the bow.

Isn't it dreadful when the family dog or cat begins to moult? My lovely black cat, Sin, is in the middle of his Autumn moulting at the moment, and is shedding his hairs all over my little flat.

I brush and comb his fur each day in order to save my furniture—but the hairs still get everywhere. They're so difficult to remove, too, for

they will cling so to carpets, cushions, and even curtains.

So I thought I had better do something about it.

I damped one of those threepenny sponges and wiped this over the carpet. It was almost magic the way the hairs transferred their affection from the carpet to the sponge.

Even Mrs. Brown—who comes for an hour each day to clean up my little flat—was impressed. She said it was a good idea and she'd try it in her own home. They have a greyhound there—which is the pride of her husband's life. This greyhound has the best armchair in the home, and if anyone else should want to sit down—well, they just sit on a hard chair and watch the dog lazing in comfort.

Do remember the damp sponge trick when you have a hairy problem like this, won't you?

Isn't this Crinoline Lady rather sweet? She's actually a needle-case—her pretty skirt concealing these useful items.

If you'd like to make it for yourself, or for a present, you'll require three circles of flannel, measuring 3½ inches across.

You'll also want a piece of coloured silk the same size to go on top and represent the skirt.

Cut the lady herself and her bonnet out of a piece of thin cardboard—keeping one eye on the picture here if you're not very good at drawing. (You might even trace the outline of a head on to the cardboard.)

Lay the pieces of flannel together and place the silk circle on top. Slip the cardboard lady between the flannel, and then make two holes through all thicknesses of silk, flannel and cardboard.

Thread a piece of ribbon through these to keep them in position and fix with a bow. Leave a loop at the back so that you can hang the dainty little needle-case up with this.

Oh, and if you like doing a little painting, I should paint the "lady" part in some colour from your paint-box to match the piece of coloured silk.

Cheers till next week!

Your own,

PENELOPE



SCAMP, THE SCOTTIE



STELLA and the SHEIK of MYSTERY



By RENEE FRAZER

THE SERPENT TOMB

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 for a time Stella was convinced that he was not to be trusted. Later, however, she had reason to change her views about the mysterious young sheik.

Finally, through the efforts of Sheik Omar, Stella found her father in the mysterious Serpent Tomb in a desert valley. With him was Princess Yasmin, the sheik's sister, who had helped him, and Abdul, the only guard who had remained faithful.

Stella left the Serpent Tomb in order to help Omar. He showed her a secret way back, and then left to return to his rascally uncle's camp, telling Stella that she and her father must remain where they were until they heard from him again.

On re-entering the tomb, Stella was surprised to find Professor Barrington and his daughter there. The professor insisted that Al Raschid was their friend, and declared that it was Omar who was their enemy.

PLEADINGLY Stella caught the professor by the arm.

"But Omar saved our lives!" she exclaimed. "Didn't father tell you about the message in the arrow, and how the young sheik was captured trying to save us?"

Professor Barrington nodded grimly. "No doubt a picturesque gesture to trick you into betraying your hiding-place. The proof I obtained in Cairo is conclusive; Al Raschid has communicated with the Egyptian authorities, informing them of his nephew's scoundrelly plans. In addition to plotting against your father, the young man is endeavouring to stir up rebellion among his uncle's followers. I intend to communicate with Al Raschid, and ask him to restrain his nephew from molesting us on our return to Cairo."

"But if you do," gasped Stella, white to the lips, "Omar will be killed. Professor Barrington"—she stared at him pleadingly—"you must listen! Omar is working on our side for our safety. He's trying to help us in secret. Unless we follow his advice, all his plans will fail."

"His advice?" repeated the professor, frown-

ing. "And what, pray, was this young man's advice?"

"That we should stay here till we heard from him," explained Stella urgently. "He's prepared a secret hiding-place, stocked with provisions. He warned me that if we tried to escape now, it would mean disaster."

Professor Barrington snorted indignantly. "The young man is a clever mountebank, and cunning into the bargain! He has successfully deceived both you and your father, and it is fortunate that I came along in time."

"Stella dear, please believe father!" urged Joyce. "I'm certain he knows best. I never did like that young sheik; he was too glib, too smooth-tongued. I'm certain your father will agree when he's seen dad's proofs. We haven't mentioned them to him yet; he was too upset about you. Here he comes!"

Stella turned quickly as Mr. Conway entered the dim, vaulted chamber, accompanied by Yasmin and the Egyptian servant.

"Stella!" he exclaimed, his haggard face lighting up with relief. "My dear, I thought—I was afraid—"

Stella flung herself into her father's arms, tears in her eyes.

"I'm all right, daddy!" she breathed. "I've been down into the valley to see Omar—"

"My dear," cut in Mr. Conway, "why—why did you run that dreadful risk? You might have been captured!"

"I was," put in Stella simply, "and Omar rescued me. Daddy, we owe him everything—our freedom, our very lives! And now—now Professor Barrington says—"

"I say that the young man is an unmitigated scoundrel, Conway, and I have the proofs!" interrupted the professor. "All along he has deceived Stella by his plausible manner. It was he, and not Al Raschid, who was primarily responsible for making you a prisoner. He planned to force you to reveal the secret of the serpent tomb, and, failing in that, he decided to kidnap your daughter to hold her as a weapon over your head!"

"Ah, that ees not true! It is a base, unfounded lie! My brother is not a rogue!"

The broken words, torn from the lips of the erstwhile silent Yasmin, brought a sudden awkward silence in their train. Her dark eyes blazing, the Arab girl confronted the startled professor.

Stella knew that to disobey the boy sheik's instructions meant disaster. But how could she convince her friends of this? They all believed the young Arab to be a treacherous enemy!

Till that moment he had been unaware of her identity. In the excitement and confusion following his arrival he had barely noticed the veiled, mysterious figure seated alone on a corner of the tomb; or if he had noticed her, he had put her down as some Egyptian servant.

Stella darted to Yasmin's side, slipping her arm round the Arab girl's trembling shoulder. "Of course it's not true, Yasmin!" she breathed. "Professor Barrington doesn't know Omar as well as we do. We—daddy and I—know that he's our friend."

White-faced, her eyes shining defiantly, she confronted the professor.

The situation became tense. Professor Barrington, tugging at his beard, maintained a stubborn silence. Joyce, rather pale, looked at Stella reproachfully.

Mr. Conway passed a bewildered hand over his forehead.

"My dear Barrington, surely there must be some mistake? Stella and I have ample proof that the young Sheik Ben Istar is our friend. This young lady is his sister—Yasmin. She and her brother have been through a great deal on our behalf."

Professor Barrington coughed, but his stubborn expression did not relax.

"I'm sorry that this should have happened, Conway!" he said gruffly. "I would certainly not have spoken so bluntly had I been aware of the young lady's identity." He bowed with formal politeness to the young Arab girl. "I do not suppose for a moment that—er—Miss Yasmin was aware of the true nature of her brother's plans—"

"I am in my brother's confidence!" exclaimed Yasmin passionately. "If you blame him, then you must blame me! But I swear that what you say is false! It is a tale concocted by my uncle to hide his own guilt! Omar is your friend. Would you repay his friendship with treachery? Would you send him to his death?"

Her outburst was followed by an even more strained silence. It was a scene that Stella would not easily forget.

This strange vaulted room, ancient almost as time itself; the flickering light of the lantern held by the Egyptian servant; the weird, yet life-like carvings on the walls; and last, but not least, the group of living people, hemmed in by unknown dangers, their allegiance divided by an unlooked-for painful dispute—Stella and Yasmin on one side, Joyce and her father on the other, and Mr. Conway, troubled and at a loss, trying to maintain the peace.

"Come!" he said hurriedly. "This is no time for a quarrel. Stella, my dear, we must listen to what Professor Barrington has to say. If there has been some mistake, it would be best to settle the matter without delay."

Gravely the professor produced a bundle of papers from his pocket—the papers he had brought back with him from Cairo.

There was a tense, dramatic silence as Mr. Conway quickly scanned them. Stella held her breath, her heart gripped by a sickening suspense, her arm tightened round Yasmin's shoulder. Joyce had averted her eyes, avoiding her chum's gaze. Professor Barrington, his arms folded, stared grimly at the flickering lantern.

"Daddy," burst out Stella, unable to remain silent any longer, "why don't you speak? You can't distrust Omar now, after all that's happened—you can't!"

Mr. Conway's features seemed even more haggard as he looked up. His lips were twisted as though with pain.

"Stella," he said huskily, "there's no getting away from these proofs! Young Ben Istar has been playing a double game, pretending to be our friend, while he has been the chief instigator of the dastardly attacks on us! Professor Barrington is right; we must get in touch with Al Raschid without delay!"

"Daddy," whispered Stella incredulously, the blood draining from her face. "You don't understand—"

"They understand well enough!" exclaimed Yasmin. "They are sending Omar, my brother, to his death! This is their gratitude for his friendship and protection—Allah! Would that he had never raised a finger in their defence—"

She turned stormily on the silent group, her dark eyes blazing.

"Cowards—English cowards! What has Omar done to deserve this from you? Oh—my brother—my brother!"

With a choking sob she turned, wrenching herself from Stella's grasp—racing for the passage that led to the entrance of the tomb.

"Yasmin!" cried Stella anxiously. "Yasmin—where are you going?"

She raced after the Arab girl, overtaking her as she reached the massive doorway. She caught at the other's arm, trying to restrain her; but Yasmin, with the strength of desperation, thrust her aside, pulling back the secret lever.

"Let me go," she ordered fiercely. "I must go to warn Omar—to save him, or die with him. There is no one else who cares!"

"Yasmin—I do!" exclaimed Stella.

But Yasmin was gone, and the great stone door slammed after her with a sound like a knell.

Stella, half-fainting, felt herself grasped in her father's arms.

STELLA PLEADS IN VAIN

THE coming of the grey dawn was like a nightmare to Stella. All preparations had been made for departure as soon as it was daylight. A message had been dispatched to Al Raschid; Professor Barrington himself had written it, and thrown it down into the valley, wrapped round a stone.

A passing Arab horseman had dismounted to pick it up; at any minute now the reply was expected.

The professor, in the name of the Egyptian Government, had applied to Al Raschid for a safe escort to the fringe of the desert.

Stella had protested in vain; she had made a last desperate appeal to her father to dissuade the professor from his purpose. She had tried to convince them that Al Raschid was a treacherous, double-faced scoundrel; that they were placing themselves in his power, and, at the same time, signing the death-warrant of their friend, the brave young Sheikh Omar.

She had promised Omar that they would wait in the secret hiding-place till he communicated with them; but of what use was her promise? She could do nothing—nothing at all. And Omar would believe that she had betrayed him—

A stifled sob escaped Stella's lips as she stood on the platform of rock overlooking the valley, watching the pale roseate light of the dawn creep over the sky.

And there was no one in whom she could confide. Joyce, though sweet and friendly, was heart and soul in favour of her father's plan. Her dislike for the young sheik was as strong as ever.

And, because of that, an unfortunate barrier had risen between the two chums at a time when Stella most needed Joyce's friendship.

The surroundings grew clearer; the rugged

cliffs that hemmed in the valley were limned against the brightening sky.

And just then there came a shout from Abdul the Egyptian servant, who had been standing like a motionless statue, rifle in hand.

"Effendi, they come!"

Stella's straining eyes made out a party of Arab horsemen approaching at a gallop from the direction of the camp. Their white robes billowed in the morning breeze, they made an impressive and unforgettable picture as they drew nearer, their leader waving a white scarf in token of peaceful intentions.

Professor Barrington hurried forward to parley with them; a few minutes later he returned, a happy smile on his face. In his hand he carried a message signed by the Sheikh Al Raschid himself.

"Al Raschid's our friend, as I thought," he declared. "Listen—I'll read you his message:

"Effendi Barrington—this from your unworthy and humble servant. Your gracious message received, it shall be my pleasure to grant you and your party a safe escort from the Valley of Rocks to the fringe of the desert.

"My scoundrelly nephew has not yet returned—but be assured that when he is found, he will pay the utmost penalty for his misdeeds.

"Accept my most humble and respectful salutations, O Effendi!

"HAROUN AL RASCHID."

"It's not true!" exclaimed Stella brokenly. "I tell you, he's treacherous—unscrupulous! This is a trap!"

Joyce slipped an arm round her chum's shoulder.

"You're upset, dear," she breathed. "You don't understand. Al Raschid's going to help us; everything will work out for the best."

"And Omar will die," whispered Stella under her breath.

She thought of the young sheik as she had last seen him—tall, handsome, arrogant; his boyish face worn by illness and suffering; yet his dark eyes gleaming with indomitable spirit.

And he had trusted in her! That was the most cruel thought of all. Against her will she was being forced to betray that trust.

The Arab escort was ready and waiting. Five saddled horses had been sent with Al Raschid's compliments, and were at the disposal of the English party.

Mr. Conway, still weak from his recent ill-treatment—ill-treatment for which he now blamed Omar—was assisted into the saddle by Professor Barrington. Stella, as in a dream, found herself mounted, with Joyce riding on her right, and the Egyptian servant on her left.

The professor himself rode a little ahead, with the bearded leader of the Arab escort.

And as the sun rose beyond the rugged cliffs and distant sandhills, the party set out across the valley, heading for the desert.

Mr. Conway's chief disappointment was that they had left the ancient tomb without having discovered the legendary treasure of Ozyndandias. But both he and the professor had carried out an extensive search—and had come to the conclusion that, if ever there had been a treasure concealed there, it must have been removed by robbers many centuries before.

Stella could have enlightened them; but she was too sick at heart even to listen to what was being said. And even if she had mentioned Omar's statement about the hidden treasure, they would not have believed it.

The young sheik was completely discredited in their eyes.

On wound the procession, up a steep and winding slope, through a dark gorge, and across a wild, barren plain, covered with stunted shrubs and cacti.

Here the sand was rippled like the sea, and Stella, gazing round her, saw bleached and whitened bones—the bones of animals and birds—scattered among the boulders.

Even the hardened Arabs looked uneasy, quickening the pace of their horses. Their leader made some remark in an undertone, which was translated by Professor Barrington.

"They call this place the 'Plain of the Vultures.' There seems to be some kind of

hoodoo on it. The Arabs won't pass this way by night."

Stella shivered, her hands tightening on the reins. She was thinking of Omar—wondering what had happened to him.

Soon the grim plain was left behind, and their horses were climbing once more between red sandstone cliffs, many of them hewn into fantastic shapes by the hands of ancient, forgotten men.

Somehow Stella found herself at the rear of the group, riding close to Joyce.

Joyce flashed a smile at her; she seemed to be thoroughly enjoying the ride.

"I shouldn't like to be left here on my own," she remarked. "Ugh! Just imagine what it would be like at night. One thing, our Arab guides know the way. They're not likely to get us stranded."

Stella tried to summon up a smile for Joyce's sake. She was as fond of her chum as ever—and it wasn't really Joyce's fault that she had misjudged Omar. She had only seen one side of the young sheik's nature—that stern, imperious manner he was forced at times to assume.

Apart from Yasmin, perhaps only Stella herself had been privileged to glance behind that mask—to see the gallant, likeable boy who was the real Omar.

And seeing him like that, no one could have believed him to be the treacherous villain portrayed by his uncle.

Impulsively Stella leaned over, grasping her chum by the arm.

"Joyce," she breathed, "we're still friends, aren't we—in spite of everything?"

"Of course!" Joyce smiled quickly, her face lighting up. "We'll always be friends, dear."

"Whatever happens?"

"Whatever happens!"

Stella swallowed hard, feeling as though one small cloud had vanished—even though other, darker clouds lay ahead.

"Thank you, Joyce," she whispered. "I—I won't forget!"

Just then one of the Arab escort galloped up to them, and in angry tones ordered them to ride ahead.

Joyce took the order in good part. "He's only afraid we might get lost," she said.

But Stella's uneasiness deepened. She was more convinced than ever that the pretended "escort" was merely a blind; they were being escorted as Al Raschid's prisoners. And no one else in the party seemed to suspect.

She tried to make Joyce see her point of view, but that girl only laughed at her fears.

"I know they look fierce, but that's nothing to go by! They're Al Raschid's orders to escort us to the desert. If they'd wanted to attack us, they could have done so without bringing us all this way."

Stella could not dispute the logic of Joyce's argument, yet her vague premonitions did not decrease; if anything, they became more confirmed as the long, tiring trek proceeded.

At any other time she might have been fascinated by the wild scenery through which they were passing; but there was no room in her thoughts, just now, for anything except her fears—fears for Omar, for her father—for the missing Yasmin.

They were all entangled in a web of treachery, from which there seemed no escape.

It was shortly after this that the leader called a halt to rest the horses. The party dismounted—and the Arabs drew apart, though still keeping within sight.

Professor Barrington had brought refreshments, and they ate these beneath the shelter of a clump of palms.

But Stella felt restless. After a while she made some excuse and wandered to the outskirts of the clearing.

She was haunted by thoughts of the young sheik—wondering if he were safe; whether Al Raschid had carried out his threat.

And suddenly she stiffened, her heart missing a beat.

She was staring almost incredulously at a figure silhouetted against the horizon—a tall slim figure on horseback. And even as she watched, it seemed to her that the distant

horseman raised his hand as though in a signal to her.

"It's Omar!" she breathed. "It must be Omar!"

Her heart was racing now; a wave of relief swept over her, mingled with excitement.

Omar was safe! And he was following them. Why had he signalled? Did he wish to give her some message?

Stella glanced quickly over her shoulder. She had wandered farther than she had supposed. The rest of the party were hidden from view by the clump of palms. But tethered not far distant were the horses of the Arab escort.

Stella clenched her hands. The distant horseman had vanished. Did he expect her to follow?

In a moment she came to a reckless decision.

Swiftly untethering one of the horses, she sprang into the saddle, at the same time bringing her heels down sharply on the animal's flank.

A moment later she was riding madly across the rock-strewn plain in the direction where she had seen that solitary mounted figure.

SEEN FROM THE CLIFF TOP

STELLA did not draw rein until she reached the crest of the hill on which she had seen the mounted figure.

Though she had listened anxiously for sound of pursuit, she heard none. Apparently her departure had been unnoticed by the Arab escort—but it would not be for long.

She was anxious to see Omar, to receive his message, before she was overtaken.

Her faith in the young sheik was implicit. He, and he alone could save her father and the others from the peril of which they were so blindly unaware.

But galloping from the shadow of the overhanging cliffs in the dreary, barren plain beyond, her heart sank.

There was no sign of a mounted figure; the plain was completely desolate—deserted.

Had she imagined it? Had the tall, slim figure of the horseman been simply some strange hallucination—the reflection of her troubled thoughts?

It seemed that it must have been so. As far as her eye could see, there was nothing moving within sight. Nothing—

Wait! There was something moving—but it was no mounted figure.

It was a grotesque, hateful denizen of the desert—a great, bedraggled bird, its neck long and devoid of feathers, its eyes staring unblinkingly as it perched on a rock high above her head.

A vulture!

Stella shuddered, recollecting the grim valley they had passed through—the valley where these birds of ill-omen had their haunt.

And just then she saw the creature flutter its great wings, swooping from its perch.

Stella stifled an involuntary scream as she dragged frantically at her horse's rein. She felt the spirited animal quiver beneath her; it, too, had an instinctive horror of the bird of death.

With a frightened whinny it sprang forward, galloping blindly across the plain;



"Let me go!" Yasmin cried fiercely. "I must go to Omar—to warn him. There is no one else who cares!" "Yasmin—I do!" exclaimed Stella. But how could she expect the young sheik's sister to believe her?

with a thrill of horror Stella realised that the horse had got the bit between its teeth, and was galloping wildly, out of her control.

The mad, nightmare gallop seemed to last for an eternity; white to the lips, Stella clung to the reins, hoping and praying that the horse would tire and come to a stop.

The end of the wild gallop came with dramatic suddenness. The startled horse slipped suddenly on a pile of loose stones, falling heavily to the ground.

Stella was flung from the saddle, sprawling on her hands and knees. Luckily, a bank of sand broke her fall; but, even so, she lay stunned for several minutes, trying dazedly to collect her thoughts.

A faint whinny of pain came to her ears, bringing her to herself. She struggled painfully to her feet and looked round.

An involuntary cry of pity escaped her lips as she saw the unfortunate horse lying, panting, on its side, one of its fetlocks badly gashed.

It was making pitiful, futile efforts to rise.

For the moment Stella forgot her own troubles; a swift glance round the desolate valley and she saw a pool of water faintly glimmering beneath an overhanging ledge of rock.

Stella hurried across to the pool, and, tearing a broad strip from her white twill tunic, she soaked it in the ice-cold water, and returned to the injured animal.

Stella knew very little about horses, but she managed to soothe her restless mount as with gentle hands she bandaged the wounded leg.

Then, grasping it firmly by the bridle, she coaxed it to its feet.

But it was quite clear that the unfortunate horse was not fit for riding; she would have to lead it back by the way they had come.

But as she turned the quivering animal and set off in the direction she imagined was correct she found herself confronted by a new terror.

The barren scenery was unfamiliar; even the aspect of the rugged cliffs seemed different.

With a shock of cold dismay she realised that she was lost!

Stella's hand tightened on the reins as she fought for self-control. At all costs she must avoid giving way to panic.

In the last few weeks she had become almost hardened to peril; but this was different.

The dreadful loneliness in the barren plain seemed even worse than out in the desert. There, at least, she and Joyce had known the danger that confronted them—the danger of thirst and hostile Arabs.

But here—

Stella shuddered, recollecting the vulture. What other horrors might be concealed by those scattered rocks, those dim, mysterious caves? If only she could see what lay beyond.

Plucking up her courage, Stella tethered the trembling horse to a stunted tree and commenced to climb cautiously up a winding path that led to the top of the cliff.

She hoped either to see her father's party, or the young sheik, from that vantage-point.

She was desperately anxious to see Omar and explain what had happened.

The climb grew steeper, more difficult. Once or twice Stella slipped, narrowly escaping a fall.

Soon she was creeping on hands and knees on a precipitous, narrow ledge. On one side of her rose the sheer face of the cliff; below her was a steep drop down into the rock-bound valley.

The slightest slip would mean death.

Stella clenched her teeth, fighting against the temptation to look down. To do so, she knew, would be fatal.

Her hands were scratched and bruised, her clothes badly torn; but she climbed on, spurred by sheer desperation. She dared not have attempted to climb down, even had she wished.

At last, with a sigh of relief, she realised that she had reached the end of her climb. With a final effort she drew herself on to a narrow ledge at the brink of the cliff, and peered over.

What she saw caused her heart to give a sickening jump.

Below her was a wide, deep chasm, through which foamed and boiled a turbulent stream; and beyond, among the trees that concealed the valley, she saw puffs of smoke—heard the distant rattle of firing!

What had happened?

Her father, Joyce, and the professor were down there, with the Arab escort! Her worst fears seemed to be confirmed. Al Raschid's men had shown their real colours; were proving themselves to be traitorous enemies!

Will Joyce and the others be taken prisoners, and what will become of Stella? Next Friday's exciting instalment will tell you. Don't miss it!

THE MYSTERY OF HOLLYHOCK COTTAGE

Don't miss this fascinating detective story, featuring Noel Raymond, in next Friday's "Girls' Crystal"

Order your copy now!

Kennel-Maid at Phantom Abbey



By
GAIL
WESTERN

REMUS UNDER SUSPICION

EVER since she had left school, Kitty Graham had wanted to establish her own kennels, and when she inherited ancient Lorne Abbey, she was able to do so.

With Bridget, a cheery Irish girl, she went to live in the partly ruined abbey, which was supposed to be haunted by a Phantom Monk. They saw the sinister Green Friar on several occasions, and it seemed clear that he was no friend.

Kitty adopted Remus, a homeless retriever, and in his collar she found a message from her grandfather, which said that riches would be hers if Remus won the Lorne Abbey Cup.

Judith Bligh, a neighbour, who also ran a kennels, was jealous of Kitty, especially when Mrs. Fergusson gave charge of her two greyhounds, two Pekingeses, and her little Scottie, Pogo, to Kitty. Judith and Ralph Tyler, an unpleasant cottager, complained about Remus to the police. As a result, the black retriever was suspected of being dangerous, and the inspector of the local Animals' Defence League was told to keep an eye on him.

One day, when the inspector called at the Abbey to see Remus an alarming din was heard from the kennels. The black retriever had broken free, and, apparently in a frenzy, he went racing across the garden.

"IT'S the Phantom Monk, I tell you! He must be up to some more of his tricks. That's why Remus was so excited."

"Rubbish!"

The inspector from the Animals' Defence League was scornful.

"The dog's fierce!" he told Kitty. "What was said in court was true. It's a positive danger!"

Kitty gazed at him in utter consternation. There was no mistaking the significance behind his words. If he thought Remus was really fierce, the dog would be shot without delay!

"Oh, no!" she cried. "You're mistaken. I'm certain Remus wouldn't act like this for nothing."

The inspector gave a grunt.

"Well, we'll soon see," he declared grimly.

Breaking into a run, he led the way towards the yard where the kennels were situated. Kitty followed in agitation. Then

abruptly they both pulled up, startled by the scene that confronted them.

In his wild efforts to get free, Remus had not only snapped the heavy metal chain, he had also pulled down one of the posts that supported the wire netting.

More alarming still, the door of the kennels had been wrenched open, and out into the yard had streamed the rest of the dogs. The two greyhounds were snapping and snarling at each other. The Pekes were rolling in the mud, yelping with terror, while Pogo, the little Scottie, was jumping up and down, barking madly.

Before Kitty could recover from the shock, there came an excited shout from the kitchen doorway, and on to the scene rushed Bridget, clutching a broom in her hands.

"Bedad, but what's been happening here?" she demanded, glaring excitedly around.

It was the inspector who answered.

"It's clear enough!" he snapped. "That retriever must have set on his kennel-mates. The brute's shown his real character at last!"

The Irish girl's eyes nearly popped out of her head.

"Surely 'tis not Remus you're talking about? Bejabbers, but 'tis as harmless as a kitten the creature is!"

"Rubbish!" The inspector's retort was terse. Then, as he remembered that Remus was at large, his face paled and he snatched up a heavy stick. "We must go after him!" he gasped. "In his present wild state there's no telling what he'll be up to!"

And off he dashed. Pogo, with an eager bark, was quick to follow. Together they sped across the garden, following the direction the black retriever had taken.

How proud Kitty was when Remus rescued the comical little Scottie. But as a result of his brave action her pet fell ill and it looked as if he would not be able to take part in the dog show—the show on which all Kitty's hopes rested!

"You must calm the dogs, Bridget; I'm going after Remus!" gasped Kitty.

Bridget nodded, and picked up one of the Pekes, while Kitty rushed away. By now both the inspector and the excited Pogo had vanished into the wood at the bottom of the garden. Kitty could hear them dashing through the trees.

Low-hanging branches lashed her as she plunged through the wood. Nettles stung her legs; jagged brambles tore at her arms. But on she raced, to give a gasp as she neared the end of the thicket. For there, not fifty yards ahead, was the inspector, with the little Scottie running on just ahead of him.

And there, also, was the runaway retriever! Hurling along as though possessed, Remus was heading for the drooping willows that edged an area of marshy ground.

"Remus!" Kitty called. "Come here, Remus!"

Her voice rose to a shriek. The dog must have heard her. But for once he paid no heed. Eyes ablaze, he plunged wildly on.

The inspector, thinking to head him off, swung to the right. Straight for the unnaturally bright green grass that masked the dangerous fen he headed, and, with another excited bark, Pogo again led the way.

Kitty pulled up in horror. Anxious though she was about Remus, all thought of him was swept from her mind. Rushing forward with outflung hand, she screamed out a warning:

"Look out, that's the fen! Come back! Oh, quick, before you're trapped!"

The inspector instantly responded. He stopped dead, suddenly aware of the squelching, treacherous mud that the vivid grass concealed. But Pogo did not understand the danger. Eager to lead the way, he scampered on.

"Pogo!" shouted Kitty. "Come back, you naughty dog! Come back at once!"

The inspector added his shouts to hers, and in desperation he took half a dozen strides forward. Almost instantly, his boots disappeared in the black mire. He felt the watery slime gurgle about him and felt himself being dragged down.

With a gasp of alarm, he wrenched himself free and jumped back on to firmer ground. But Pogo ran on, undaunted, until suddenly even he became conscious of the danger.

With a frightened yelp, he dragged at his feet, stirred up the mud, tried to scamper back. But it was too late. The more he struggled, the more firmly the bog held him trapped.

Kitty's heart turned to ice. In helpless terror, she stood there. The little Scottie was now wild with terror. Faintly, despairingly, his voice reached her. He was being swallowed up by the treacherous quagmire—was sinking before her very eyes!

The inspector screwed up his courage. Again he plunged forward, but this time he sank to his knees. The slimy ground seemed to open under his very feet. He struggled desperately, and Kitty, running to his help, clutched at his arm.

After a breathless effort he managed, with her assistance, to clamber out of the bog. But Pogo still wallowed there, only his little head showing now above the deceptive grass.

Kitty looked around in anguish. Her eyes went across to the willows. There Remus had halted. Barking in dismay, he was sniffing and snuffling at the rushes that grew there.

A desperate idea occurred to Kitty. Perhaps Remus could do what was impossible for either the inspector or herself to achieve! The retriever had four legs; he was not so heavy. The quagmire might bear his weight.

"Remus!" she shouted. "Quick—here! Remus!"

At first he paid no heed, then swung his head. For a moment he stood there doubtfully; then, realising her distress, he gave an excited bark and came bounding along by the side of the fen. With a quivering hand, Kitty pointed.

"Pogo!" she shouted. "Save him—fetch him!"

The black retriever pulled up, whining in puzlement. His wondering eyes looked slowly around, then suddenly his whole body went tense. Not only had he heard the little Scottie's despairing whines, but he had glimpsed that wriggling, squirming shape in the slime.

A challenging bark rumbled from the bigger dog's throat. Always he and Pogo had been good chums. And the intelligent Remus didn't need to look again to realise that the little Scottie was in dire peril.

Headlong he launched himself forward. A bark of surprise escaped him as he felt the ground giving beneath his weight; felt that terrifying mud sucking at his paws. But bravely, indomitably he battled his way forward.

The inspector held his breath. Kitty hardly dared look. An eternity seemed to pass. Remus seemed to be getting no nearer. Numb horror seized Kitty in its grasp.

Then a shout came from the inspector. She felt his excited fingers on her arm.

"Look—he's reached him! He's got him! Oh, well done! Stick it, old lad, stick it!"

Kitty gave a gasp. Remus had seized the yelping Scottie by the collar. His strong teeth held him fast, but the retriever was trapped in the black mud now. There was no sign of his legs; every moment saw him sink lower and lower.

"Remus!" cried Kitty. "Oh, quick, Remus!"

HOW BRAVE OF REMUS!

HER voice seemed to rouse the big dog. He struggled madly. His thrashing legs made the slime rise in showers. With Pongo still grasped by the collar, he writhed and clawed, kicking out with his hind legs, scrabbling frenziedly at the treacherous ground with his front paws.

The inspector gave another shout. "He's doing it! He's getting nearer! Stick it, old chap! I'll be able to help you in a jiffy!"

And as the powerful retriever worked his way nearer, the man in uniform recklessly plunged into the bog, stretching out an eager arm.

At last Remus came close enough for the inspector to snatch at the weakly yelping Scottie. He whirled him to safety, and at the same time Kitty thrust out the inspector's long stick.

With a bark Remus grasped it. Kitty pulled, and, like a cork from a bottle, the dog shot up out of the slime and fell, floundering and gasping, at her feet.

Trembling, she dropped to her knees, hugging him, kissing him, oblivious of his muddy coat, oblivious of the dirty water that streamed off him.

"Oh, you darling!" she whispered. "I shall never forget this. But for you poor Pogo would have been drowned!"

Remus' soft brown eyes surveyed her fondly, and weakly he licked at her hand. Then abruptly Kitty remembered the little Scottie. She turned and looked anxiously at the inspector.

"Is—is he badly hurt?" she asked. The inspector grinned and shook his head. "Scared, that's all," he said. "But we'd better get them both back home. They want a

good rub down. There's a danger of them catching a chill."

The little Scottie in his arms, he set off through the wood. Kitty and Remus followed.

When the Abbey was regained, they saw that Bridget had calmed down the rest of the dogs, and made them comfortable in their kennels. She stared in alarm as she saw the two muddy, dripping dogs.

"Bejabbers, but what's happened now?" she gasped.

Kitty told her, and then she turned to the inspector.

"What have you to say about Remus now?" she asked. "Have you ever seen a braver act than his?"

The inspector shook his head.

"He was splendid!" he said heartily, and then he frowned. "But that doesn't excuse his mad behaviour just now." He ran puzzled fingers through his hair as he surveyed the retriever, now quietly squatting at Kitty's side. "That dog baffles me!" he cried. "One moment he's just crazy; the next and he's the finest chap I'd ever wish to see!"

"He's never crazy—not unless he's upset!" declared Kitty stoutly. "Are you, darling?" Smilingly she patted Remus, then, realising how he was panting, she gave a cry of concern. "Poor thing, you want a nice long drink!" she declared.

Entering the wire-netting run, she picked up the big enamelled drinking bowl, and made to put it before both Pogo and Remus. The little Scottie ran forward eagerly, but suddenly the retriever again became transformed.

A fierce snarl escaped his mouth, and, like a thunderbolt, he hurled himself forward, knocking the dish out of Kitty's grasp. With a cry of alarm she staggered back. The inspector came forward and frowned gloomily.

"I'm afraid my first opinion was right," he said. "The dog's given to brain-storms. I hate to say it—he's a brave, old chap—but he's too dangerous to live!"

But Kitty was not listening to him. Her startled eyes had gone to something that had got caught in a splinter in the kennel door. It was a jagged piece of cloth—green cloth—cloth that glowed eerily!

Darting forward, Kitty snatched at it. Her pulses were racing. There was a triumphant gleam in her eyes.

"The Phantom Monk!" she exclaimed. "I knew it! He was here! He was responsible for all the trouble! And he isn't a ghost at all—he's a man! A cunning rascal dressed up as a monk!"

Excitedly she held out the scrap of luminous

cloth. Dazedly the inspector took it. Then there came a horrified shout from Bridget. Though she had also been startled by Remus' latest onslaught, she had been quick to suspect the reason for it. And now she was bending over the fallen drinking bowl. A little water still lay in it, and, dipping in a finger, the Irish girl tasted it. Her usually cheery face went white and her eyes rounded with horror.

"I thought so!" she cried, and lifted up the dish. "Here, you, Mister Know-All, taste it for yourself! Blame Remus, would you? Bedad, but 'tis praise the poor creature deserves. That water's poisoned!"

Kitty gave a stifled cry while the inspector tasted it for himself. He also went white.

"By thunder, you're right!" he exclaimed. "This has been tampered with!"

"And 'tis as plain as your nose who did it!" Bridget cried. "That spalpeen of a ghost! The villain meant to poison all the dogs—he meant to put Miss Kitty right out of business!"

Kitty stood as though petrified. From the incriminating scrap of green cloth, her horrified gaze went to the poisoned water. She could hardly believe that anyone could be so inhuman to poison animals! But why had the Green Friar attempted such a wicked scheme?

She did not have to think long for the answer. Her mind flashed to the County Show on Saturday. Remus was entered for the Championship Trophy, and if he won it he would be eligible to compete for the Lorne Fen Cup—the cup which, according to her grandfather's cryptic message, could bring Kitty riches!

"The wretch doesn't want Remus to win it!" Kitty cried. "He's after the cup himself." The Irish girl nodded.

"Shure and 'tis plain enough," she agreed.

Then the amazed inspector spoke. His face was grim and horrified.

"The villain!" he muttered. "To tamper with the dogs' drinking water—it's a despicable trick!" He paused and frowned, looking again at the black retriever. "This puts a fresh complexion on everything," he declared. "It's clear now, Miss Graham, that what you said in the police court the other day was true. There is a Phantom Monk!"

"Then you don't think Remus is crazy?" Kitty gulped. "Surely you can see now what happened? The brave darling must have seen the Green Friar. That was why he broke loose; that was why he went careering off across the fen!"

The inspector nodded. He was an honest



Like a thunderbolt Remus hurled himself at the dish of water and spilled the contents. Kitty was completely baffled by her pet's strange behaviour. What could be the reason for it?

man and was only too glad to acknowledge his error.

"Blame Remus? Goodness gracious, not likely!" he declared. "I realise now that he's innocent. It's that fake ghost who's been responsible for all the trouble."

The colour rushed back to Kitty's cheeks. "Then he needn't be chained up?" she cried. "He isn't in disgrace any more?"

"Of course he isn't. First thing to-morrow morning I shall make it my business to see that his good name's cleared."

As he spoke, he bent and patted the black retriever. Remus seemed to sense that this burly, uniformed man was now a friend, for he wagged his tail and raised a friendly paw. Solemnly the inspector shook it, then he looked at his watch.

"I must hurry off," he announced. "I ought to have been home long ago. I should give both dogs a good rubbing down and give them something warm to drink. They mustn't catch cold."

"My goodness, no!" cried Kitty.

And as soon as he had gone, she picked up the little Scottie and carried him indoors, whistling to Remus to follow. Fortunately there was a kettle of hot-water on the hob.

With Bridget's help, Kitty bathed her two pets, and then wrapped them up in blankets and made them curl up before the fire. She hummed to herself as she made them bread-and-milk. An enormous load had been taken off her mind.

The unjust accusation levelled against the black retriever had been removed. Remus' good name had been restored. No longer must he be kept cooped up; no longer must he be stopped from scampering about. Thanks to his brave act he had earned his liberty.

"Oh, Bridget, won't it be wonderful if the darling wins on Saturday!" Kitty cried, as, kneeling, she fed both dogs from the steaming basin of sugary bread-and-milk. "I don't care about that Phantom Monk now—not now that I know he is only a man dressed up."

Bridget rubbed doubtfully at her squat nose. "A man," she repeated. "Bedad, but what if he's a girl?"

"A girl?"

"Yes, me darlint. Don't forget that that wretch Judith Bligh has cause to hate you!"

Kitty frowned thoughtfully. Whose identity did those eerily glowing robes really hide? Kitty mentally ticked off all the possible people. First on the list were Samuel Bligh and his daughter.

Mr. Bligh was disappointed because Kitty had refused to sell him the abbey grounds. Judith was furious because Kitty had started rival kennels. Either of them might well be connected with the Green Friar, though Kitty had to admit that Mr. Bligh had struck her as being a kindly man.

Then there was Ralph Tyler. Could it be that that surly cottager was the unknown phantom? On the night when Remus had followed the Green Friar to the cottage, Tyler might have slipped through the trapdoor at the back of the chicken shed, doffed his monkish robes, and re-appeared as though only just awakened by the din. No, he could not be ruled out!

Then—Kitty bit her lip and frowned. Then there was Nathaniel Jones, the elderly lawyer whom, until recently, she had always thought was her friend.

Surely he could not be the unknown enemy? She could not forget that she had found an incriminating scrap of paper in his office. Part of a document that the Green Friar had stolen; and on the back of it had been a few lines in Mr. Jones' handwriting. Also—Kitty stifled a gasp—he lived not far away; just at the bottom of the road.

"Oh, I can't believe it's him," she muttered. Whatever the truth, she was too tired to bother about it to-night.

She finished feeding Pogo and Remus, then, satisfied that they were both warm and comfortable, she went out into the yard to see that the rest of the dogs were safely locked up.

She and Bridget had their supper, then together they went on a tour of the house, inspecting window fastenings, bolts and locks. For, as the Irish girl pointed out, they couldn't afford to take any risks.

"If he knows he's failed, that spalpeen of a spook may have another try," she declared grimly.

The thought made Kitty anxious. She nearly decided to keep awake, just in case of danger. But the excitement of the evening had worn her out, and her eyes closed almost the moment her head sank back on the pillow. Peacefully she slept, not waking until she heard Bridget knocking on the door.

"Come on, me darlint, sit up. Here's a nice drop of tea to wake you up!"

The door opened, and there stood the Irish girl, already washed and dressed, a beaming smile on her face and a tray in her hand.

"That is nice of you," said Kitty, sitting up. "But you shouldn't encourage me to snooze on. You'll be making me lazy. How are Remus and Pogo?" she asked.

"Shure and the little Scottie's full of beans, me darlint, but Remus isn't awake yet."

"And the other dogs?"

"Locked up safe and sound."

Bridget stayed in the room, chatting, while Kitty had her tea and dressed; then they both went downstairs—just in time to see Pogo wriggle through the open larder door.

"Hallo, what are you up to?" demanded Kitty.

Pogo looked round guiltily, his face all smeared with jam!

"You silly boy, you'll make yourself sick," Kitty cried, rushing forward and snatching up the jar that lay on the floor. But she was so pleased at seeing how well the Scottie was that she hadn't the heart to scold him any more.

Putting the jar on a shelf out of his reach, she turned to the hearth-rug where Remus still lay curled up in his blankets.

"And how is my pet?" she asked, dropping to one knee beside him.

Remus gave a faint whine of welcome, but he did not stir. Kitty frowned, and put her hand on his nose, then she gave an alarmed gasp. Instead of being cold, it was really hot.

"Oh, my goodness," she exclaimed, her face turning white. "The poor thing's ill! He's taken a chill!"

REMUS FALLS ILL

"ILL? Bedad, don't say it's anything serious! Don't forget that 'tis the County Show that's being held the day after to-morrow."

Bridget could not help thinking of the disastrous consequences that would arise if the black retriever were unable to appear at the show on Saturday. There would not be time to enter him for another championship competition, and that would mean he would not be eligible to compete for the Lorne Fen Cup, which was so important to them.

But Kitty had no thought for the forthcoming show. All she was anxious about was to see Remus get well. Mistily she looked down at him. His eyes were glazed over, and as she lifted the blankets she saw that he was trembling.

"It looks like flu!" she gasped. "Oh, you poor dear!"

Kitty jumped to her feet. She rushed across to the cupboard where she kept her first-aid outfit and got out a thermometer. Gently she placed the little glass tube in the hollow under the sick dog's foreleg.

When the time came to take it out, she looked at it anxiously, and another worried gasp escaped her lips.

"It's high," she whispered; "three degrees above normal. It's a feverish cold he's got, right enough. Put on the kettle, Bridget, there's a dear. He must have a hot-water bottle."

The two girls bustled about. Kitty put their big clothes-basket before the fire. She lined it with a blanket, popped in the hot-water bottle Bridget had prepared, then stooped over the piteously whining retriever.

She lifted him up, staggered with him across to the basket, and made him comfortable in it, covering him with another blanket.

"How's that?" she asked. "More comfy?"

Remus licked her hand with a hot, dry tongue, and his glazed eyes closed.

"Give him a powder, Bridget, will you?"

Kitty asked. "I'm off to get the vet."

"But what about your breakfast, me darlint?"

"That'll have to wait. Remus comes first. If anything should happen to him—"

Kitty gulped. As she put on her hat and

coat she could hear Remus wheezing. Every breath he took seemed to be an effort. A terrifying thought occurred to her. Suppose the chill turned to pneumonia!

Frankly she dashed out of the house. Fortunately, there was a veterinary surgeon in the village. He was at breakfast, but willingly he left the table and hurried back to the abbey with the agitated girl.

Silently Kitty and Bridget stood by as the man made his examination.

"Well?"

Kitty's voice was only a whisper. The vet rose to his feet, gave the shivering dog a comforting pat, and put away his thermometer.

"It's too early to say yet," he said. "The next twelve hours are the vital ones. If he manages to throw off his fever he'll recover almost at once."

"And if he doesn't?" faltered Kitty.

He shrugged.

"Well, then his case'll be serious, I'm afraid. These chills are tricky things. But don't worry too much, Miss Graham. Careful nursing will save him. He must be kept warm, must have hot milk every three hours, and—"

He gave her precise instructions, and, with a reassuring smile, took his departure.

Anxious hours they were that followed for Kitty. She hardly left Remus' side. She watched over him as though he were a baby. She fed him with a spoon. She sat beside him, one hand ready to keep the blanket in position should he kick it off.

Most of the time the dog lay as if asleep, his wheezy breathing coming heavily, but occasionally he would give a little whine, and feebly his tongue would lick Kitty's hand.

Slowly the day passed. Kitty had not eaten; she felt she could not eat. Bridget, knowing how she felt, had taken charge of the other dogs. And then at last evening came, and fearfully Kitty got out her thermometer. Her face was pale as she again took the dog's temperature.

She looked at the instrument closely, and then she jumped to her feet, cheeks flushed, eyes glowing.

"It's down! Oh, Bridget, it's down! Look!" Excitedly she thrust the thermometer under the Irish girl's nose. "It's practically normal!" she cried, in relief.

Almost delirious with delight, she flopped back on her knees; put a quivering hand on Remus' nose. It was still not as cold and moist as it should be, but unmistakably the dog was better. Even his eyes seemed brighter, and, catching her excitement, he gave a bark—the first bark that day!

"Oh, you darling!" she exclaimed, gathering him up in her arms. "You're better! You're going to recover!"

But, despite her relief, she determined to stay up with him all night. She packed Bridget off to bed, and made herself comfortable by the fire.

Every three hours she took the temperature again, and by five o'clock it was dead normal. Tired out, she went back to her chair, and, despite her resolve, she fell asleep.

Bridget, coming downstairs in the morning, smiled thankfully as she saw that Kitty was slumbering peacefully. On tiptoe the Irish girl went about her work. Nevertheless, before breakfast was ready Kitty was awake. It was not the rattle of crockery that disturbed her, but a deep, healthy bark.

She was out of the chair in a flash, to gaze with dancing eyes down at the clothes-basket.

"Why, Remus!" she cried.

For the black retriever had thrown off his blankets, and was standing there, tongue lolling out, nostrils twitching hungrily.

Bridget, with a dish of bacon and eggs in her hand, stood and gaped.

"Bejabbers, 'tis a miracle!" she declared.

"The broth of a boy looks as well as ever he did! Shure, and he must know that the show's to-morrow! Miss Kitty, me darlint, you'll be able to enter him, after all!"

But Kitty shook her head doubtfully.

"I don't know about that," she said. "We must see what the vet says."

The vet called immediately after breakfast. He was delighted at the invalid's lightning recovery, though he knew from experience how swiftly dogs can throw off all the effects of an illness.

(Please turn to back page.)



When Rosina nearly Triumphed

THE PASSENGER FROM AMERICA

NOEL RAYMOND threaded his way through the jostling crowds on the quayside, a faint smile of anticipation on his boyishly good-looking features. "It'll make a bit of a change from trackin' down forgers and bank robbers!" he murmured. "To escort a charming girl from Southampton to Scotland sounds rather like a holiday!"

From his pocket he extracted a letter and a photograph. The portrait was that of a fair-haired, smiling girl in her late 'teens—the letter was from the girl's father.

"My dear Raymond,—Mary has left to-day for England, and I'm anxious for someone to meet her at Southampton and escort her to her aunt's place in Scotland.

"Why I'm writing to ask you this favour, old man, is for a peculiar reason. At the last minute, I discovered that Mary had taken with her an old locket of her mother's. Intrinsicly it is valueless—and Mary herself is quite unaware that behind the old portrait in the locket is a secret worth a king's ransom.

"I will not go into details, now, of how it came to be there; sufficient to say that it is Mary's dowry from her mother—and that so far as I know, no one but you and I is aware of the locket's hidden value—"

Noel's eyes gleamed as he folded the letter, slipping it into his pocket.

Mary Farrel's father was an American. She had been brought up in the States, but on her mother's side she came from an ancient Scottish family. Noel was looking forward to meeting her.

As the liner berthed, he strolled across to the gangway and watched the passengers disembark.

There was one slim, girlish figure, wearing a white wrap, and a chic Parisian hat with a small veil, whom he thought at first glimpse might be Mary Farrel. Then, at a second glance, he noticed that the girl's hair was dark—and she was smoking a cigarette with an air of languid sophistication that did not fit in with the eager, attractive girl of the portrait.

And yet there was something strangely familiar about the slim, elegant figure. The memory was elusive; Noel might have captured it, but, at the moment, his thoughts were centred on Mary Farrel.

He reached the gangway and stood there, watching the stream of passengers descending from the deck. Suddenly, he became aware

of a waft of perfume, and a slim figure in a white wrap brushed past him.

Even as he turned, a startled cry escaped the girl's lips; she seemed to miss her footing and slip on the edge of the quay.

The young detective sprang forward, catching her by the shoulder in the nick of time.

"Oh, thank you!"

The veiled girl's hands were clasped on his arm as she gasped out the words; her voice was husky and tremulous.

Noel's eyes narrowed a little as he attempted to catch a glimpse of the other's face.

"Close shave!" he commented lightly. "Dangerous to walk so close to the edge—Miss Fontaine!"

He felt the girl stiffen in his grasp, and his suspicions were confirmed.

Rosina Fontaine, the baffling girl-crook—with whom he had already crossed swords on more than one occasion! What was she doing here—in England? Was it a coincidence that she happened to be travelling on the same boat as Mary Farrel?

Noel's eyes hardened as he retained his grasp on the girl's shoulder. His expression had barely changed; he shifted his position so as to keep watch on the gangway.

"Aren't you taking a big risk, Rosina?" he inquired dryly. "The police, here, are very much on the look out for you; a word from me and you'd find yourself booked up in rather uncomfortable quarters—as the guest of His Majesty's Government!"

The girl laughed softly as she pulled back her veil.

"My dear Mr. Raymond," she murmured, "how clever of you to recognise me! But surely you wouldn't be so ungallant as to give me away?"

"On the contrary," rejoined Noel grimly. "I'm taking no risks. You're up to no good in England, Rosina—and I propose to escort you to the nearest police station—just as soon as I've completed my business here."

Rosina smiled amusedly as she coolly lit a gold-tipped cigarette.

"But how priceless! I do so love your

English police; they are funny. You are meeting a young lady, perhaps?"

Noel's eyes narrowed.

"Perhaps," he rejoined, non-committally.

"A young lady by the name of—shall we say—Mary Farrel, yes?"

Noel drew in his breath quickly, but he did not relax his watch on the gangway.

"You're pretty good at guessing, Rosina."

"I do not guess." The violet eyes gleamed maliciously. "I make it my business to know everything, my friend."

"In that case," rejoined Noel calmly, "you may know what will happen to you—when I hand you over to the police."

"You have the sense of humour, Mr. Raymond," Rosina said, resting a slender, beringed hand on his. "You are joking—yes?"

As she spoke, her fingers tightened involuntarily; Noel was conscious of a sharp, stabbing pain in his hand—a pain that shot like red-hot needles up his arm, momentarily paralysing his nerves.

He tried to shout, but found himself powerless; he stood there, utterly helpless, as, with a soft, mocking laugh, Rosina slipped from his grasp and mingled with the crowd.

The whole incident had passed so naturally that it attracted no attention; a fraction of a minute later the numbing sensation passed and Noel spun round.

But Rosina had gone; in that surging, colourful throng there was no sign of her slim, chic figure. Once again she had escaped him!

With a wry grimace, Noel glanced at his hand; just below the wrist was a tiny pinprick, slightly swollen, and painful to the touch.

"Confound it!" he muttered softly. "Rosina's learnt the tricks of the Borgias! A hollow ring, containing a drug—injected by pressure on a concealed point. The young woman's as dangerous as ever!"

Noel decided to get in touch with the police, just as soon as he had met Mary Farrel. He was becoming rather anxious about the girl. He had been keeping a close watch on the gangway, but, as yet, she had not appeared.

He pushed his way forward, and boarded the boat. When he questioned the purser, he got a shock, for the man declared that Mary had already gone ashore.

"Miss Farrel left the ship ten minutes ago, sir!" he declared.

"Ten minutes ago!" echoed Noel sharply. "But I was there—Great Scott!" He clenched his hands. "I can see it now. Rosina

Eagerly Noel Raymond set out for the docks. He was looking forward to escorting Mary Farrel to Scotland. But he reckoned without Rosina, the fascinating girl of many disguises. She was determined that Noel and Mary should never meet.

pretended to fall to divert my attention while Mary was passing. She hoodwinked me properly!"

He was thinking quickly, his face drawn with anxiety. Rosina's cunning move had been typical of her usual audacious methods. She had deliberately drawn his attention to herself, in order that he should miss seeing Mary Farrel. The "accident" and "rescue" had taken barely three minutes in all; but in those three minutes Mary must have passed down the gangway, behind him.

One thing puzzled Noel, Mary was expecting him to meet her; surely, then, she would have looked out for him? She would have remained on the quayside; unless—

The young detective drew in his breath sharply, struck by a sudden thought.

"Has Miss Farrel mentioned any change of plans—or received a message of any kind, do you know?" he inquired.

The purser shook his head.
"Can't say I've heard of anything, sir—though wait!" He turned to his assistant. "Wasn't there a marconigram for one of the passengers this morning, Thomas?"

"There was, sir; I'll get a copy from Jenkins, the operator."

A moment later the flimsy slip of paper was in Noel's hands; a stifled ejaculation escaped his lips, as his worst fears were confirmed.

"Miss Mary Farrel.—Cannot meet you as arranged—urgent business in town—will await you at Rialto Hotel—explain then.—N.R."

His own initials! So that was how Mary had been tricked. No doubt furiously angry and mystified, she was on her way to London, at this moment, expecting to meet him at the Rialto Hotel!

And the scheming Rosina was probably close on her heels!

OUTWITTED ON THE SCOTCH EXPRESS!

NOEL clenched his hands, glancing quickly at his watch.

There might still be time to outwit the daring girl crook. If Mary had caught the boat-train, she would arrive in London at seven o'clock—in time for dinner. Rosina would probably have boarded the same train. But she would hardly dare to make any move on the comparatively short journey, and in so crowded a train. She would probably follow Mary to the Rialto Hotel, and attempt to gain the girl's confidence by one of her numerous clever tricks.

Noel wondered how it was that the astute Rosina had failed to achieve her purpose during the long voyage; but, whatever the reason, she was obviously determined not to let the unsuspecting girl out of her clutches until she obtained what she sought.

The boat-train had started five minutes ago, but Noel's own powerful car was garaged close to the quay. Ten minutes later, his foot pressed on the accelerator, the speedometer needle hovering in the region of sixty, the Kildare Twelve was speeding on the main road to London.

It was just after seven that a long, dusty grey car pulled up outside the Rialto Hotel in London, and Noel Raymond sprang out. He strode through the lobby and approached the reception-desk.

"My name is Raymond," he announced. "I rather fancy that a room was booked here, in my name, earlier in the day."

"Why, yes, sir—it was booked by telephone," came the prompt reply. "I think you will find everything in order—"

"Never mind the room," interrupted Noel impatiently. "I'm expecting a young lady to call—a Miss Mary Farrel—"

"A lady called, sir," put in the desk clerk unexpectedly. "She arrived five minutes ago. I think she's waiting in the lounge—"

"Anyone with her?" cut in Noel.

The desk-clerk looked surprised.
"No, sir—she was alone. She mentioned she'd wait till you came, and that you were expecting her. She didn't give her name."

Noel thanked him, and hurried towards the lounge. He looked round it, seeking Mary's attractive, girlish figure.

But there was only one person in the lounge—

an elderly, prim-looking woman, engaged in knitting a jumper.

An anxious frown crossed Noel's face; there were several other doors by which Mary might have left. He moved across to the solitary occupant of the lounge.

"Pardon me," he said politely, "I'm looking for a young lady who was in here just now—"

The elderly woman looked up, and nodded.
"There was a young lady waiting here, just now—fair-haired, blue-eyed, rather attractive."

"That's right," said Noel eagerly. "Could you tell me which way she went?"

The reply filled him with sudden premonition.

"Another young woman called for her—dark-haired, rather foreign-looking. I gathered that they had met on the boat coming over. Something was said about their having dinner together. They went towards the dining-room—"

Barely pausing to thank his informant, Noel hurried across the lounge and along the passage leading to the dining-room. There was an anxious frown between his eyes. So Rosina was here!

As the door swung to behind him, the elderly woman rose quickly from her chair. Behind her spectacles her violet eyes gleamed mockingly as she retrieved the smouldering cigarette she had concealed behind her knitting and dropped it into an ash-tray.

"Not so clever, Mr. Raymond!" she breathed softly. "It was I who inquired for you—not the so charming Mary. That young lady should arrive any minute—but I shall take care that you do not meet!"

She made her way quickly into the lobby, as a fair-haired, agitated girl sprang from a taxi.

Rosina smiled cunningly beneath her skilful disguise. Mary Farrel had proved no easy victim to her wiles on the voyage; though seemingly a simple girl, she had pretended to know nothing about the precious locket.

So Rosina had changed her plans—and her identity!

She hurried forward now to intercept Mary before the girl could make inquiries at the desk.

"Miss Farrel?" she inquired pleasantly, holding out her hand. "I'd recognise you anywhere by your photograph."

Mary halted, staring at her doubtfully.

"But—"

"You are expecting to meet my nephew, Noel Raymond, I believe?" The elderly lady took the surprised girl by the arm. "I am his aunt—Miss Agatha Raymond, the writer. Perhaps you have heard of me?"

Mary's face cleared.
"Why, yes, I have heard of you! But Mr. Raymond, isn't he—"

"My dear, I must explain." Rosina glanced hastily over her shoulder as she led the way across the lobby. "Noel telephoned me to ask me to meet you here. He was unavoidably detained, poor boy. Some stupid affair at Scotland Yard. He had already made arrangements for your journey, and he asked me if I would see you safely into the train. He will do his best to be there to meet us."

Mary was bewildered, yet grateful.
"It's awfully kind of you; but, really"—she smiled apologetically—"I don't like putting you to all this trouble. It's all daddy's idea that I couldn't travel to Scotland on my own—"

"And very wise of him, my dear," put in Noel's pseudo aunt. "My nephew was in full agreement with the plan. He spoke of the danger of your meeting with an unscrupulous confidence trickster—a young woman named Rosina Fontaine, who was supposed to be travelling on your liner."

A sarcastic smile momentarily curved the girl crook's lips as she saw Mary's involuntary start.

"Why, there was a girl on board who tried to strike up a friendship with me—a rather lively foreign girl, with strange violet eyes, and—"

—began Mary breathlessly.

"That's Rosina, right enough!" declared the girl crook, her eyes narrowing. "My nephew's on her trail now. You've had a narrow escape, my dear. But come! We shall have to hurry! My car's outside."

And, leading the bewildered Mary down the

hotel steps, Rosina calmly stepped into Noel's own car.

A few moments later the young detective entered the hotel lounge, perplexed and anxious. He had not found Mary in the dining-room, and none of the waiters had seen her. Neither had anyone noticed a tall, dark girl fitting Rosina's description.

Then, as he entered the lounge, Noel stiffened, recognising a faint, familiar perfume—the perfume of a scented cigarette.

In two strides he crossed the room, staring into the big brass ash-tray. A stifled ejaculation escaped his lips as he snatched up the stump-end of a gold-tipped cigarette of a little-known Continental brand.

He spun on his heel, staring at the armchair in which the elderly visitor had been sitting. Dropping to his knee, he examined the cushion and upholstery. There was a faint trace of grey ash scattered on the former—scented ash.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Noel.

He sprang to his feet and hurried into the lobby as enlightenment burst on him. When he returned, a moment later, his worst fears had been confirmed. Rosina had left the hotel with her victim—in his car—bound for an unknown destination!

Desperately his keen eyes searched the lounge, seeking some small clue, however slender. Suddenly he strode to a shelf on one of the walls—a shelf containing several reference books, directories, and time-tables.

There was a faint trace of grey ash on the shelf and on one of the books—a railway timetable, and it was open at the London to Edinburgh section. That did not tell him a great deal; but Noel's sharp eyes detected something else.

The indentation was barely visible to the naked eye; but, on examining it through a powerful glass, Noel made out the letters: "K - - g - r - s -," and the numbers, "8 - 5."

By comparing them swiftly with the timetable, Noel decided that this meant: "King's Cross, 8.25." The 8.25 was a fast through express to Edinburgh.

The young detective glanced quickly at his watch. He drew in his breath in a sharp hiss of dismay. It was already ten past eight. He had barely a quarter of an hour in which to reach the station, and his car had been purloined!

ROSINA gave a sigh of relief as the Scotch Express drew out of the station. She had tricked Noel, after all. Though she had kept a close watch on the barrier, the young detective had not put in an appearance.

"Well, my dear," she remarked, beaming pleasantly at the flushed, bewildered girl on the opposite seat, "we're off! I cannot understand why my nephew did not meet us, but no doubt we shall hear from him at Edinburgh. Meanwhile, you can trust me to see you safely to your aunt's house."

Mary nodded, but before she could speak the door opened, and a uniformed attendant entered the compartment, carrying a tray on which were the two cups of coffee Rosina had ordered. He was a tall young man, with a fair moustache and glasses. Rosina paid him, and stated that they did not wish to be disturbed again.

The young man departed, closing the sliding door behind him.

Rosina's eyes glittered as she edged nearer her attractive young companion.

"You were telling me, my dear," she remarked, "about that scheming young woman on the boat. What was it that she was so anxious for you to let her see?"

"My mother's old locket," explained Mary, with a puzzled smile. "I can't understand why she should have been so anxious; it's no real value—except sentimentally." Her lips trembled. "I promised mother that I'd never let it out of my keeping."

Rosina shook her head gravely, suppressing her eagerness.

"May I see the locket, my dear?" she inquired carelessly.

Unsuspectingly Mary fumbled under her frock, producing a finely chased gold locket, attached to a slender chain round her neck.

Snapping it open, she revealed the portrait of a grey-haired, smiling woman, whose features bore a striking likeness to her own.

"My mother," she said softly, looking down quickly. "She—she died five years ago, and this was her last present to me. I'll never part with it—never!"

Rosina clicked her tongue in assumed sympathy; there was an avaricious glint in her eyes.

"Don't you think that I ought to take care of it for you, my dear, until we reach Scotland?" she inquired. "One gets pickpockets and thieves on the trains—my nephew has often warned me against them."

Mary shook her head quickly as she closed the precious locket, slipping it under her frock.

"It's awfully kind of you, Miss Raymond," she said: "but, you see, I promised mother."

"Of course, my dear—of course. I quite understand."

Rosina patted the girl's arm, but the expression in her violet eyes became harder—more determined.

Another train roared past them, and Mary instinctively turned to glance at the flashing lights. Rosina's hand crept out, dropping a small pellet into Mary's coffee-cup.

When Mary awoke she would know nothing—suspect nothing; a little mild sleeping-draught could do her no harm.

"Drink your coffee, my dear, before it gets cold," she urged.

Mary reached out her hand for the cup, raising it to her lips. But it did not reach them.

Just then the door opened unexpectedly, and the young attendant blundered into the compartment, carrying a tray. Clumsily he knocked into Mary, and, with a hurried apology, made a grab at her coffee-cup as it slipped from her fingers.

"I beg your pardon, miss!" he gasped.

Rosina's eyes narrowed vindictively as the young attendant groped on the floor to pick up the broken remains of the cup. Quick as thought Rosina raised a hand behind her, switching out the lights.

There came a frightened scream from Mary.

"My locket!" she cried, "Someone snatched it!"

There was a sound of a quick scuffle, and the light flashed on again.

It revealed to Mary's startled gaze the young train attendant, minus his fair moustache and glasses, grasping her elderly companion by the shoulder, while in his free hand he held the precious locket and chain.

"You see, Rosina," remarked Noel Raymond dryly, "I happened to catch the train, after all!"

CARVOYLE CASTLE'S SECRET

MARY FARREL, her face deathly pale, was staring in blank bewilderment from one to the other.

"I'm sorry, said Noel, glancing at her with a reassuring smile, "that I was unable to arrive earlier. Your astute companion rather upset my plans. If you would kindly fetch the guard, I will explain more fully. I advise you to stand just where you are, Rosina."

His hand tightened on the girl crook's slender shoulder.

"I—I don't understand!" gasped Mary, white to the lips. "Who—are you? How dare you attack Miss Raymond like this?"

Noel raised his eyebrows, whistling softly.

"Miss Raymond—eh? I congratulate you, Rosina. That was a smart move. But, fortunately for Miss Farrel, you weren't quite smart enough."

In spite of himself, he felt a grudging admiration for Rosina's amazing acting. Though the audacious girl crook must have realised that she was cornered, she maintained her assumed character with amazing sang-froid.

Her expression was one of horrified indignation, coupled with fear.

"My dear child," she gasped, looking appealingly at Mary, "run and fetch help—at once! The young man's a raving lunatic, or worse. Pull the communication-cord!"

Mary promptly darted out into the corridor, calling for help.

There came startled shouts and the banging of doors.

Noel smiled grimly at his captive as he slipped the locket and chain into his pocket.

"I'm afraid, Rosina," he remarked, "that you rather overstepped yourself this time. You may as well take off that wig—"

"Not so fast, Mr. Raymond!" The reply came like a flash as a revolver glinted unexpectedly in the girl's left hand. "Keep your distance! This is your trick, but the game is not over yet—not by a long way, my friend!"

At that moment the corridor became full of people—Mary, the guard, some other officials, and a crowd of excited, curious passengers.

"What's all this—" began the guard ominously.

"Guard," snapped Noel, "kindly arrest this woman! She is Rosina Fontaine, the notorious girl crook. My name is Noel Raymond."

An excited gasp went up from the onlookers. With a startled ejaculation the guard stepped forward.

"Pardon me," put in Rosina coolly, "this

made out in the name of Miss Agatha Raymond—and bearing a photograph identical with the girl crook's disguise.

The guard eyed Noel with cold suspicion; Mary Farrel shrank from him in obvious horror.

"Please make him give me back my locket!" she gasped.

"This is fantastic!" said Noel curtly. "You are being hoodwinked by an audacious girl-crook! That passport is faked—and she is wearing a wig. Surely, if she is genuine, it would be an easy matter for her to disprove my statement!"

But at that moment a burly, grey-haired man pushed his way along the corridor.

"Pardon me," he said gruffly, addressing the guard, "can I be of any assistance? I am Detective-Inspector Plummer, of Scotland Yard—"

His words caused a sensation; the guard's face lit up with relief as he glanced quickly at the newcomer's card.

"I'd be very much obliged if you would, sir. Can you identify either of these two people here?"

Noel was staring at the newcomer with a



The old lady's words convinced Noel that Rosina was here in the hotel. Thanking her, he hurried away. He did not see the violet eyes behind the spectacles gleam mockingly. The "old lady" was no other than Rosina herself!

young man is either a lunatic or else a dangerous criminal. My name is Agatha Raymond—no doubt you have heard of me. You will find my passport photograph and other details in my handbag. This—this person, who appears to be masquerading as my nephew, broke into the compartment, and tried to purloin my young friend's property. You will find it in his pocket. He held me up with this revolver, and I only snatched it from him in the nick of time. I insist that he is put under immediate arrest!"

Noel's breath was taken away by the audacious statement; the guard stared in bewilderment from one to the other.

"You will find my card-case in my right-hand breast pocket," said Noel grimly. "There is bound to be someone on the train who can identify me."

The guard felt in Noel's pocket, but drew blank—the young detective's card-case had vanished!

Noel's lips tightened as he saw the mocking gleam in Rosina's eyes. He realised that, in the scuffle in the dark, she must have skilfully picked his pocket!

Matters were made even worse when, in Rosina's case, the guard discovered a passport,

puzzled frown. Inspector Plummer, of the Yard; he did not know the name—or the man.

There was a tense, expectant silence, as the newcomer's steel-grey eyes glanced quickly from one to the other.

"To the best of my recollection," he remarked gravely, "the lady is Miss Agatha Raymond, a relative of my famous young colleague; and this young man"—he gave a sudden start, stepping towards Noel—"I've been looking for him! His name is Pierre Blanchard—and he's a confederate of the notorious girl crook, Rosina Fontaine!"

There was a sudden scuffle. Noel, taken completely by surprise, was borne down by the pseudo-inspector and the guard; a pair of handcuffs clicked on his wrists.

He was a prisoner!

IT was useless for the young detective to protest; he was searched, and the precious locket was found in his possession, and returned to Mary Farrel.

The train was pulled up at a lonely wayside halt, for the "police officer" to remove his prisoner.

"Miss Farrel," shouted Noel, as, white to

the lips, he was hustled from the compartment, "this is a trick! Whatever happens, don't trust that woman! Get in touch with the police immediately you arrive in Scotland, and—"

The door was slammed in his face, and, in the grasp of the pseudo-inspector and a porter, Noel was forced to watch the train steam out of the station.

"But the game's not over yet!" thought Noel grimly.

He was pretty certain of the identity of the pseudo police officer; the man was none other than Pierre, Rosina's faithful confederate, who was never far from the girl crook's side.

Noel wondered what Pierre intended to do with him. He was not left long in doubt.

A closed car was drawn up outside the station, and Pierre bundled Noel roughly towards it, aided by the porter.

"Get inside!" he snapped, producing a revolver.

Noel obeyed; he knew that it was useless to resist. But his active mind was at work.

Pierre climbed in beside him, and Noel slumped limply into the seat, his head drooping forward—his attitude one of helpless despair.

Pierre smiled unpleasantly, as he manoeuvred the car round a dangerous bend.

"I advise you to play no tricks, monsieur," he remarked.

One hand on the wheel, he flourished his revolver.

And at that instant Noel acted. His foot shot out, ramming down hard on the accelerator. The car shot forward, swerving madly. Pierre, with a furious ejaculation, grabbed the wheel with both hands.

In an instant, Noel was on his feet; his manacled hands descended with stunning force on Pierre's head. With a groan, the other slumped forward, and Noel jammed his foot on the brake as the car lurched into the bank at the roadside.

Pierre was stunned; but it was no easy task to search him with manacled hands. But Noel contrived, at length, to find what he sought—the key to the handcuffs. Using his teeth, he contrived to unlock the manacles.

Slipping one over Pierre's wrist, he locked the other to the steering-wheel.

With a grim smile, he brushed himself down; then his hand slid into his pocket—producing a round metal disc, engraved like an ancient coin.

In the few minutes he had had to spare, before his fake "arrest," he had contrived to open the back of Mary's locket—and to extract what it contained!

With the aid of his torch, he examined the metal disc. There was an engraving of a lion's head—and, above it, the name "Carvoyle."

"Carvoyle Castle!" breathed Noel. "The ancient seat of Mary's family! I wonder—"

He slipped the disc back into the wallet, and proceeded to search Pierre. In the man's wallet he found a map—and some scribbled notes.

"Proceed to Carvoyle Castle—"

Noel whistled softly. So Rosina must have had an inkling of what the locket contained! But what was the secret of the metal disc—the secret for which she had dared so much?

It was an intriguing mystery; but at that moment Mary Farrell's safety meant more to Noel than all the mysteries in the world.

Springing from the car, he made his way to the nearest town. There he had a consultation with the local police superintendent, who promised to give him every assistance in his power. Noel next drove to a near-by aerodrome and hired an air-taxi to fly him to Scotland. He arrived at Edinburgh two hours later. A car was at the air-port to meet him. Inquiries had already been made. The "elderly lady" and her fair-haired companion had been traced to a near-by hotel.

Noel arrived at the hotel, accompanied by a police officer. There they found Mary Farrell, locked in her room—bound and gagged!

The girl was almost distraught. With tears in her eyes, she explained how the kindly "Miss Raymond" had purloined her locket and left her lying helpless in the hotel bedroom.

Noel's eyes glinted.

"Don't worry, Miss Farrell!" he said. "I fancy I know where she's gone. But she hasn't

got what she was after. By now she's probably realised her mistake!"

"What—what do you mean?" breathed Mary.

Noel replied by a question.

"There's an old castle belonging to your mother's side of the family, Miss Farrell," he said. "Do you happen to know if it is occupied?"

Mary's eyes widened.

"You mean—Carvoyle Castle? But what—what has that to do with mother's locket? The old place has been deserted for years."

"Then I must get there before Rosina tumbles to the secret," snapped Noel. "Will you wait here, Miss Farrell?"

"No—please, please let me come with you!"

The girl caught appealingly at his arm, and Noel grinned boyishly.

"Right you are, Miss Farrell! I don't imagine there'll be any danger. It's just a race against time—and, at the moment, the fates are in our favour."

During the long journey by car into the highlands, Noel examined the metal disc more closely. The strange inscription puzzled him—a crouching lion, with a coronet between its paws.

"The emblem of the royal line of Scotland!" he muttered.

It was dark when they reached the castle—a grim, weather-beaten building, partially in ruins, and overlooking a dark, silent loch.

They were accompanied by a taciturn police-sergeant.

Leaving the police-officer in the car with the chauffeur, Noel and his young companion made their way up to the castle. In response to the clanging bell, the massive oak door was opened—to reveal a bent, wrinkled old woman of witch-like appearance, holding a spluttering candle in a massive iron stick.

The caretaker was obviously suspicious, till Noel introduced his companion. Then the woman smiled.

"Come in, my bairn," she said huskily, "and you, too, mister. It's many a day since I set eyes on one of the clan of Macfarren—your mother's family, my dear. Come in!"

"Have you had any visitors, to-day?" asked Noel.

The old caretaker shook her head.

"Not a soul, mister—not a soul."

"We'd like to see round the castle," went on the young detective. "Do you mind showing us round?"

Nodding, the old woman led the way—the flickering light from her candle throwing grotesque shadows on the bare stone walls.



WOULDN'T MOTHER LOVE THIS?
Especially if you made it for her yourself.

I'M sure mother would be thrilled if you made her a Milk-Notice like this—and I'm quite certain it would impress the busy milkman!

To make it, you'll require a large circle of thick cardboard.

Paint it any bright colour you fancy. Then cut the milk-bottle shapes from white paper—drawing-paper or notepaper would be best.

You'll require three little milk-bottles and nine big ones. Paste these on to the coloured circle—first a small one for the ½-pint, then a big one for a pint. After that you increase by the ½-pint until you reach three whole pints.

Now cut an arrow out of cardboard, and fix this to the centre of the circle, either with a stab-through paper clip, or a drawing-pin.

You would have to flatten the point of the drawing-pin on the wrong side.

Paint the words MILK FOR TO-DAY in black letters, and paint the arrow, too. Attach a curtain-ring to the top of the circle by stitching right through the cardboard.

Hung on the back door, the milkman will be able to see by a glance at where the arrow is pointing, just how much milk mother would like left each day.

Noel was staring round him keenly, paying particular attention to some of the quaint old engravings on the walls.

And in a little cell-like room, at the foot of a flight of steps, he found what he sought.

A sculptured lion, in crouching position, with a coronet between its paws.

The young detective crossed to the wall, whipping out a powerful magnifying glass.

His eyes glittered with satisfaction.

"Hold this torch, Miss Farrell," he jerked, thrusting an electric torch into her hand.

"Steady—just on this spot." His sensitive fingers crept over the engraving. There was a faint click—and a cry from Mary—as the engraving swung out from the wall, revealing a dim cavity.

Noel thrust his hand into the opening, to produce an ancient gold coronet, encrusted with priceless gems!

"What—what is it?" gasped Mary, her eyes wide with wonder.

"The secret of Carvoyle Castle," rejoined Noel, "and your dowry, Miss Farrell. The royal diadem of Mary, Queen of Scots, who once hid here from her enemies—"

"How very clever of you, Mr. Raymond!" remarked a cool, mocking voice. "You have saved me the trouble of finding it for myself. You will kindly hand over that attractive object—and keep your hands above your head!"

Noel spun round on his heel, and there came a startled cry from Mary.

The old caretaker was confronting them, a revolver grasped in her hand, a mocking smile on her lips.

"Rosina!" snapped Noel.

"At your service, my friend," Rosina's violet eyes flashed menacingly. "Do not keep me waiting!"

Noel laughed.

"I wasn't quite certain," he replied, "but I took precautions. That revolver is quite harmless, my dear Miss Fontaine; I saw the bulge in your pocket as we came in—and I contrived to extract it, and remove the cartridges. Officer"—he spoke sharply, addressing the darkness behind Rosina—"kindly arrest this woman!"

Rosina, taken off her guard, flung a half-gance over her shoulder; at the same instant Noel leaped forward, twisting the revolver from her hand.

In the struggle, the trigger was pulled; there was a deafening report and a bullet thudded into the wall.

"Sheer bluff, Rosina," panted Noel, covering her grimly. "I think this is my trick. You will kindly hand over Miss Farrell's locket!"

With a shrug, Rosina dropped it into his hand. Noel handed it to Mary, who was clutching the jewelled diadem, her face pale, her eyes wide with bewilderment.

"You are clever, Mr. Raymond," said Rosina softly. "Very clever. But the time will come—"

With a choking sob, she raised her hands to her face. She swayed on her feet, and seemed on the point of fainting. Mary, with a cry of sympathy, darted forward to the girl crook's help. But Rosina was only bluffing. Like lightning, she grasped Mary and gave her a violent push. Mary cannoned against Noel, and before either of them could recover from the shock, Rosina had sprung backwards through the door, locking it behind her.

With an angry ejaculation, Noel flung himself at the door, but it resisted his efforts. In desperation, he fired into the lock, shattering it.

"Come on, Miss Farrell!" he gasped.

But, by the time they had arrived outside the castle, Rosina had gone. The police-sergeant had noticed the old caretaker enter a boat and pull across the lake. He had not thought to question her.

Noel clenched his hands, drawing a deep breath.

Once again the audacious girl crook had escaped the punishment she so richly deserved; but she had escaped empty-handed. The royal treasure of Carvoyle Castle was in the hands of its rightful owner.

"To the next time, Rosina!" murmured Noel softly, as he stared out across the dark, rippling loch.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

THE MYSTERY OF HOLLYHOCK COTTAGE— that is the title of next Friday's thrilling detective story. Don't miss it.



The Happy-go-lucky Hikers

This Week:

THE MYSTERY HOUSE ON THE MOORS

By ELIZABETH CHESTER

A PONY FOR FAY

"WHY can't I be hungry all over again?"

Wendy Topham laughed as her friend Jill gave that doleful cry; for Jill had eaten a hearty lunch, especially for a girl whose ambition was to reduce weight and plumpness.

"Just as well you can't be until tea-time," said Wendy, "or Fay and I would have to carry you over the moors."

"Me carry Jill?" said Fay, with a gasp. "I shall have all I can do to carry myself, thanks. But wasn't that wonderful butter?"

"And cheese," nodded Wendy. "I've never enjoyed bread and cheese so much in all my life."

"Nor I," agreed Jill. "And for once it didn't matter that Fay lost the sandwiches."

Fay looked up from her small pocket hand-mirror with the air of a girl who was either going to start a new argument, or take the old one a lot farther. But Wendy held up her hands and implored peace.

Wendy usually had to implore peace at some time or another on their hiking expeditions; for Fay and Jill, although the best of friends, were inclined to argue.

"Never mind who lost the sandwiches," said Wendy philosophically. "I only hope that someone who was really hungry found them and enjoyed them as much as we've enjoyed our lunch in this lovely little cottage."

Wendy, Fay, and Jill, having been favoured with a morning off from the office where they worked, were making good use of the extra time.

It was Saturday morning, and they were some forty miles from their own Midland town, exploring the moors.

Hiking was their hobby, and on every possible occasion they took the road—in thick shoes and socks, shorts, shirts, sweaters, and berets.

Three healthier, happier girls it would have been impossible to find, and their appetites had surprised the owner of this cottage.

But, luckily, the larder had been equal to the occasion, and there had been fresh butter and cheese in plenty, and the tastiest home-made bread they had ever eaten.

They had been walking since nine o'clock that morning, and the rest had been welcome, but thanks to their early start, they were now in a lonely moorland village, where few travellers had arrived before.

Mrs. Marling, the owner of the cottage, had also a small general store, and a funny little place it was, too, with almost everything imaginable for sale.

One of the three had very cleverly lost the sandwiches, so they had been compelled to stop for a meal. Wendy had seen the small general shop, and had thought of asking if the owner knew where they could get some bread and cheese.

In the kindest manner possible, Mrs. Marling had offered them her own parlour, and there on the Victorian, plush-covered chairs they had gladly rested and eaten.

Mrs. Marling looked into the room just as Wendy rose to look at a picture on the wall.

"I want to get a better look at this portrait," said Wendy, with a smile. "I do think she's beautiful."

A shadow crossed Mrs. Marling's face. "Was, my dear," she said. "For she's dead now, as you probably know."

Wendy was perplexed, and faintly amused. "We're strangers here," she said, "and I don't think any of us know her."

Mrs. Marling seemed more amused than Wendy had been.

"What? Never heard your mothers talk of Gloria Wisdon?" she asked, in surprise. "Well, there! Who'd have thought that fame would die so sudden, eh?"

But Fay gave a quick exclamation of recognition.

"Golly, I know the name—an actress wasn't she?" she asked.

"Yes—and the prettiest in all England, so she was," said Mrs. Marling. "But there! That's going back a few years. Poor dear—struck down in the very height of her success. A cruel fate—"

The three hikers in solemn mood looked at the portrait on the wall, studying it closely. They saw that it was a coloured reprint with the appearance of having been a presentation plate given free with some paper published long ago; nevertheless, Miss Gloria Wisdon's facial beauty was given full justice.

What an extraordinary house it was that the Happy-Go-Lucky Hikers found themselves in. Why should everyone except the housekeeper have to go about blindfolded? It was an amazing secret that those lonely walls hid from the world.

"What happened to her?" asked Jill, after a long pause.

Mrs. Marling sighed. "She paid the penalty of her beauty. Real tragic it was. A theatre fire—and there she was in her dressing-room. When they got to her she was unconscious. Then, as far as I have always heard, she was disfigured for life. Leastways, she didn't die—not then, but she disappeared. Went into seclusion, as they call it."

"Oh!" said Wendy. "I am sorry. How awful to be disfigured when one is really beautiful, as she was."

"A terrible thing," agreed Mrs. Marling, with a heavy sigh. "They say she came to somewhere on these moors; but I never saw her, and, anyway, I suppose she didn't want to be seen, being disfigured like that. Now how about a nice cup of tea?" she added.

There was a chorus of approval, and Mrs. Marling waddled away to get the tea made, and the tray set—and in between, answering the door bell that told her customers were needing service.

The three hikers sat looking at the photograph. Fay, who was reckoned the prettiest, and had, so many said, a film face, looked saddest of the three. It was as though she seemed to see herself in Gloria Wisdon's plight.

"Awful thing," said Wendy. "Nowadays, of course, they do wonders with plastic surgery, even though one is scarred."

Just then Mrs. Marling came back with the tea.

"Going far?" she asked them. "Anywhere in particular?"

"Just hiking," said Wendy, "and we'll stop when it's getting near to dusk, and there's a likely cottage. We shall be a good few miles on by then. And after a good sleep, up we get for the return home to-morrow."

Mrs. Marling gave them a few hints about the moors, and told them where there were swampy places, and certain other danger points it was as well to miss.

"But you won't find any more cottages not until you come to Bosper village, nigh on fifteen miles ahead," she said.

"Near enough," decided Wendy. "We want a good long trudge over these marvellous moors."

"Ay. Well don't be getting afraid if so be a pony should jump up at yer," said Mrs. Marling, with a smile. "Wild ponies are plentiful here, and they're yours for the catching and keeping. But I'm thinking it needs a professional catcher to get those ponies, they're that tricky and sly."

Wendy, Jill, and Fay brightened. They were all fond of animals, and the thought of running across some wild ponies thrilled them.

Long before they saw one—before even they

had settled the account with Mrs. Marling, Fay had made up her mind to own a pony.

"Good," said Wendy. "All you have to do is to catch it, and ride it home. You'll look dashing riding up to the office on it, Fay—"

"And you'll have a use for that pair of jockhairs, after all," cut in Jill, with a chuckle. "But first catch your pony."

They left the cottage behind, and then at the crest of the winding village street, looked back and waved to Mrs. Marling.

Then arm in arm they cut across the moors, vast, open and, in the winter, bleak. But it was not winter yet, and there was still heather blooming. Mile after mile they walked, enjoying every moment of it.

"Best foot forward," said Wendy. "It'll be downhill in half a mile."

She looked to the crest of the hill, and then, seeing an animal shape rise from the other side, gave a light cheer.

"Pony ahoy. Your pony, Fay!"

Fay ran as soon as she saw it, but the pony, apparently oblivious of his doom, went on champing the grass.

With glad cries Fay chased up to him, for he was a nice looking little fellow, though shaggy, and just what she wanted for her very own. The pony stood like a statue except for his champing jaws, and then as Fay's hands reached to him, he turned and ambled off.

"Explain that you can give him a good home and reasonable food," advised Jill merrily.

Fay hesitated and followed the pony slowly. But every time she drew nearer the pony darted forward.

It was such good fun watching that Jill and Wendy came to a halt.

"Shall we lend a hand?" asked Jill. "She doesn't seem to get a chance alone."

"If you like," said Wendy. "But very few ponies are ever caught."

Jill joined Fay then, and went boldly in front of the pony, who, watching her with cautious eyes, decided to back.

But there stood Wendy. His escape was barred.

Fay saw her chance and seized it. She took a run and hurled herself across his back. Then she swung round and clung on.

"Riding him!" she cheered.

The pony, annoyed at being so easily caught, and hating having a rider on his back, just pranced on his hind legs and then set off like a Derby champion.

Fay yelled, Jill shrieked out warning. At terrific speed down-hill the pony went, and as it ran it gathered speed. Fay sitting astride gripped with her knees, and clung to the pony's mane.

"Whoa—!" she yelled. "Whoa back!"

But the pony gathered speed downhill. He went as though lashed by a dozen whips.

Whatever its motive, it was going as fast as it knew how, and had clearly not the slightest intention of stopping.

Wendy, watching, saw the treacherous ground ahead, and was filled with dismay.

"Jill—after her," she gasped. "Another pony there—it may be tamer. Come on!"

There were several ponies grazing and Wendy made a jump for one nearest. It reared, put its ears back, shied, and then at very little less speed, went in pursuit of the other.

THE STRANGE HOUSE

WENDY TOPHAM was not riding for the first time, but she found a world of difference between riding with a saddle, and riding bare-backed, and a still greater difference between a mild, good-tempered horse, and this pony.

The pony wanted to run and run. And there was nothing and no one to stop it. But fast though Wendy's pony went, Fay's still had the lead.

Fay was shrieking now, urging her mount to stop, pleading commanding, threatening. But all in vain.

So she wisely saved her breath and kept a grip. It was either clinging on, or falling off. There seemed no way of stopping the pony until it ran out of breath.

It reminded Fay of her uncle who had had to stay on a motor-cycle until it ran out of petrol, because he didn't know how to stop.

How long it would be before the pony ran out of breath Fay couldn't guess. Fay was not only scared, but she was bumped and banged and biffed.

"Oh, oh—oh!" jerked out Fay.

Wendy tried to catch her, but there was little hope. Sooner or later Fay's pony would stumble, and then—

"Ah!" gasped Wendy. For the inevitable happened. The pony travelling so swiftly over the rough ground, missed his footing and stumbled.

Fay hurtled over his neck, landed on her shoulders, somersaulted and rolled twice before ending on her back winded, and fighting for breath.

The pony trotted away, shaking his head and flicking his mane in a contemptuous manner.

Wendy slowed her gentler pony, and slid off, running to where Fay lay trying to struggle up. She saw that Fay was grimacing, and that her cheeks were pale with pain. Until this moment, Wendy's alarm had been vague; now, however, it was real.

"Fay. Are you badly hurt?" she asked in deep concern, and she dropped on her knees beside her friend.

Fay bit her lip, for she was plucky, and hated showing weakness.

"I—my ankle," she said. "It twisted as I went over."

Wendy put her hands gently on the ankle. Her first fear was that it was broken, and a sigh of relief told Fay that all was well. Nevertheless it was an unpleasant sprain, and Fay would not be able to walk for a while.

"Of all the awful luck!" said Jill running up after dismounting from a rather portly and slow-footed pony. "Poor old Fay. How awful! I am sorry—"

She took Fay's hand and squeezed it. For though they might chaff each other, these two, they were deeply devoted. Jill propped Fay while Wendy took out the first-aid tin and arranged a bandage. Cold water was needed, and a rippling stream ran not far away, with water that was ice cold and beautifully clear.

Between them they carried Fay to it, and bathed her ankle and dressed the cut on her other knee.

"And after it all, the pony got away," said Wendy. "Too bad."

"Too wonderful," retorted Fay, sitting up, still quite white. "I'll never, never try to steal another pony as long as I live!"

They let her rest for some minutes, chatting the while to keep her mind from concentrating on the pain. Then they helped her to her feet.

But Fay no sooner put her left foot to the ground than she gave a sharp cry and lifted it, biting her lip.

"Hallo, hallo, that's bad!" said Wendy anxiously. "You can't walk with that!"

Jill looked in all directions. They had come three miles at least from the cottages, and there were no others in sight. There was but one building, a gaunt place built on a hill, and so surrounded by trees that at first Jill did not realise that it was a house.

"That place there!" she remarked. "What do you think, Wendy? Is it a house or not?"

Wendy took out her small field-glasses and studied it.

"House!" she said. "But there are high walls, and there's barbed wire on top. It doesn't look too friendly."

"It's the only place here, though," said Jill. "And surely no one would be mean enough not to give us shelter! Fay can't go on with this ankle. At least they could let her rest."

"Well, they probably will," said Wendy. "I'm only going by the barbed wire."

But when they at last came to the walls of that house, Jill began to think that Wendy was right, and Fay's heart went down into her shoes.

There had surely never been a more forbidding outside than that house had. The walls were of stone—solid-looking, impregnable—and, surmounting them, as Wendy had noticed—was barbed wire.

They found the gateway, and stood before it. It was very heavy, with iron studs, and there was no ring outside, as is usually fitted to doors of that type.

Only the roof of the house could be seen

above the walls, and the girls could not be sure whether it was occupied or not.

But Wendy decided, after a study of the lock and hinges, that it was, for all showed traces of recent oil.

Then Jill noticed a small plate, on which was printed "Tradesmen's Entrance," with an arrow pointing the way.

"That'll be the door most often used," Wendy decided. "Better try that."

Fay suggested she should sit down where she was while the other two went exploring. When they did find a door that opened, she would work her way along to it with their help.

So Wendy and Jill, following the direction of the arrow, came to the tradesmen's entrance. There was a bell-knob to push, and it had been recently polished.

"Good!" said Wendy, in relief. "That means that there's someone here. I should say that that was polished this mor—"

She broke off in mid-sentence, for the door had just opened. It was even now not more than ajar, and they could only just see the face of a middle-aged woman. She peered at them, keeping the door so narrowly open that she had to move her head from side to side, using first one eye for studying them and then the other!

"What do you want?" she snapped. "Sight-seers, I suppose?"

"No. Our friend is hurt," said Wendy. "and we thought you might let her rest awhile. She has sprained her ankle."

The woman narrowed her brows.

"Ah! Hikers! Fooling about, as usual. Perhaps trying to climb these walls."

"No—no! She fell from a pony—" said Wendy.

"Ah, she did, did she?" the woman snapped. "Like her impudence riding it. Why can't you keep away from here? Who's been talking, that's what I want to know?"

"Talking?" said Wendy, in surprise.

"Ah! It isn't just for nothing folks come here," said the old woman darkly. "You go somewhere else. You don't catch me with this sprained ankle yarn."

Wendy's politeness grew a little thin at that.

"I don't know why you should suspect us of lying," she said. "And we certainly don't want to force our way in—"

A voice called from the house, interrupting Wendy.

"Martha, open the door and let them in! They are not spies. I can tell by their voices. I have leaned to know the ring of truth."

Martha grumbled to herself, and, giving Wendy a resentful look, pulled the door wide open.

The door gave on to a small courtyard of crazy paving.

The house itself was as solid as the walls, and a strong door gave double protection from invaders. Even the windows had large, green wooden shutters, although these were now open.

Wendy looked for the woman who had called out, but failed to see her, nor was there a window open.

"Odd!" she told herself, and then turned back to the woman who had been called Martha.

"Well, and which of you has the strained ankle?" sneered Martha.

"She's outside, waiting," said Wendy.

"We'd better fetch her. I do hope we're not being a fearful bother, but a sprained ankle's no fun. With rest, and some vinegar, it can be cured quickly."

"Don't try telling me anything about sprains," said Martha. "I've been curing sprains and strains since I was your age. And I had more sense to start with."

Wendy and Jill hurried out to Fay, and in whispers told her about the odd house.

"Do you think it's safe to go in?" Fay asked anxiously. "What do they mean—spies? What is there to spy on?"

Wendy didn't know, and Jill's best guess was that they might be foreign spies; but what they could spy on in the middle of the moor was not at all clear.

"Anyway, they're harmless enough," said Wendy. "And at least you can rest, and there's a chance we may be able to stay the night there."

They gave Fay a bandy-chair to the house,

and did not put her down until they had crossed the threshold. There was a small entrance hall, barely furnished with a solid-looking Cromwellian couch. Wendy and Jill put Fay gently down on it, and took a breath.

Martha was standing by a communicating door that led from the hall, and now she came forward.

"H'm, so it is a real sprain!" she commented. "Well, well!" And she stooped over Fay's ankle and examined it. That completed, she looked up grimly. "Understand, not a word to anyone about what you see in this house. And you'll see as little as you can if you know what is good for you."

Fay gave a jump of alarm, and accidentally let her bad foot to the ground as she swung round. But the pain reminded her quickly enough.

"Oh, dear!" she gasped, with a look at Jill. "What place is this?"

Wendy, growing quite alarmed herself—fearful that they had accidentally stumbled upon a coiners' den, or something of the sort, faced Martha frankly.

"We don't want to spy, and we certainly don't want to be involved in anything crooked or dishonest," she said.

"There's nowt dishonest here!" said Martha indignantly. "But just mind your own business, that's all! And keep your eyes shut when I says 'Shut'!"

Jill gaped, Fay blinked, and Wendy puckered her forehead, each in her way expressing facially the surprise Martha's words created.

"Shut our eyes?" exclaimed Wendy incredulously.

"That's right. Only when I say 'Shut.' And mind you do! You're accepting hospitality, and it's for you to do as the hostess may wish, I don't have to tell you."

Then she went to a side door and beckoned them.

The door led to a pretty living-room, comfortably furnished. There was a thick, red Turkey carpet on the floor, two deep armchairs packed with red-and-gold cushions. There were pictures of landscapes on the walls, a portrait, and almost everywhere, covering the mantelpiece, the bookcase, the occasional tables, and even the piano, were photographs.

In a sweeping glance Wendy took in the scene. She noticed, without paying detailed attention, that the photographs were old-fashioned, of young people taken some time ago, and then, conscious that she might seem to be staring, she gave her attention to Fay, helping her to the comfortable chesterfield near the window.

"She can rest there for an hour or two," said Martha. "And maybe I might make her a cup of tea, being a kind-hearted old fool."

She turned and swung to the door. Wendy winked at Jill and Fay, for she liked Martha, whose bluntness was a mere cloak to hide her warmth of feeling, which for reasons known best to herself she was ashamed to show.

"My watch!" exclaimed Fay suddenly.

"Oh, I think it's in the hall! I remember seeing it loose on your wrist," said Jill.

"I'd better run and get it," said Wendy, and made for the door.

She had nearly reached it when it opened suddenly, and Martha stood there. Carefully she closed the door and approached Wendy.

"Shut your eyes," she snapped, "and stand there!"

Wonderingly Wendy looked at her, and noticed the silk handkerchief she held.

"Why, I—"

"It's all right, stupid!" said Martha brusquely. "I'm only going to blindfold you. Youngsters like you can't be trusted to keep your eyes shut!"

Then, as Wendy stood there, with Fay and Jill looking on wonderingly, Martha tied the silk handkerchief firmly round Wendy's eyes.

"There!" she said. "Now I must get back to my kitchen."

As soon as she had gone Wendy groped her way out to the little hall. Suddenly she heard a step and a soft rustling.

"Hallo! Someone there?" said Wendy. "I can't see."

"Yes," said a gentle voice—the voice that had called a command to Martha from the house.

"Would you be kind enough to pick up Fay's

watch, please? It must be somewhere near the couch there. I'm frightened to move in case I step on it."

"I will try," said the voice. Wendy heard steps. A hand touched her, someone brushed past, and then she heard groping movements on the floor.

"Can't you find it?" she said.

"I too, cannot see," said the voice.

Wendy could think of no answer. For if this woman, too, were blindfolded, then only Martha was allowed to see—allowed to see what?

A big question mark seemed to burn into Wendy's brain. But, unless she shifted her handkerchief, there was no answer. Temptation to do so assailed her, but she remembered that she had been shown hospitality; Fay had been sheltered and given rest, so in return the least Wendy could do was to respect the wishes of her hostess.

"Here is the watch."

Wendy held out her hand. Another hand touched hers, and she was given the watch.

"Well, that wasn't fooling. She's blindfolded all right," Wendy told herself.

"Into the sitting-room, please!" said the voice.



"Understand? Not a word to anyone about what you see in this house!" Martha said warningly. The chums were amazed, wondering what strange secret this house held.

Groping Wendy obeyed, helped by Martha, and then, as if playing blind man's buff, found her way to a chair and sat down.

She heard whispering, and then Martha exclaimed:

"All right. Take the handkerchief off."

Wendy whipped hers off, blinked in the light, and then frowned. She, Jill, and Fay were alone in the room save for Martha.

"I give it up," she said, rising.

Martha closed the door from the far side, and then turned the key in the lock.

The sound of that turned key seemed to unnerve Fay.

"Oh, gracious! For goodness' sake," she gasped, "let's get out of here, do! I can't stand it!"

She tried to jump, hurt her ankle, and fell back.

"It's something queer, and I don't like it!" fumed Jill. "It isn't reasonable—unless they're hiding a wanted thief or escaped convict or something!"

Wendy laughed, and then suddenly stopped laughing.

"Oh!" she exclaimed.

"Oh, what?" said Jill.

"Nothing," mused Wendy. "Just an idea, that's all."

Then she wandered about the room, looking at the photographs, taking a deep interest in

them. Finally, as though satisfied, she turned back.

"Fay, Jill," she said urgently, "promise me one thing. However curious you feel, don't lift your bandages; don't look when Martha tells you not to."

Fay blinked at her, and Jill was equally perplexed.

"Whatever's biting you, Wendy?" said Fay. "Just as if we should cheat; and even if we did, as if it would matter."

"It would matter," said Wendy quickly, "because it so happens that we are the guest of someone thought to be dead!"

"Wha-a-at?" gasped Fay, and turned ashen colour. "Th-thought to be dead! Does she think she's dead? Who thinks she's dead? Doesn't anyone know?"

"Duffer! I mean, popularly supposed to be dead," said Wendy. "That's all. You can guess who it is."

"Oh, can we?" said Jill blankly. "Joan of Arc?"

"Boadicea?" asked Fay playfully.

But Wendy was serious.

"Don't you remember? We were talking about the woman who was disfigured in

the face—the woman who is blind—Gloria Wisdon?"

The door of the room was swung open and Martha glared in.

"Out of here, every one of you, you spies! You nasty little cheats. This is my thanks for giving you shelter is it? Get out!"

She flung wide the door, and pointed.

Wendy hesitated, then gathered her things and helped Fay.

"I'm sorry you heard that, Martha," she said.

"I dare say you are," said Martha fiercely.

"Now go and blab it everywhere, the secret the poor darling has been keeping all these years—all these years, and you come here spying. She wants to be thought dead—not living. And you come here! How did you know? You must have known before you came? Are you from the newspapers?" she ended fiercely.

Wendy calmed her.

"Just hikers," she said. "And we can forget easily enough. You were kind asking us in, and we shan't talk—shall we?" she asked her friends.

"No," said Fay huskily. "Of course not. As if anyone decent would."

"You'd better not if you have a heart in you, if you don't want the poor dearie to be

pestered with newspaper men and those cameras of theirs, and everything," said Martha.

Tears showed in her eyes. "It's the last kindness I'll do a passer-by, so it is," she said.

"Don't fear us. We shan't say a word," said Wendy, and turned to the door.

Fay was limping, and Jill put an arm round her, and under her arms, while Fay rested a hand on Wendy for support.

"Well—on our way children," sighed Wendy. "I only wish we could have brought happiness instead of pain!"

They had reached the door, but now a voice called them sharply, and at the head of the stairs there appeared a woman clothed entirely in black. She was slim and graceful, her charming appearance enhanced by the long frock and its slender tight-fitting sleeves.

"Wait!" she called.

Wendy, Fay, and Jill turned back. They looked at this woman, and their eyes were moist with pity. They tried not to let their eyes rove up to her face. But they all knew that the face was masked by a dark mask, such as is often worn at fancy dress dances.

"I cannot see you—but you can see me—and you shall!" said the woman fiercely. "You came to spy. Very well, there may as well be an end to all this pretence. Let everyone know how hideous I am now. And once I was beautiful. Except you Martha! You need not look—"

With a quick movement she lifted the mask from her face, and Wendy, despite herself, stared fixedly. She stared and then drew back, eyes rounded.

"Go," commanded the woman. "You have seen. Now go—go I say—"

Martha who had covered her face, now removed her hands, and stepped fiercely towards Wendy.

"Go," she snarled. But Wendy did not move. Her voice was tremulous, excited.

"Wait—wait—" she pleaded. "We must not go—not before Miss Wisdon knows the truth."

"The truth?" cried Martha.

"The truth!" said Wendy excitedly. "Tell me, has she always worn that mask—all these years?"

"Yes—yes—well?"

"Has anyone seen her face since the acci-

dent? Are you sure that it is still disfigured. I tell you it is not," cried Wendy. "You're wrong. Miss Wisdon does not know the truth because, unhappily, she's blind—and you do not know it because you have never looked."

Martha turned agape. "Take off your mask, my lovely," she cried to her mistress.

The woman on the stairs mechanically lifted the mask.

"Heaven be praised," cried Martha. "It's a miracle it is. Look at your face—look at it. Beautiful as ever it was! It's a miracle!"

"That is what the plastic surgeon told me at the time," muttered the woman on the staircase. "But I thought he lied to me, as you all lie to me. I thought—give me a mirror!"

Wendy, forgetting for the moment that Gloria Wisdon was blind, snatched a mirror from her rucksack, and sprang forward with it.

"Look!" she cried. "You are beautiful—"

Gloria Wisdon looked into the mirror, and saw a lovely reflection.

"You are right," she breathed. "You are right! The doctor did not lie. And my eyes—I can see—"

She stared at Wendy, blinked, covered her eyes, and then blinked again.

"I can see," she whispered. "Oh, it's a miracle. It was the shock of thinking I was disfigured that caused my blindness. Now the shock of knowing I am no longer hideous has given me back my eyes."

She walked down the stairs, hurled herself at Wendy, hugged and kissed her, then kissed Martha most passionately of all. Then she hugged Jill and Fay, whereat Fay gave a yelp. They had all forgotten the damaged ankle.

"Stay with me here to-night," Gloria Wisdon cried. "Stay as my guests and let us have a party. Then to-morrow with my eyes to see the lovely moors, the sky, the trees, the birds—oh, take me with you hiking. I am no longer young, but I could ask nothing better! Oh, say you will!"

And then, unnecessary though it seemed, the three smiling happy hikers said in one breath: "We will."

That evening Wendy, Fay, and Jill sat in the big lounge and listened, enthralled, to Gloria Wisdon's tales of old theatrical days. Now that she knew she was no longer disfigured, the former stage star thought of her days of success without bitterness.

Old Martha hovered about, still looking rather grim, but with a soft light in her eyes, and nodded and muttered as Miss Wisdon remembered various exciting incidents in her career; for Martha had been Miss Wisdon's dresser, and had stuck to her mistress through thick and thin.

"Wasn't it funny that we should see that plate of you back in the village to-day?" said Wendy.

"Yes," replied Jill. "And still more funny that we should stumble on this very house."

"If you hadn't done so," smiled Gloria Wisdon, "Martha and I would have remained here for years to come—perhaps until one or other of us died. But now everyone's happy."

"All except my ankle," said Fay, with a little grimace; for, although her foot was very much better, it still was too weak to stand on.

"And that will be better in the morning, so it will," said Martha.

And it was, too.

Next day the Happy-Go-Lucky Hikers and Miss Wisdon wandered over the rolling moors, drinking in the clean, fresh air. Never would the three girls forget the look of ecstasy on Gloria Wisdon's face as she shaded her eyes from the sun and stared away across the rolling land—far away to where the hot, misty sky blended with the purple hills.

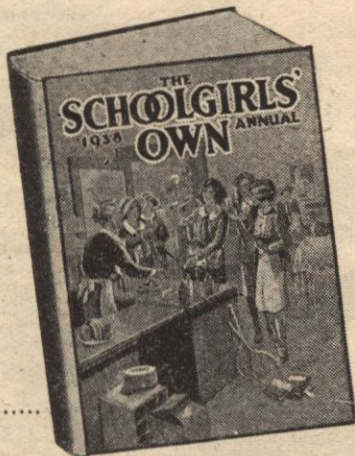
Martha prepared a wonderful lunch; and in the late afternoon Wendy, Fay, and Jill waved good-bye to two happy people and set off back for their workaday Midland town without a single care in the wide world.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

Another charming story of Wendy, Jill and Fay, will appear in next Friday's **GIRLS' CRYSTAL**. Don't miss it, whatever you do. Order your copy in advance.

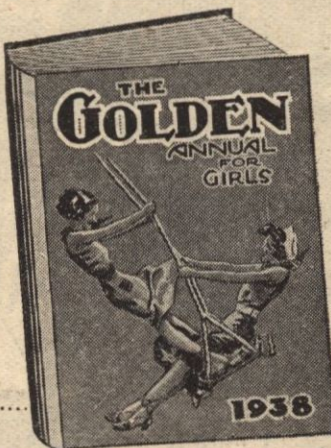
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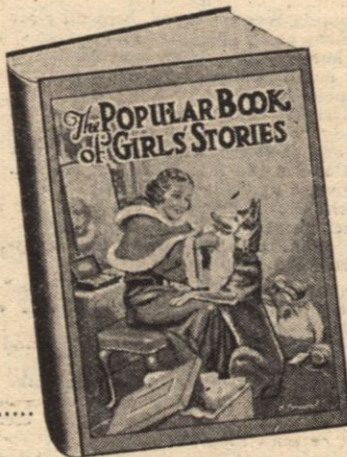
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AUNT AGATHA MET HER MATCH IN

SUSIE

By
ELISE
PROBYN



SUSIE MAKES A MISTAKE

"YOU'RE sure you don't mind staying in, Susie?"

"Of course I don't, dear!"

Cheerfully Susie Bowling smiled across the parlour of the little country cottage. The girl by the window, putting on her hat, turned and surveyed her gratefully.

"You are good, Sue!" she declared. "I don't know what I'd have done if you hadn't come for the week-end. As it is, you've cheered me up no end. I feel a different girl, though"—her lips quivered, and her soft grey eyes grew misty—"it's not much of a holiday for you."

"Rubbish! I'm enjoying myself no end, and I'm only too glad to be of use."

Susie's voice was hearty, and, crossing the room, she gave Mildred Drake an affectionate hug.

"Cheer up, dear!" she urged. "Your aunt's bound to help you. Even if she's got a stone for a heart, she couldn't be so cruel as to turn you away empty-handed."

"I hope you're right; but she's never answered my letters, and—"

Mildred's gentle voice died away. Her face became white as she thought of her troubles, and Susie's arm tightened its grip on her shoulders.

Her heart went out to the girl with whom she was spending the week-end. In the days when Mildred had, like herself, worked at Spollard's, Susie had always liked her, and she liked her more than ever now that she knew how bravely she had struggled against adversity.

Some months ago Mildred had had to give up her job at Spollard's because of her mother's health. Country air was essential, so the doctor had said. So the girl had taken this little cottage, and turned village dressmaker.

It had been a hard struggle to make ends meet, but Mildred had not complained, even though she had thought it mean of her aunt, who lived in the next village, to ignore their very existence.

But Aunt Agatha was hard and embittered. She had quarrelled with Mildred's mother when the latter had married, and for years the sisters had not spoken.

Though Aunt Agatha was comfortably off, Mildred would never have dreamed of asking

for help for herself. But recently her mother had become worse and was now in hospital.

In despair, Mildred had written to her aunt, but her letters had been ignored. Then had come a fresh blow. The woman who owned the cottage had threatened to turn the Drakes out of their little home.

"It's true there's two weeks' rent due!"

gulped Mildred. "But she says none's been paid for over three months, and I can't prove it's untrue. Mother always kept the rent-book. Now she's in hospital, and I can't find it."

Susie's face grew grim. What she had heard made her burn with indignation.

"Sounds as if they're trying to swindle you," she snapped, "taking advantage of the fact that your mum's in hospital! What's the landlady like, ducks?"

Mildred shook her head miserably.

"I don't know. I've never seen her. We always pay the rent to her agent."

"Well, never mind. If she does keep her threat and calls while you're out, I'll send her away with something to think over!" Susie gave her chum another comforting squeeze. "Off you go, and don't worry, love," she added. "Perhaps your letters to your aunt went astray. Anyway, she won't refuse to help her own sister when you tell her what's happened."

Silently Susie watched Mildred go down the trim little garden path, to make her way along the country lane. When a turn at last hid her from view, Susie turned away from the window with a worried frown.

Her thoughts were busy as she cleared away the dinner-things, and began to wash up. They turned to the cottage landlady.

"She must be mean!" she muttered. "Fancy trying to turn Mildred out while her mother's in hospital! Golly, but don't I hope she does

show up this afternoon! I'll tell her what I think of her!"

But time passed on, and no visitor called at Myrtle Cottage. Susie, never one to idle, busied herself with mending a basket of stockings. As she sat there by the window, a log crackling cheerfully in the old-fashioned range, the copper kettle sizzling on the hob, she thought what a peaceful, homely place this was.

Looking at the bronze masses of chrysanthemums out in the garden, admiring the tidy little lawn, Susie told herself that Mildred should have been perfectly happy here.

Then abruptly the noisy throb of an engine disturbed the stillness, and a ramshackle old car drew up outside the gate. An old chauffeur descended to open the rear door for the passenger who sat there.

Susie's lips tightened as she saw that it was a middle-aged woman who descended, a disagreeable woman, with hard eyes and a frosty expression. Dressed in rusty black, she had a bonnet perched on the top of her head, and in her hand was what looked like a small ledger.

She stopped for a moment to grumble to the driver; then, lips pursed, beady eyes narrowed, she sent the garden gate swinging back on its hinges, and came striding up the path.

Susie took a deep breath.

"This is her! There can be no mistaking her!" she told herself.

If this was Mildred's landlady, then Susie meant to give her a piece of her mind. Grimly she sat there, darning-needle still poised over the stocking in her hand.

Thump! There came a knock on the door. Almost instantly there followed another. The visitor plainly didn't expect to be kept waiting. But deliberately Susie remained seated. Thump! came again, and the door quivered; then a shrewish face appeared at the window.

"Anyone at home? Open the door at once! How dare you keep me waiting?"

Quietly Susie rose to her feet and crossed to the door. Opening it, she surveyed the short-tempered woman calmly.

"If you wish to see Mildred Drake, I'm afraid you're unlucky," she said. "She's gone out."

"Gone out!" The woman seemed to vibrate, and, fascinated, Susie watched her bonnet. It quivered and lurched like a ship in a storm. "Didn't she get my postcard?" she demanded.

Susie took another deep breath. So this was the landlady! Her postcard lay on the parlour table, and never had Susie seen such a cruel, harshly worded missive.

"Yes, she got your card," she agreed; "but she couldn't stay in. She asked me to wait in for you, and I'm glad she did! Mildred's too soft. She doesn't know how to handle hard people like you!"

"Girl!" The landlady seemed to choke. Her bonnet gave another agitated twitch. "How—how dare you!" she gasped.

"I do dare!" declared Susie. "Don't you know that Mildred's mother is in hospital?"

Susie's outburst seemed to have rendered the hatchet-faced woman speechless. All she could

Aunt Agatha was a grim old lady, but Susie felt sure that she could not refuse to help her own niece. The cheery girl from Spollard's did not realise that someone was poisoning Aunt Agatha's mind against her chum

manage was a nod, and Susie's eyes filled with scorn.

"Then you ought to be ashamed of yourself," she cried, "treating the poor dear like you've done! Why, it's abominable! It's—it's—"

Unable to think of a sufficiently forcible description, Susie lapsed into silence. The landlady's bonnet fluttered weakly; her face grew first purple, then white. Finally, she gathered her old coat together, and, almost trembling with rage, she found her voice.

"Never have I been so insulted!" she screeched. "Never! That—that girl must have put you up to this! But she will rue it—rue it bitterly! I'll never come here again!"

Susie grinned cheerfully.

"Never will be too soon," she retorted. "And if you think you're going to make Mildred leave the cottage you're wrong!"

But the landlady wasn't even listening. Muttering and glaring, she stamped her way back to her car. The chauffeur hurried forward, rug in hand; but she brushed him aside, clambered into the car unaided, and sank back on to the seat, her bonnet quivering.

Silently Susie watched her drive off; then, with a chuckle, she picked up her darning.

Presently she rose to lay the tea. It was time Mildred was back.

"Wonder how she got on?" she speculated, as she reached for the tea caddy. "Poor dear, I do hope her aunt was kind."

She measured out three teaspoonfuls, and was about to put the kettle on the fire to boil up, when she heard footsteps on the garden path.

Eagerly she turned to give a whoop as she saw Mildred come running towards the front door. A changed Mildred it was. There was a flush on her cheeks; an excited glint in her soft grey eyes.

Susie rushed across to the door, pulled it open, and breathlessly surveyed her chum. But before she could get a word out Mildred clutched her by the arm.

"Has she been?" she cried. "Oh, what did she say, Susie?"

Susie stared, bewildered, for a moment; then she chuckled.

"You mean the landlady? Oh, she came right enough, ducks! And I told her what I thought of her."

But Mildred shook her head.

"I'm not interested in her, Sue; it's Aunt Agatha I mean."

"Aunt Agatha?"

"Yes. Oh, don't say she hasn't been, after all! When I got over to Little Walden the cook said she'd just left. Very friendly the cook seemed, and she said that aunt was on her way to call on me."

"Call on you?" stuttered Susie, a horrible suspicion suddenly creeping over her. "Mildred, what is she like? Is she a tall woman with a face like a hatchet; beady eyes and a frostbitten mouth?"

Despite her anxiety, Mildred could not help smiling at Susie's forcible description, but she gave a nod.

"Yes, that's her!" she cried, and her eyes lit up. "Then she has been! Oh, thank goodness!"

Susie felt quite faint. The dreadful suspicion that had seized her had been confirmed. Weakly she sank down on to the nearest chair, and for a moment it was all she could do to nod.

"Yes, she came, ducks," she managed to get out at last, "but— Oh golly! I mistook her for your landlady!"

NOT WELCOME AT THE ELMS

"MISTOOK her for my landlady?" Her grey eyes puzzled, Mildred stared at Susie in utter bewilderment. With an effort Susie got a grip on herself and dully she explained what had happened.

Mildred gave a gasp of surprise; then, as she realised the significance of what Susie had done, her face went deathly white. She gave a moan of despair and flopped down on the sofa.

"She'll never forgive me—never!" she

faltered. "Oh, Susie, what have you done? Now she'll never help us!"

Into Susie's mind flashed the memory of Aunt Agatha's last ominous words:

"I'll never come here again—never!"

"Oh golly!" muttered Susie. "I've properly put my foot into it this time! If only I hadn't been so sure it was the landlady—"

Then abruptly Susie's face cleared, and she gave Mildred a comforting pat.

"I've got it, ducks!" she cried. "I'll go and explain to her. After all, she can't blame you for what I've done. She can kick me as much as she likes, but when she learns the truth she's bound to be reasonable."

So confident did she seem that, despite herself, Mildred's fears left her.

But Susie, though she said nothing of her doubts, was not relishing the idea of meeting Aunt Agatha again.

It took her nearly an hour to walk into Little Walden. She didn't have to inquire for the Elms—Aunt Agatha's house—for the white gate with the name painted on it stared her straight in the face before she reached the village.

Pushing it open, Susie strode up the carriage drive. Her eyes opened wide with surprise as the house came into view. It was a big, rambling mansion, ivy-covered, and fronted by a terraced lawn.

"My, but she must be rich!" Susie exclaimed. "Fancy living in a place like this while her own sister is ill and poor!"

Susie knocked at the imposing front door, which was opened by a prim-looking woman, with her black hair done up in a bun at the back.

"Well?" she asked curtly, folding her thin arms across her waistline.

Susie, guessing that this was Aunt Agatha's housekeeper-companion, gave the woman her most winsome smile.

"Please I would like to speak to Miss Baines for a moment," she said.

The housekeeper's beak-like nose gave another disdainful twitch.

"What name?" she asked.

"Bowling—Susie Bowling. But I'm afraid Miss Baines doesn't know me. You see, I've called on behalf of her niece, Mildred Drake."

Next moment Susie could have bitten her tongue out, for, on hearing Mildred's name mentioned, the housekeeper's sallow face took on a hard look.

"Indeed!" she said. "Well, I am afraid you have had your walk in vain! Miss Baines has given strict instructions that no one connected with—ah—with that person is to be admitted! She never wishes to see or hear of her niece again!"

"But—"

Susie started forward in dismay as the woman made to close the door.

"Just a minute, please!" she gasped. "If you'll just let me explain—"

"There is nothing to explain. Miss Baines has made up her mind!"

And slam! went the door right in Susie's face.

Helplessly she stood there and stared at the inoffensive front door. She wouldn't admit defeat. Somehow she would see Miss Baines—housekeeper or no housekeeper!

She left the porch, stepped back on to the gravel path, then abruptly rounded the corner of the house. She had remembered the cook. Mildred had said that she had seemed friendly enough.

"Perhaps she'll take a message in to Miss Baines," Susie told herself.

She hurried on down the path, but when she reached a pair of french windows the sound of voices made her pause. Curiously she looked into the room. It was furnished as a boudoir, and seated by the fire, turning over the pages of a catalogue, was a stiff, formidable figure. Aunt Agatha!

Miss Baines had turned to address her housekeeper as that woman came into the room.

"Was that Mr. Ickenstein, the antique dealer, Mrs. Binks?" she asked.

The housekeeper shook her head, folding her arms primly. Clearly her reply reached Susie:

"No, Miss Baines. But he telephoned just now. He thinks he's found the kind of grandfather-clock you were inquiring about. He wants to know if it would be convenient for

you to call at his shop in Marldon to-morrow afternoon—three o'clock, he suggested. The clock—a real Heiner—is in a cottage just outside Marldon."

Aunt Agatha nodded.

"Quite convenient, thank you, Mrs. Binks," she said. "But who was the caller just now? I'm sure I heard someone knock."

Susie, having no intention of eavesdropping, was about to move on, but some instinct made her hesitate. Again came the housekeeper's voice:

"Oh, only one of those wretched salesmen, ma'am! Someone trying to sell us a vacuum cleaner."

Susie gave a gasp. Incredulously she stared at the prim-looking housekeeper. Why had she lied? Why didn't she want her mistress to know that someone from Myrtle Cottage had called?

Susie couldn't guess the answer to that; but, as she realised that for some reason of her own the housekeeper had tricked her, an angry flush mounted her cheeks.

Impulsively her hand grasped the handle of the french door, and like a whirlwind she swept into the room.

"That's not true, ma'am!" Hot and indignant, she faced the startled Miss Baines. "It was I who called—not a salesman at all!"

Aunt Agatha glared at Susie. She hardly realised what she had said. She only knew that this was the girl who had dared to insult her. As she struggled for speech, the housekeeper rustled forward, her dark eyes gazing malevolently at Susie.

"I am sorry, ma'am!" she said, and her voice was as soft as buttermilk. "I oughtn't to have deceived you, but I wanted to save you from being annoyed! I guessed—"

"Quite right, Mrs. Binks—quite right!" Aunt Agatha cut her short. She rose to her feet and confronted Susie, a majestic, awe-inspiring figure. "Wretched girl," she said, "how dare you force yourself into my presence! Go at once!"

She pointed a quivering finger at the open french windows, but Susie did not budge. Somehow she must get Aunt Agatha to realise the truth.

"I'm sorry, ma'am!" she said. "I know it was cheeky of me to pop in here like this. But I had to come. I can't allow you to misjudge Mildred. You see, she wasn't to blame for— for what happened this afternoon."

"Indeed!"

Miss Baines raised forbidding eyebrows. Her hatchet face was grim and stubborn.

Desperately Susie rushed on. She apologised for what she had done; she tried to explain her mistake; she started to say what a nice girl Mildred was. But Miss Baines refused to listen. Quivering, she stood there, her eyes as hard as jet.

"Silence, girl!" she ordered. "I do not know your object in coming here, but you have had your walk in vain. Mildred isn't worthy of help! For months she and her mother have ignored my very existence—"

"But they haven't!" Susie stared in surprise. "Mildred's written to you several times!" she protested.

"Nonsense! I have received no letter—not a word. It was quite by chance I heard of my sister's illness. Out of the charity of my heart, I went to inquire as to her health, only to be insulted by you! It is enough! I refuse to hear more! The stories I have heard about her are plainly correct!"

"Stories! What stories?" asked Susie, and instinctively her eyes went to the housekeeper.

Suddenly she found herself wondering if that woman could have helped to turn Aunt Agatha's mind against her niece. The fact that she had refused to admit Susie and afterwards had fibbed about it was highly suspicious.

But Aunt Agatha did not reply. Frigidly she faced Susie.

"Even her landlady has had enough of her!" she went on.

"Her landlady is a cruel, heartless woman!" exclaimed Susie, astounded.

Aunt Agatha went purple.

"How dare you talk like that of a friend of my housekeeper's!" she exclaimed. "Mrs. Binks knows the owner of Myrtle Cottage. She will vouch that she is the kindest of women. Isn't that so, Mrs. Binks?"

The housekeeper inclined her head. "A dear soul—one of the best!" she agreed. "For months she has had no rent. And her only reward for such kindness has been insults. I hate to think ill of anyone, but when I think of that girl's ingratitude—"

She shook her head sadly and Susie nearly exploded. Why the housekeeper should tell such falsehoods was beyond her, but plain it was that it had been she who had poisoned Aunt Agatha's mind.

"You hear? So go now!" Commandingly Miss Baines raised a finger. "I refuse to listen to another word. Begone, or I shall telephone for the police and have you removed!"

"But, Miss Baines—"
Susie broke off helplessly, for without another word Aunt Agatha had turned and given her arm to the housekeeper. Together they swept out of the room, leaving Susie white-faced and dismayed.

Frowning, she stepped through the french windows, made her way down the carriage-drive. Though she was dismayed by her failure, yet her chief feeling was one of mystification.

How was it Aunt Agatha had received none of Mildred's letters? A startling suspicion occurred to Susie. She stopped with a gasp. What if the housekeeper had got hold of them and destroyed them. She certainly seemed anxious that Mildred should not win her aunt's friendship. But what object could she possibly have for such a mean action?

Susie shook her head and sighed. It was beyond her. Only one fact was plain. Not only had Mildred lost her aunt's help, but the probability was that soon she would be turned out of her cottage.

AUNT AGATHA LISTENS-IN!

"WHY, that's the estate agent for Mildred's cottage!"

Walking back through Little Walden's crooked High Street, Susie paused, her attention attracted by a little shop.

"Joseph Jenner, Estate Agent. Rents collected," it said on the window.

The shop had not yet closed for the night, and through the window Susie glimpsed a grey-haired little man, seated at a desk, telephone receiver clapped to his ear.

Susie came to a sudden resolution. If she had failed with Aunt Agatha, she might at least secure justice for Mildred with regard to her cottage.

As she lifted the latch and opened the door she heard the estate agent finish his call.

"Very well, Mrs. Binks! I will see to it immediately," he said, then replaced the receiver and swung round in his swivel chair, to stare inquiringly at his visitor. "What can I do for you, please?"

Susie took a step forward. "Do you look after the interests of Myrtle Cottage?" she asked. He nodded, and she tightened her lips. "Well," she said bluntly, "I represent the tenant—Miss Mildred Drake. I wish to speak with her landlady."

Mr. Jenner shook his head. "I am afraid that's impossible," he replied. "I deal with everything connected with Myrtle Cottage myself. But if you have come to intercede for your client—well, I am sorry." Again he shook his head. "I can hold out no hope for you. I have just received instructions from my client. She says that unless the back rent is paid by to-morrow night Miss Drake will be forcibly put out of the cottage."

Susie caught in her breath. But it was not this cruel ultimatum that had shocked her. Suddenly she had remembered what the estate agent had said when she had entered. He had been telephoning Miss Binks, Aunt Agatha's housekeeper.

An amazing suspicion flashed into Susie's mind, and swiftly she put it to the test.

"Look here," she said bluntly. "Isn't Mrs. Binks this mysterious client of yours?"

"Mrs. Binks? You—you mean the housekeeper up at the Elms? Why, my dear young lady, it's absurd!"

He tried to laugh off the suggestion, but Susie was not deceived. Her keen eyes had noticed the agitated start he had given. Now

she was positive that her suspicions were right. Almost in a flash Susie was seized with a daring idea. Her eyes grim and determined, she faced the agitated estate agent.

"I don't care tuppence who your client is—whether it's Mrs. Binks or someone else," she snapped, "but Miss Drake insists on seeing her to-morrow afternoon, at ten minutes to three. You understand—at ten minutes to three!"

Mr. Jenner licked his lips and fidgeted with his fountain-pen. Susie's commanding tone and determined manner had, for some reason, upset him.

"I'm afraid my client can't keep the appointment," he stammered, "but I myself shall be pleased to call."

"You'll stay where you are! It's the landlady herself Miss Drake wants to see. To-morrow, at ten-to-three, prompt—and, I warn you, she'd better be there!"

A grim nod she gave him, then, without another word, she turned and departed.

All the way back to Marldon, where her chum lived, Susie's brain was a-fire. It was a hazardous idea she had set in motion. If her suspicions were not correct, or if Miss Binks failed to come to Myrtle Cottage—

to three as Susie hurried up the road. Anxiously she increased her step. "I must hurry," she told herself. "I haven't too much time."

She did not head for Marldon itself, but strode briskly up the lane, to where a branch road forked off to the neighbouring village of Little Walden. It was down this road Aunt Agatha would have to pass in her car on her way to keep the appointment with Mr. Ickenstein, the local antique dealer.

Susie was banking on that, and all her plans depended on Aunt Agatha being on time.

At the turn of the road, barely a hundred yards from Myrtle Cottage, was a gateway, with a barn beyond. Sticking out of the hedge was a post, announcing that the barn and surrounding land was for sale.

It was so placed that passers-by could hardly fail to notice it, and Susie eyed it with satisfaction as she undid her parcel, to reveal a pot of paste and an arresting, hand-printed poster. On the placard appeared the words:

HEINER
GRANDFATHER CLOCK FOR SALE.
Inquire Within.



"Excuse me, but have you come to see the grandfather clock?" Aunt Agatha swung round as she heard the voice, and stared incredulously. For it was Susie who confronted her. "What are you doing here?" she gasped.

But Susie smothered the thought. "She'll come fast enough. That rabbit of an estate agent will see to that," she told herself. "And if she does come—"

She chuckled. For then all Mildred's troubles would be over. Susie's little scheme would see to that!

"BUT why must I see the landlady? What good will that do, Susie? Oh, I do wish you'd explain!"

It was the following day, and Mildred raised appealing hands as she faced Susie, who, humming quietly to herself, was putting on her hat and coat.

To look at Susie you'd have thought she had not a care in the world. Mildred could not understand it. She knew that Susie, the previous night, had told her not to worry, had assured her that soon everything would be all right.

"Now tidy up, dear, and then get ready to face your landlady," Susie said blithely. "I must go out, but I won't be long."

She gave Mildred's arm an affectionate squeeze, then, picking up the parcel that lay on the parlour table, she left the house.

The near-by church clock chimed a quarter

Swiftly Susie pasted the poster on the overhanging notice-board, then, clambering over the gate, she took up her position behind the hedge, anxiously to watch and wait.

AUNT AGATHA'S leathery features were creased into a smile of anticipation. There was an excited glint in her beady eyes as she sat stiffly back in her old limousine.

Rattling and creaking, it crept down the narrow country lane, for Aunt Agatha disliked going at speed.

Usually she drove along in fear and dread, but this afternoon she had other things to think about—grandfather-clocks, especially that rarity, a Heiner eight-day timepiece!

Grandfather-clocks were Aunt Agatha's one weakness. She collected them like some people do stamps or butterflies. Every room at the Elms was decorated with one, and to-day, if Ickenstein had not misled her, she would secure the prize of them all—a rare Heiner clock.

The honk of her chauffeur's klaxon made Miss Baines sit up. They were nearing the turning into Marldon. It must be near here that was situated the cottage where the prized Heiner was for sale.

An almost schoolgirlish flush on her cheeks, Aunt Agatha peered excitedly out of the window; and then suddenly she gave a gasp, for there just ahead was a notice-board, and it announced that a Heiner grandfather-clock was for sale.

Aunt Agatha trembled with a sudden fear. What if someone else chanced along and bought the clock before she could see Mr. Ickenstein!

Her black bonnet quivering, she leaned forward and rapped on the glass partition that separated her from the driver. The limousine came to a gradual stop, and, without waiting for her chauffeur to open the door for her, Aunt Agatha clambered out. Seeing the gateway, she made for it, swinging it open, then staring in bewilderment as she found herself confronted, not by a house, but only by a dilapidated barn.

"Excuse me, but have you come to see the grandfather-clock?"

At the sound of that girlish voice, Aunt Agatha swung round, then her eyes nearly popped out of her head. For it was Susie who confronted her.

Aunt Agatha's bead-embroidered bonnet jumped.

"What are you doing here?" she gasped.

Susie smiled sweetly.

"Waiting to show you the clock," she replied. "Come this way, please!"

For a moment Aunt Agatha hesitated. She wanted nothing to do with this insolent girl. She never wanted to see her again. And yet—

She swallowed hard. A genuine Heiner clock was too big a prize to lose. She must stifle her feelings.

"Very well," she said, and stiffly she followed Susie past the barn and along a footpath that led across the field beyond.

Presently a hedge came into sight, with the thatched roof of a cottage beyond.

Aunt Agatha stopped abruptly. She gave a surprised sniff.

"Why—why, that's Myrtle Cottage!" she exclaimed, and her beady eyes filled with suspicion. "Wretched girl, what does this mean? If this is a trick—"

"Of course, if you don't want to buy the clock you can turn back," she said. "But, I warn you, next time you call it may have been sold."

Aunt Agatha frowned. She fidgeted with her bulky handbag. She set her bonnet rocking

agitatedly. But her collecting mania made her stifle her suspicions.

"Very well, lead on," she said. "But I warn you, girl, if you are trying to deceive me—"

She finished with another of her forbidding nods, and, an ominous figure, she let Susie escort her through a break in the hedge and up the garden path.

From the cottage came the sound of voices raised in anger. Susie felt a thrill of relief run through her. She had timed things nicely. The landlady was still inside, and, judging by the noise, Mildred was playing her part well.

Clearly her voice came through the open window:

"You have tricked me, I tell you! You know that if I had the rent-book I could prove I don't owe you all that money!"

There followed a jeering laugh

"I don't care what you can prove, my girl! If you're not out of this house by to-night, you will be thrown out!"

Curious despite herself, Aunt Agatha strained her ears. It did not take her long to realise that it was Mildred's landlady who was in the room, and again came the woman's jeering laugh.

"Yes; it was I who turned your aunt against you!" she declared. "I don't mean you to come to the Elms! I've got a soft job there, and, once you're out of the way, that old fool will change her will, leaving me all her money!"

Susie gasped. The truth was out with a vengeance. She stole a look at Aunt Agatha. That woman's face was a study. Incredulously she looked through the window; then her bonnet quivered, and a horrified whisper escaped her lips.

"Why—why, it's Mrs. Binks!" she gasped.

Susie nodded.

"Yes, your housekeeper. It's she who owns this cottage. It's she who poisoned your mind against Mildred and her mother. It's she who's tried to turn them out of their home. I discovered the truth yesterday. That's why I tricked you into coming here—"

But Aunt Agatha wasn't listening. Her bonnet rocking like a ship in a tempest, her eyes ablaze, she was marching for the front door. With a bang, she flung it open and strode in.

Susie made no attempt to follow, but she heard every word that followed, and inwardly she hugged herself. What she had intended

to tell Mildred's landlady was nothing to what the outraged Aunt Agatha was telling her.

For five minutes Susie stood there; then the door opened again, and the tall, angular figure of Mrs. Binks slunk out. But no longer did she look prim. Her features were sallow. There was fear in her eyes, and, without even noticing Susie, she ran down the garden path, bolting as though for dear life.

Susie waited a minute longer, then softly she knocked at the door.

"May I come in?" she asked.

Without waiting for an answer, she opened the door, then paused. Both Aunt Agatha and Mildred were seated on the sofa. The tears were running down Mildred's face, but her eyes were shining—shining with a happiness she had hardly dared hope for. And Aunt Agatha's arm was around her quivering shoulders.

As Susie entered they both looked up, and, with a sudden gulp, Mildred leapt to her feet and hurled herself at Susie.

"Oh, Susie," she cried, "it's all been a horrible misunderstanding! Aunt never knew how poor we were. She was horrified when she learnt the truth, and—and—" Her arms tightened about Susie's neck. "Oh, how can I ever thank you?" she asked. "It's you who've brought us together!"

Susie blushed and smiled.

"Rubbish, ducks! It was just a bit of luck, that's all. But don't choke me, dear. Let go. I want to put the kettle on."

"Yes, and please hurry up about it! I badly need a cup of tea!"

The voice, autocratic as ever, came from the sofa, but there was a softer gleam in Aunt Agatha's beady eyes now, and it was with a smile that she watched Susie fill the kettle.

Susie smiled back. She knew Mildred's troubles were over. It might take the crusty owner of the Elms time to become what Susie regarded as really human, but—

"Mildred will win her round," Susie told herself; and delightedly she winked at the gleaming copper kettle. Her week-end in the country had certainly not been wasted!

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

Isn't Susie a dear? You'll be reading another delightful story featuring this lovable heroine in next Friday's **GIRLS' CRYSTAL**. Order your copy in advance.

THESE FOUR NUMBERS of the "SCHOOLGIRLS' OWN LIBRARY" are now on sale—price 4d. each. *Order yours to-day.*



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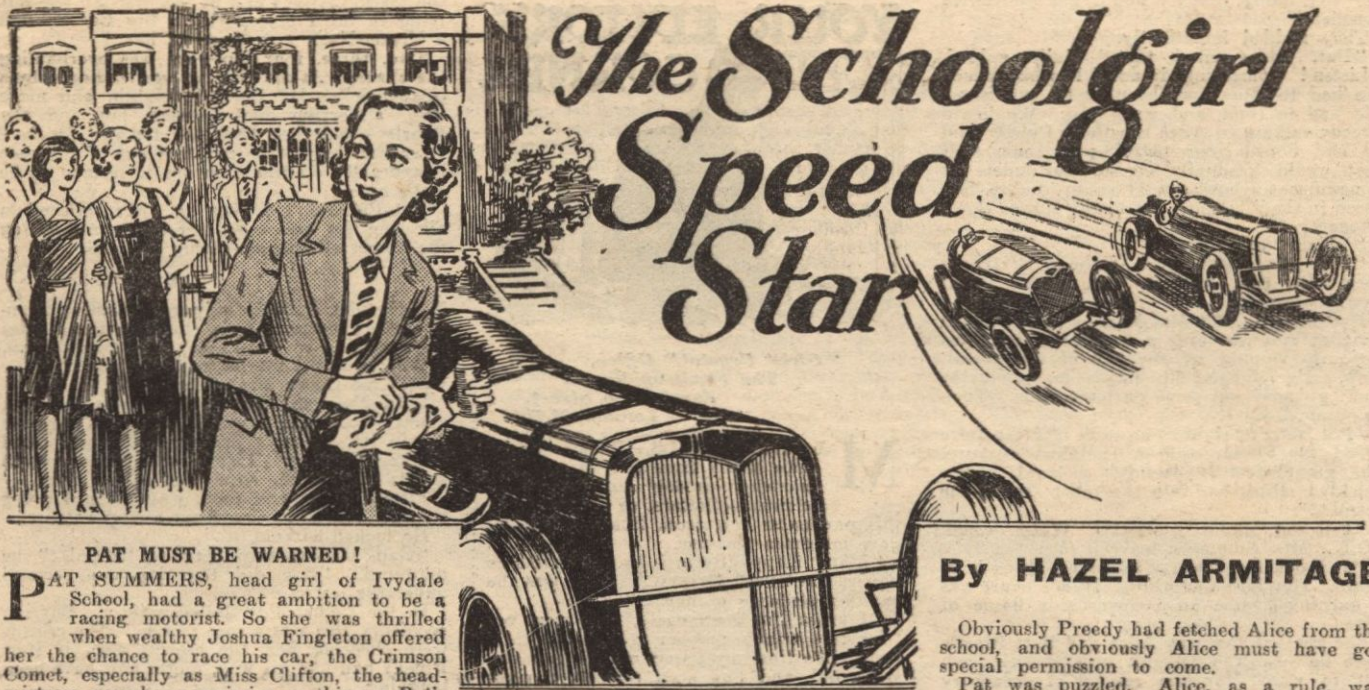
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By SHEILA AUSTIN



No. 602.—Only by winning fame on the tennis courts could Joan Seymour save her brother from arrest
By DORIS LESLIE



No. 603.—A grand story of the early adventures of famous and popular Betty Barton and Co. of Morcove School
By MARJORIE STANTON



The Schoolgirl Speed Star

By HAZEL ARMITAGE

PAT MUST BE WARNED!

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 eventually, after Pat had rescued Julie from almost certain death, the two became firm friends.

Pat won several races in the Crimson Comet; but things were difficult at the school, for Alice Smailes, who wanted to be head girl herself, turned most of the prefects against her.

Pat was anxious to win a race in Ivydale, for she needed the £50 prize to pay for a statue that had been smashed, as a result of Alice Smailes' trickery.

Bert Preedy, a rascally mechanic, doped the petrol in Pat's car. Julie and three other Fourth Formers heard of the plot to prevent the head girl from winning; but they were locked in the detention-room. How could they warn Pat of the danger?

ALL unconscious that the petrol in the tanks of the Crimson Comet had been doped with Bert Preedy's deadly concoction, Pat Summers drove on towards the Ivydale track.

Her face was animated, her eyes bright. The Comet, showing no signs yet of that dreadful lethargy which was destined to overtake it once the chemicals got working, purred smoothly and sweetly.

Pat felt buoyant and confident, and, remembering all that hung on the race, more fiercely determined than ever to win.

If there were one little shadow on the horizon of her happiness it was the thought of Julie, Grace, Tessa, and Thelma, at present slogging away in the junior detention-room at Ivydale School. Poor Julie & Co., who had earned that detention only because they had tried to help her!

Still, if she won the race even Julie & Co. would feel compensated.

She laughed again. The light of battle was in her eyes now; all those haunting fears and speculations which had so troubled her seemed to have disappeared completely.

Gaily she swept into the immense park of the Ivydale Stadium. With a wave of her hand to Jimmy Walsh and Jim Mace, her two faithful mechanics, she indicated that the Comet was ready to be taken on to the track.

Then she stared as another vehicle came

bowling into the park. A long bullet-shaped thing, which looked strangely out of place here.

"Goodness, what's this? A new sort of caravan?" Pat asked laughingly as the driver's door opened and Malcolm Cobb, the president of the Driver's Club, emerged.

Cobb laughed. "Hit it first time," he admitted. "One of my own invention. Caravan and motor combined—see! I've brought it along to give it a try-out on the track after the race. Like to look round it, Pat?"

Pat, reflecting that she still had half an hour before the start of the race, was all eagerness.

She was charmed. Certainly it was something new in the motor world. Compact, neat, pretty, and powerful, with beds that folded up against the walls, and rubber covered floors which were calculated to eliminate all vibration.

Cobb was as proud of it as a small boy with his first steam-engine.

"Beauty, isn't it?" he asked. "And speedy, too. I reckon when she's fully loaded she'll have a cruising speed of seventy. Like to drive her, Pat?"

Pat's eyes gleamed. "Wouldn't I just!" she cried.

"Right-ho! Then what about you giving her the trial after the race instead of me?" he asked. "If anybody can get the last ounce out of her, it's you, Pat, and, anyway, I'm rather anxious to do my own timing."

"Thanks so much for the offer, Mr. Cobb. But, I say—" Pat added, and staring through one of the windows of the caravan suddenly paused.

For into the park had suddenly run another car—not a racer this time, but a large Rolls saloon. And from it emerged two people—Bert Preedy and Alice Smailes.

How sporting it was of Julie and Co. to come to the track to warn Pat of the danger that threatened her car. If Pat did not get them back to school before they were missed, the Fourth Formers would be expelled.

Obviously Preedy had fetched Alice from the school, and obviously Alice must have got special permission to come.

Pat was puzzled. Alice, as a rule, was not interested in motor-racing, though she could drive a car herself.

Something strange in that, considering that Alice only professed to know Bert slightly. Something more than strange when Pat remembered how the association of these two in the past had always heralded some fresh crisis for herself.

They both seemed mightily pleased about something, she thought, and decidedly she did not like that half-triumphant grin which lurked around the corners of Alice Smailes' lips. It rather looked as if they were planning some fresh mischief.

Yet what mischief could they be planning—against her? The Comet was already in the pits—certainly, if it were Preedy's intention to tamper with that, he had arrived too late.

Pat shrugged. She was becoming unduly suspicious, she told herself, a thought which was confirmed when she saw Bert and Alice, instead of turning towards the pits, make their way towards the spectators' stands.

"Well, Pat, what about getting down to the start?" came Malcolm Cobb's voice. "Your race is due in ten minutes, and—well, Pat, you know what I wish you," he added softly. "All the very best, my dear!"

Pat blushed. She thanked him. The race—yes! The race on which depended the fifty pounds first prize and the fulfilment of her bargain with Mr. Ricco!

In the dressing-room she changed, and trotted off to the starter's point. Jimmy Mace and Jim Walsh were there, all glowing enthusiasm.

"Oh, Miss Summers, the Comet's marvellous," Jim Mace told her. "If you don't win this race—well, Jimmy's going to eat his hat and I my boots! Five minutes to go," he added briskly. "Anything I can get you, Miss Summers?"

"No thanks," Pat said, and beamed again. How beautiful, how marvellous the Comet looked, she thought!

She adjusted her goggles and patted her hair into place. The other cars were lining up now. She flung one leg over the Comet's low side into the cockpit. And then:

"Pat, Pat, Pat!"

Pat jerked round with a start. The start became a jump as she saw the four breathless, red-faced schoolgirls who were running towards her, Julie Fingleton in the lead. Julie flung up a desperate arm.

"Pat—don't go, Pat! Your petrol—"

"But—" Pat blinked. She looked from the fiery, flushed face of Julie to Grace Campbell. From Grace to Tessa Reeve, from Tessa to Thelma Wayne. "But you're in detention," she cried out. "What on earth

are you doing here? You'll get yourselves expelled!"

They nodded impatiently.
"Pat, never mind that," Julie gulped.
"Listen! Something dreadful has happened! We had to come—expulsion or no expulsion! We had to come and warn you. We heard Preedy talking to Alice Smailes. Preedy said he had doped your petrol with some stuff that would gradually choke your inlets or something—anyhow, would cause you to lose speed in the race until you finally slowed down altogether!"

"What?" cried Pat.
"Pat, it's true!" Grace stuttered. "If you race with that stuff in your tanks, you'll lose!"

Pat blinked. But Jim Mace, who had heard all that and was ever a man of action, was furiously ripping off the cap of the petrol-tank. He plunged his finger in, smelt the stuff, gingerly put some on his tongue. Then he jumped.

"Pat, they're right!" he said. "I can taste it. I know this stuff—a chemical mixture. Oh, great Scott! Jimmy, a hand here—quickly! Rush her into the pits! Drain the petrol!"

"Fill up again!" Jimmy Walsh cried.

"O.K., Miss Summers, leave it to us!" Pat shook her head. She stared at the girls again. Her face was white. In her heart was a burning anger, an ungovernable flame of rage.

She guessed now why Alice and Bert Preedy were here—not to attempt treachery, indeed, but to watch for the results of treachery already perpetrated!

Still, strangely enough, in that moment Pat was not thinking so much of Alice, as the plight of her four loyal chums.

"And you broke detention?" she asked.

"Pat, what else could we do?" Julie asked.
"We—we had to warn you! Besides, it's all right," she added eagerly. "Miss Wright will never know. She locked us in the Form-room and she's gone out for the afternoon."

"Then how the dickens did you get out?" Pat wanted to know.

"Well, we got through the window, you know—at least, I got through the window," Julie said. "Then I nipped back and unlocked the door and let Grace & Co. out, locking the door again on the outside. We were lucky, too!" she added. "Just in time to catch the fast train here!"

"And you know, I suppose," Pat asked, "that there's not another train back for two hours?"

Four faces fell.
"Oh, my hat, we—we hadn't thought of that!"

"Which means," Pat said, "that you can't possibly hope to reach the school before Miss Wright gets back!"

Julie & Co. looked at each other. The looks expressed dismay—but not repentance. Julie shrugged.

"Well, never mind," she said. "We'll just have to face the music, that's all. Anyway, it was worth it. And, anyway," she added with her old recklessness, "now we're here we can jolly well stop and see the race. Don't worry about us, Pat. You go in and win—and good luck!" Julie added eagerly. "Here's your car, Pat!"

Pat gulped. There was nothing she could do then, anyway. But despite Julie's attitude, she was worried. She knew Miss Wright's temperament. She knew Miss Wright was not the sort of woman to make idle threats, and if Julie & Co. did not get back in time—well, the fat would be in the fire with a vengeance!

No time to speculate, to wonder. The starter was already running his eyes along the row of cars. Jim Mace and Jimmy Walsh breathlessly were rushing back into the pits, hauling Julie & Co. off with them.

There was a hush, then a cry. The starter's flag dropped.

They were off—with a thunderous series of explosions.

There was going to be no mistake about this race, Pat told herself! She had got to win, and was going to win, and to win meant going all out from the very start. Her debt to Mr. Ricco, her loyalty to the school, her debt now towards Julie & Co., all urged that upon her.

Pat tensed. Like a rocket she roared down

YOUR EDITOR'S CORNER



"Girls' Crystal" Office,
The Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street,
London, E.C.A.

MY DEAR GIRLS,—I had such a nice letter from one of you this morning—among lots of other charming letters, of course! But this particular one, from Rosemary Miles, gave me extra pleasure.

"Many Happy Returns to my favourite paper, the GIRLS' CRYSTAL." That was the opening sentence of her letter.

"I know I'm a bit early," she went on, "for this week's number is 102, but in a fortnight's time my paper will be just two years old—and I've been reading it right from No. 1."

Clever Rosemary to realise that 104 weeks of publication is twice fifty-two, the number of weeks in one year! Thank you for the good wishes for the CRYSTAL's birthday, Rosemary.

She had lots of other nice things to say as well, but then, so had you all in your letters.

LETTER-TIME IN THE OFFICE

Mr. Postman, you know, comes about tea-time, which is three o'clock in the office. So you can guess that this is the brightest moment of my busy day. I light a cigarette and lean back in my chair and forget all about work while I read every one of your delightful letters.

And they're a help to me, you know—as well as a pleasure. For I love to hear all about yourselves, of course—of your hobbies and school and family. But you generally tell me which type of story you like best as well. And even if I'm not always able to grant every story-request, your suggestions do help me when planning new story programmes.

So many thanks to you all, my readers!

NEXT WEEK'S STORIES

Now I'll tell you what I have in store for you in next Friday's GIRLS' CRYSTAL—the second birthday number.

"THE MYSTERY OF HOLLYHOCK COTTAGE" is the title of next Friday's splendid mystery and detective story, featuring Noel Raymond. It's a tale you'll love from the very opening line—and in it you'll meet little Mickey Wilson, a lovable young schoolgirl, who thinks Noel is quite the most wonderful man she has ever met. And no wonder—for it is thanks to Noel that the mystery which had been worrying Mickey and threatening to bring unhappiness to her mother is solved.

"WHEN SUSIE KEPT HOUSE" is another of Elise Probyn's splendid stories featuring Susie Bowling. You'll thoroughly enjoy reading how Susie reforms two plump and lazy lads who expect to be waited on hand and foot by their sister.

"The Happy-Go-Lucky Hikers" will feature in another complete story, and our three serials will continue as entrancingly as ever.

I shall very soon be able to give you some hints about new stories that are on the way. Watch my corner, won't you?

Your sincere friend,

YOUR EDITOR

the track. At the end of the first lap she was lying in third place, with a big Bentley and a Frazer-Nash just ahead of her.

Two, three, four laps—she was overhauling the Frazer. At the fifth lap was leading it by a clear five yards. Seventh, eighth, and ninth laps, a terrific duel between her and the Bentley—and then bad luck for the Bentley! A sudden burst tyre put him out of the race temporarily. From then on, it seemed to be Pat's race.

But Pat didn't slacken up. She believed in allowing for accidents. On she went, letting the Comet all out, increasing her lead.

IN the pits, Julie & Co. were screaming themselves hoarse. In the stand Bert and Alice were looking at each other with blank faces.

What was the matter with the dope? Why wasn't the Comet slackening speed?

From the tenth lap on, there was no doubt about whose race it was. There was only one car in it. Preedy's face became blacker and blacker with fury. Hatred and jealousy made sparks burn in the corners of Alice's eyes.

Fifteenth lap, and there was Pat still going strong. Preedy dragged out a stop-watch.

He looked amazed.
"Gad, she's nearly breaking records!" he muttered. "She did that lap two seconds under the last one!"

In the Comet Pat smiled grimly. Barring accidents, this was a sure victory. The crowds were cheering her, the crowds who, if Bert Preedy had had his way, might now have been laughing.

In the pits, Julie & Co., too hoarse to shout any more, were waving their arms, almost overcome with excitement.

Nineteenth lap—twentieth, the Comet going as sweetly, as smoothly, as tirelessly as ever.

The last lap. Pat's heart beat with exultation. Now, barring the most dreadful luck, she—

But there was no dreadful luck this time. Fate surely was smiling on Pat that afternoon. With almost two laps in hand, she zoomed past the starter's box; the Bentley, after a plucky recovery during the time wasted in the pits while its wheel was being replaced by a spare, coming into second place behind her.

She had won! The fifty pounds was hers!

Outside the pits she stopped. Julie & Co., frantic with excitement, almost mobbed her.

"Oh, goodness! Oh, Pat, what a race!"

"You just walked away—"

"Pat, you've got the fifty pounds!"

Pat had! It was handed to her five minutes later by the smiling president of the track.

But Pat was now not thinking of the fifty pounds. She was thinking of Julie & Co. Julie & Co. had risked so much for her that she could not possibly let them down in return. Could she take them on the Comet?

That was impossible. She could squeeze one of them in—only one.

If she could borrow another car—

And then suddenly she saw a figure squeezing its way through the crowd—the figure of Alice Smailes. Too late, she remembered the delinquent Julie & Co. who were surging around her.

"Scoot!" she gasped out.

But it was no good. Alice was before her, her eyes burning with fury.

"All right! Don't worry!" she snapped.

"I've seen 'em, Pat Summers! Supposed to be in detention—eh? And yet you're here! What do you mean by breaking detention?"

Julie faced her scornfully.

"You ought to know!" she cried.

"I?"

"Yes, you! We heard what Bert Preedy said to you! We had to warn Pat. That's why we came here."

"You—you—" She choked. "You dare hint that I—" She clenched her fists. "If this is something else you're trying to blame me for, Julie Fingleton, I warn you that you are going too far! I came here with Bert Preedy—yes; but I only came because Bert and I are friends. In any case," she added vindictively, "that doesn't excuse you! You've broken detention, and breaking detention means expulsion! And if Pat's not going to report it, I am! Wait till you get back!"

"Here, I say—" Pat cried.

But Alice, with a venomous look at the four,

was already hurrying away. They saw her climbing into the Rolls-Royce; saw the car glide off.

Julie's face turned white. "Well, that's finished it!" she said, with a groan. "I'm sorry, kids, I got you into this! I suppose it means we're all booked for the throw-out! Pat, what's the matter?" she cried, as Pat, with sudden feverishness, grasped her arm.

"Come on!" she gasped. "I've an idea. If we can only get back to the school before Alice, we might be able to save trouble yet."

"But how are we going to get back?" "How?" Pat smiled grimly. "See that caravan over there? Get into it! Now, quickly," she cried, "while I go and find Mr. Cobb! Hurry!"

"But—" "Oh, please don't argue!" And while the four bewildered juniors stared and set off towards the caravan, Pat, desperately looking around, saw Malcolm Cobb standing among a group of mechanics and drivers. Jimmy Walsh was showing him something in a can.

"This is some of the petrol we took out of the Comet, Mr. Cobb," he said. "It's doped, sure enough. I reckon— Oh, here you are, Miss Summers! I say—"

"Please, Jimmy, see me later!" Pat begged. "Mr. Cobb, can I have a word with you—at once?"

"Why, sure, Pat!" Malcolm Cobb agreed, with a curious glance.

"Will you do me a favour—a great, big favour?" Pat gulped out. "Will you lend me your caravan for two hours?"

"But—" "If you don't, it may mean that four jolly nice schoolgirls will get expelled, Julie Fingleton among them!"

"I see!" He nodded slowly. "All right, Pat! Take it. And, whatever it is, good luck!" he breathed. "I'll wait on the track for you."

And Pat, with a breathless "Thank you!" flew. In another minute Malcolm Cobb's new high-powered caravan was on the road, bowling towards Ivydale with a speed that would have astonished even its inventor.

A BLOW FOR ALICE

GOOD enough! Alice isn't back yet!" Pat chuckled. "Now, careful! Don't let anyone see you. Nip into the classroom. I'll come up and lock the door on the outside."

"Oh, Pat—" "Smartly, now!" Pat rapped. Julie & Co. grinned as they jumped out of the new caravan which had come to rest in front of Pat's garage.

Fortunately for them, very few girls were about at this time.

Pat, with a smile at them as they ran off, backed the caravan into her own shed, shutting the door upon it. Leisurely she sauntered towards the school.

There, quickly rushing up to the Fourth Form classroom, she turned the key in the lock, first peeping in to see that the truants were at their desks. Then leisurely she strolled out again, and, reaching the quad just in time to see Alice Smailes, looking excited and dishevelled, talking to Miss Wright, who had just pedalled in from the road outside on her bicycle.

She heard Miss Wright's words. "And you tell me, Alice, that they have broken detention—they have dared?" she cried.

"I tell you they have," Alice replied—"a fact which you can prove for yourself, Miss Wright. They can't possibly have got back from the track yet. You'll find the classroom empty."

"I see!" And then Miss Wright looked up as Pat smilingly came towards them—as Alice, in goggle-eyed surprise, stared at her. "Oh, Patricia," she said, "I want you! Alice here reports that Julie Fingleton, Grace Campbell, Tessa Reeve, and Thelma Wayne have broken detention. You will come with me to the detention-room!"

Pat's eyes opened in innocent surprise.

"Oh, but Miss Wright, how could they? Didn't you lock them in?"

"I did," Miss Wright agreed. She stopped, struck by a thought. "Yes, Alice; that is a point. Since you know so much about this business, how did they manage to get out of the detention-room?"

"I don't know," Alice said; "but they did get out. I tell you I saw them on the Ivydale Racing Track! Pat must have let them out!" she added vindictively.

"Nonsense!" Miss Wright said sharply. "I myself saw Patricia go off in her racing motor-car. She went at least half an hour before I went myself. Julie and her friends were not with Patricia then. Most certainly Patricia could not have got back and released them without my knowledge. I do think, Alice," she said, somewhat severely, "that you allow your prejudices to run away with you at times! But we will soon see," she added. "According to your statement, Alice, the girls could not possibly have got back here in time to reoccupy their places in the detention-room—"



"Hurry!" Pat said to the juniors. "Nip back into the classroom and I'll come up and lock the door on the outside." Julie and Co. grinned as they stepped out of the wonder caravan. They had got back to school before Alice Smailes after all!

"Unless," Alice sneered, "Patricia herself brought them back in the Comet!"

Miss Wright's eyes showed her disapproval. "If," she said, rather biting, "you will pause to reflect a moment, Alice, your own common sense would tell you that Patricia could not possibly have brought four full-grown girls back in her racing motor-car. There is hardly room for one passenger, never mind four! But, come!"

Alice, with a scowl, turned red. Pat still smiled gently. Miss Wright, considerably annoyed now, made her way into the school, Pat and Alice following—Alice sulkily slouching behind.

The detention-room was reached. Miss Wright turned the key in the door and threw it open. Alice almost jumped at sight of the four demure faces which looked up from their work.

Miss Wright paused, her lips came together. "Girls!" she said.

"Yes, Miss Wright?" "Stand up, please. Julie, I address myself to you. Have any of you been out this afternoon?"

Julie's stare of surprised wonder was really magnificent.

"Oh, Miss Wright, did you intend us to go out?"

"Sit down!" Miss Wright snapped. "I most certainly did not! Well, Alice, I think," she

added stiffly, "that this effectively disposes of your ridiculous argument. Obviously these girls could not have been in two places at once—just as obviously they could not have got out of this classroom without outside assistance."

Alice's face flamed. "But I tell you—" she hooted. Miss Wright's eyes flashed. "Thank you! That will do!" she said coldly. "The matter is finished with as far as I am concerned!"

"Yes, Alice, I don't think I'd carry on with it any further if I were you," Pat said sweetly.

Alice quivered. She was in a really terrible fury then. Once again Pat had beaten her. Once again, thanks to Pat, she was cheated of her revenge; humiliated, made to feel inferior; that great ambition of wresting Pat's captaincy was as far off as ever!

The race which she had gone to laugh at had ended in a glorious victory for Pat. The disaster which she had so desperately tried to bring about had been circumvented by these

little hypocrites! Hardly likely in that moment that Alice could control herself.

"All right!" she said between her teeth. "If you won't believe me, Miss Wright, perhaps Miss Clifton will!"

"Alice!" Miss Wright quivered. "I demand to see Miss Clifton!"

"You know that Miss Clifton is not well—" "All the same, I demand to see her!"

"Very well!" Miss Wright's lips came together. "In that case," she said, "you shall see her. You will come with me—now! And I shall report you, Alice, for insolence. Come!" she added. "You girls may dismiss. Patricia, I do not think I shall require you. You may go, too!"

"Thank you," Pat said with a smile; and while Julie & Co., winking at her, stood up, she flew back to the school garage.

THE GOVERNOR'S WARNING

THANKS, Pat, that's all I wanted to know," Malcolm Cobb said with satisfaction. "You certainly put the machine through her paces, and you drove magnificently. Any time I can ever do anything for you, just let me know."

Pat laughed. It was an hour later. She had just come off the track at Ivydale after

giving the pleased president's new caravan its trial run.

Mr. Cobb nodded his friendliest nod and strode off. Pat, feeling rather breathless after the trial—for though the caravan was a powerful contraption, it had required a great deal of expert handling round the bends at sixty-five miles an hour—went into her dressing-room to change. It was as she came out that Jimmy Walsh accosted her.

Jimmy's brow was dark. "Dirty work," he said briefly. "I've analysed the petrol that was put into your tank, Miss Summers. It was doped right enough—with some stuff which takes a long time to get working. If you'd carried on with the juice you had, you'd have probably come to a full stop about lap ten."

Pat's lips came together. "There was no mistake about it, then?" "None at all," said Jimmy angrily. "The kids were right! I'm going to report to the committee—but whether they'll be able to do anything I don't know. Preedy's artful. Apart from what your little friends can say, there's no evidence against him—and, of course, he'd just deny everything. All the same, watch him—and watch that girl Smailes he goes about with. They're up to no good as far as you're concerned, Miss Summers!"

Pat nodded. She hardly needed telling that. "And meantime," Jim said grimly, "if I can get just the slightest thing on Mr. Preedy, his number's up!"

Pat smiled. Watch Preedy she would, and in future she'd watch Alice Smailes.

She stepped into the Comet, and in a moment all uneasiness was banished from her mind as she fingered the beloved wheel.

Smoothly and easily the Comet purred off back to Ivydale School. In the village Pat stopped—at the post office to send off her fifty pounds cheque to Mr. Ricco.

Well, that was over, she thought, with a sigh of relief. Now she could settle down to her school work again and prepare for the next big event—the race on Saturday at the Pulford Stadium. If she won that—

Ah, then— If she won that she would have fulfilled Joshua Fingleton's conditions, and that would qualify to race the Comet in the greatest event of them all—the Grand Prix in London!

Humming a tune, she drove back to the school. Outside the garage she dismounted. She was preparing to open the door to house the Comet for the night when a flying figure came pelting across the ground. It was Lena Grange.

"Pat!" she gasped.

"Hallo!" Pat cried, turning.

"Pat—Miss Clifton! She—she's had a stroke, or heart attack, or something!" Lena gasped. "There was an awful row in her study with Alice Smailes and Miss Wright, and in the middle of it Sir George Fall, the governor, walked in. I don't know rightly what happened yet, but Miss Clifton is in a bad way. Will you go and fetch the doctor?"

"Why, yes, of course!" Pat cried, and in a flash was back in the car.

Like a streak she was off through the gates. It took her exactly five minutes to reach Ivydale. Dr. Grantham was just having his dinner. Breathlessly Pat bundled him into the car, and at a speed which made that mild-mannered little gentleman gasp, hurtled him towards Ivydale.

Hastily he was shown into the room where Miss Clifton, deathly white, lay stretched out upon the settee.

Sir George was there. His lips came together as he saw Pat.

"Thank you!" he said. "Er—doctor, carry on! Patricia," he added, "I want to speak to you—at once! Come outside!"

He went outside, and Pat followed him as he led the way towards Miss Clifton's study. He did not invite her to sit down.

"This—this trouble," he said, waving a vague arm, "has been brought about through the internal strife in this school, Patricia. Miss Clifton, though a very brilliant scholar, is a nervous woman, and the strain of recent events has been too much for her. The trouble between yourself and the prefects has not helped. Patricia," he added solemnly, "I think I warned you last time I was here that if you failed speedily to restore harmony among your prefects I should have to consider making changes."

Pat bit her lip.

"Yes."

"You have not obeyed that order. No school," Sir George went on, "can hope to maintain discipline when its prefects are at war with each other. The duty of a head girl is to be respected throughout the school, but still more must she be respected by those girls who are her intimate helpers. If this collapse of Miss Clifton's means that she will be forced to abandon her duties for a time, then I shall have to instal a new headmistress, Patricia, and in installing a new headmistress I shall have to make changes. Those changes," he went on heavily, "will begin with the re-organising of the prefect system as it exists, and will probably call for your resignation!" Pat stiffened.

"Yes, Sir George," she said. "Is that all, sir?"

"That is all!" he said curtly. "Meantime, carry on."

Pat went. But she went bewildered and harassed all at once. Her worry was by no means minimised when, later, the ambulance arrived to take Miss Clifton away to hospital, rumour saying that it would be weeks, perhaps months, before she returned to the school again.

While the whole school wondered and speculated upon the outcome of this sudden crisis, Pat, in a last desperate endeavour to get some understanding with her rebel prefects, called a meeting.

As before, only one turned up—faithful Lena; the others, led by Alice, still declaring themselves on strike, refusing to attend.

To-morrow came—with it rumour of a new headmistress, a Miss Sharples, who was on her way from the Continent to take up the appointment.

Thursday came, with Miss Wright, as senior mistress, temporarily filling the gap. Speculation was rife. A spirit of uneasiness, too.

Who was the new headmistress? Some said that Miss Sharples had been headmistress of some strict establishment in France, run almost on military lines. There were those who said that she was a harsh disciplinarian, who believed in plenty of punishments.

Only one girl in the school seemed tranquil and at ease. Only one girl knew the truth. That was Alice Smailes.

And Alice was immensely satisfied.

"For," she told Amy Hemmingway, on the Friday before Pat's race on Saturday, "I do happen to know Miss Emily Sharples. In fact," Alice said, "it may come as a surprise to you to know that when I was a mere kid this same Miss Sharples was my governess. She left us to take up an appointment in a Continental school, and that, apparently, is where she is coming from now. But she's a Tartar! She's mustard! And," Alice said, with a sly, slow smile, "she's very fond of me. I think I see in our new Head a friend in need! Miss Sharples won't like Patricia, in any case. Once I've had a gentle chat with her, it wouldn't surprise me, you know, if our dear juniors' idol doesn't topple to a swift and very complete downfall!"

What troubled waters Pat is in now! How will she cope with these new worries? Don't miss next Friday's dramatic chapters of this fine serial.

"The fever's left him, and, by the look of him, he seems hungry. That's a good sign, Miss Graham." He smiled. "I should give him a good breakfast, but only liquid, of course. I suggest some soup."

"And—and what about the show to-morrow?" asked Kitty. "Do you think it'll be safe to take him?"

The vet rubbed his chin, and he gave Remus another thorough examination before he answered. Then, to Kitty's relief, he smiled.

"I don't think he'll take any harm, providing, of course, the weather's warm," he said. "Yes; I think you can safely take him, Miss Graham, though I'm afraid this chill hasn't improved his chances. His coat's lost a little of its gloss."

But Kitty soon put that right. A dry shampoo worked wonders, and by the afternoon Remus had so far recovered that she ventured to take him out into the garden for a short scamper.

Remus thoroughly enjoyed playing in the grounds of the abbey with Pogo, who had also quite recovered from his terrifying experiences, and was as frisky as a puppy.

That evening Kitty and Bridget discussed the retriever's chances over supper.

"I do hope that wretched cold won't return, Bridget," sighed Kitty.

"Sure, and he'll be as right as rain, me darlint," laughed the Irish girl. "I feel it in my bones—he's going to sweep the board.

KENNEL-MAID AT PHANTOM ABBEY

(Continued from page 8.)

And when he does, I'll fix up a celebration tea like the Mayor of Dublin's Christmas banquet!"

Next morning, however, when the taxi arrived to take him to the county show, Kitty took every precaution. She had made a coat for him out of an old blanket, and, much to his secret disgust, she insisted that he should wear it.

She got to the town hall, where the show was to be held, very early, for she wanted to pick a warm and draught-free box for her pet. She had just made him comfortable when she heard footsteps behind her, and a man's voice:

"She's turned up, then! Confound it, but I thought that dog would be too ill to enter!"

Realising that the speaker was talking about her, Kitty turned her head, but she was just too late to catch sight of the two men who had crossed the hall. They had disappeared into an ante-room, and she only saw the door swing to behind them.

For a moment Kitty stood there, then impulsively she crossed to the door and strained her

ears. She didn't like eavesdropping, but it had occurred to her that one of the men might be her unknown enemy.

Faintly their voices reached her. A man who spoke with hearty gruffness was speaking, and she heard him give a laugh of contempt.

"My dear fellow, you need have no fear at all. Remus doesn't stand a chance! My dog's never been beaten yet. He will win easily."

Kitty's lips tightened. So Remus had a formidable rival, had he? But who was the speaker's companion? As she listened, she heard him give a sigh of relief.

"I hope you're right, Jarrold! There's too much at stake to take any chances. If once that girl wins the Lorne Abbey Cup—"

The voice died away, as though its owner feared he had already said too much. Kitty caught in her breath. Her heart was thumping, for she was certain that her first suspicion had been correct.

The man who had just spoken was her unknown enemy—the rascal who had tried to terrify her by posing as the Phantom Monk. She had only to step into the ante-room in order to discover his identity.

Nerves tingling, she stretched out her hand. Her fingers closed over the handle, and eagerly she turned it.

Will Kitty unmask the mysterious Green Friar at last? Don't miss next Friday's enthralling long instalment, girls. Order your GIRLS' CRYSTAL today.