

"THE BANDIT'S DAUGHTER" — One of the Six Enthralling Stories for Schoolgirls, Inside."

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GIRLS' CRYSTAL^{2D} WEEKLY



**"GIVE UP YOUR FRIENDSHIP
WITH JESS—OR WE WON'T
VOTE FOR YOU!"**

That was what Jess Grant heard the
Fourth Formers tell her chum.

(See "Her Unknown Enemy at
School.")

The BANDIT'S DAUGHTER



THE INCRIMINATING SCARF!

LOLA SHARMAN determined to make a success of her dancing career in Mexico, in order to help her father, who, owing to treachery, had been outlawed and forced to turn bandit. He was now known as the Grey Shadow.

A young Englishman, Tony Creswick, told Lola he was hunting down the Grey Shadow.

While Lola was dancing at a cafe, Tony was brought in, having apparently been wounded by one of the Grey Shadow's men.

Then a man whom Lola had seen before produced a scarf, which she recognised as one of her own.

"This was dropped by one of the Grey Shadow's spies in the market this afternoon!" he said. "Does anyone recognise it?"

"**YES,**" repeated the stranger, "this—scarf was dropped by the bandits' spy. Look at it well, all of you."

There was a ripple of interest among the colourful crowd in the cafe. Lola held her breath, her hands clenched, her eyes wide with fearful suspense.

It was her scarf—the scarf given to her by her father, and bearing the curious crest he had adopted!

She saw Tony staring at it over the heads of the crowd; she saw Maria Garcia saunter forward, her hand to her hip, her dark eyes narrowed.

The Mexican girl halted at Lola's side.

"It is a pretty scarf," she murmured softly, "and I seem to have seen one like it before. It is a scarf that might have been worn by a dancer—like one of us, eh, my little Lola?"

Though she spoke with a smile, her voice was cold and meaning. The glance she darted at her successful rival was like a dagger unsheathed.

Lola wondered if her expression betrayed her—if her pallor was noticeable to the onlookers.

She endeavoured to force a smile, but was saved from replying by Tony. The English boy rose to his feet unsteadily, for he was still weak after his scuffle with the unknown bandits.

"Please give me the scarf!" he said. His voice held an unmistakable ring of authority, and in spite of his dishevelled attire the crowd regarded him respectfully.

The stranger stepped forward with the incriminating scarf. Tony took it carelessly, glancing at the crest in the corner. Lola held her breath, not daring

to meet his eyes. Would he recognise that crest? Would he guess—

The boy laughed shortly.

"This scarf is of little help, my friend," he declared, "but I shall retain it—to show to someone in authority. Meanwhile, we are spoiling the enjoyment of these good people—and wasting precious time!"

He thrust the scarf into his pocket and turned to Lola with an apologetic grin.

"Sorry, Lola!" he said whimsically. "Afraid my butting in rather spoilt your act. Won't you go on with the dance? I'm sure the crowd's dying to see you."

Lola shook her head nervously. Everything had changed with the dreadful news brought by Tony. Even though the owner of the scarf had not yet been identified, it was only a matter of time. Sooner or later the truth might be discovered, and then—

Her heart turned cold at the thought.

A few minutes ago she might have laughed at the possibility of discovery for herself, confident in the innocence of her bandit father.

But now, like a grim and threatening cloud menacing her new-found happiness, had come the first shadow of doubt!

The robbery that had taken place on the outskirts of the town, her father's unexpected gift—could there be any connection between them?

The crescent headdress, gleaming

Excitedly Lola was looking forward to dancing at the house of the Mexican grandee. What a wonderful chance it would be for her! But it was not until she reached there that she realised her host was her father's most ruthless enemy.

By RENEE FRAZER

against her dark hair, seemed to burn as though it were white hot.

Horried, she thrust aside the thought; she remembered the gay, affectionate note that had accompanied that gift, so typical of her father.

She was mean, ungrateful, disloyal, even to imagine such a thing!

Instinctively she raised her hand to her hair—conscious that both Tony and Maria were watching her.

"I don't feel like dancing now," she pleaded.

"But you must dance," urged Tony. "You can't let down your audience. Hark at them now!"

There came a ripple of impatient clapping—a banging on the tables. Several voices at the back of the crowd were raised in a chant:

"La Bella Lola! La Bella Lola!"

"You hear?" whispered Tony, grabbing her arm. "They want you to dance again; and I—"

He lowered his voice. "I want you to dance, Lola, too!"

For a moment only Lola hesitated as the clapping became louder.

"Please!" murmured Tony.

A light shone in Lola's eyes as the orchestra once again struck up the familiar, haunting tune of her dance.

The blood coursed more swiftly in her veins as she slipped from the boy's grasp, and, with a wave of her hand, swung out into the centre of the floor, beneath the glistening lights.

"La Bella Lola!"

The applause of the crowd was like music to her ears, helping her to forget.

She remembered only that she was a dancer, and that this was the first big chance of her career. She would be foolish to let her opportunity slip because of some vague, intangible fear—an unfounded suspicion.

Heart and soul she threw herself into the dance—the "Dance of the Flames." In a way, it expressed her own feelings—the first despondent flickering and uncertainty, followed by a glimmer of hope—and the final wild, reckless leap as the fire kindled and burst into flames.

The lights had been lowered, and a single crimson spotlight flashed and glittered on the stones of her headdress, on the swirling, silken folds of her flame-coloured costume.

Breathless, dizzy, she brought her dance to its conclusion, sinking slowly, gracefully down to the floor, like a flame that was dying.

The music trailed softly away, and just for a moment there was a tense,

unbroken silence—a silence that was a greater tribute than any applause.

Then, as the roar of clapping burst out, a figure detached itself from the crowd and sprang towards her.

It was Tony. The boy caught her by the arms, helping her to her feet.

Startled, bewildered, Lola met his accusing gaze, and her heart turned cold as she saw Maria hovering in the background, a gleam of malicious anticipation in her eyes.

"So, Lola," breathed Tony, "I've found you out—at last!"

"What—what do you mean?" faltered Lola, her face paling.

To her amazement, Tony caught both her hands in his and burst out laughing.

"I've found out, Lola, that you've been deceiving me. You're a young genius, in disguise! Why didn't you tell me? Great Scott!" he added. "Don't you realise that you'd have Mexico at your feet if only people knew about you?"

Bewildered, almost faint with relief, Lola stared into the boy's laughing eyes. The colour had returned to her face and her lips were trembling.

Around her the crowd were clapping and shouting—calling for an encore.

Only one pair of eyes was not smiling. Maria Garcia, pale with secret fury and chagrin, stood watching her narrowly.

"You danced as though you were inspired," declared Tony. "What's your secret, Lola?"

"Perhaps," put in Maria's silky tones, "La Bella Lola was inspired by the headdress she wears—the mysterious gift that came to her from nowhere a few minutes before her performance started!"

A murmur of interest arose from the listeners. Lola's heart turned suddenly cold as she encountered Tony's swift, questioning glance.

"Maria is joking," she replied, with a forced smile. "It was a gift from a very dear friend."

She raised a hand to the crescent headdress with an almost protective gesture.

"A strange friend," murmured Maria. "He came on horseback, and flung the package through the window. Ah"—as Lola started—"you did not think that other eyes might be watching! Who is this mysterious admirer?"

Lola crimsoned, her hands clenched, her eyes flashing defiantly.

"What business is it of yours, Maria?" she replied.

"Come, come!" put in Tony, with a broad grin. "Don't fall out, you two! I'll admit I'm quite intrigued at the thought of this mysterious friend, and I must say his methods appeal to me; but, after all, it's Lola's business, Maria."

He regarded Lola quizzically, with a mock reproving shake of his head.

"I'm heartbroken!" he declared gravely. "I'm afraid I can't rise to tiaras myself, but, hang it, I won't be outdone!"

He caught her by the hand, his eyes twinkling.

"It's my turn to play fairy godfather, Lola, if you'll give me the chance."

Lola had to smile, in spite of herself; yet there was a hint of earnestness behind the boy's joking manner that touched her heart.

There was a tragic irony about the situation; the likeable boy, who was her only real friend in Mexico, was in league with her father's enemies—an agent employed to track the Grey Shadow to his lair.

By rights she should have hated him. Even now, as she caught his laughing

glance, she tried to steel her heart against him, realising only too well the danger of their friendship.

"You've been very kind, Tony," she said unsteadily, "but there's nothing further you can do. My place is here, as a dancer in the cafe, and you—you have your quest."

She spoke with a bitterness she could not entirely hide. Tony glanced at her swiftly.

"My quest?" His good-looking face clouded. "You mean my search for the Grey Shadow? But that need not interfere with our friendship, Lola. It's a job I've undertaken, and I've got to see it through; but I get some time to myself, you know."

He grinned boyishly.

"And that brings me to my bold suggestion. To-morrow evening I've been invited to attend a reception at the house of a certain distinguished grandee—a gentleman with considerable influence in Mexico. I shall be there on business, but I gather there's to be an entertainment arranged for the guests."

"I fancy that my friend would jump at the chance of obtaining the services of a talented and attractive young English dancer in this out-of-the-way spot—"

"Tony," gasped Lola, her face crimsoning with excitement, "you—you're joking—"

"Not I!" rejoined Tony, with a grin. "You don't know me yet, Lola. I got all my plans out and dried while I was watching you dance just now. Look here, are you game? If I can persuade old Lopez to let you off to-morrow evening, will you come with me? It'll be a splendid chance!"

A WONDERFUL CHANCE

TONY'S voice was eager, persuasive. There was something boyishly masterful in his manner as he drew her away from the crowd.

"Let me speak to Lopez now," he urged.

Lola's thoughts were in a whirl; she was torn by conflicting feelings. It was a wonderful chance, as Tony had said; yet had she any right to accept such

help from this friendly boy who was her father's avowed enemy?

Would it be disloyal to her father—unfair to Tony himself?

A faltering refusal rose to her lips; but, mistaking her hesitation, Tony interrupted.

"You don't trust me, Lola?" he asked whimsically.

Lola crimsoned, shaking her head quickly.

"Tony, you know it's not that—" she began.

"Then you will come?" demanded Tony eagerly, taking her consent for granted. "Splendid! Where's Senor Lopez? Senor, I want a word with you!"

He beckoned the portly cafe proprietor, giving Lola no chance to back out.

Senor Lopez appeared doubtful at first, but at the mention of the name of Tony's distinguished friend his hesitation vanished.

"But, of course!" he replied, rubbing his hands. "Why did you not tell me before? I should be delighted to oblige the senior! Besides, it will be a fine advertisement for my cafe. La Bella Lola is here under contract, but publicity is good. And the fee—"

"Will be generous," promised Tony.

He turned to Lola, his eyes twinkling.

"Then it's all settled. I shall call for La Bella Lola to-morrow evening."

He grasped her hand. Lola tried to speak, but the words refused to come.

Gratitude struggled with apprehension and a thrilling excitement. She whispered her thanks in a tone that was barely audible. Tony laughed as he raised her hand gallantly to his lips.

"To-morrow, then," he murmured. "Till then—au revoir!"

He saluted gaily and moved towards the door. A pang cut through Lola's heart as she realised that she had not even asked after his injuries.

She made to run after him, but her way was barred by the crowd, calling loudly for their encore.

"Come, senorita!" murmured the proprietor, tapping her shoulder.

"They are waiting!"

Lola pulled herself together, drawing a deep breath as she turned to face the clamouring throng. This was her



"It was a gift from a very dear friend," said Lola, raising her hand to the jewelled head-dress. "Who is this mysterious admirer?" asked Maria mockingly. Lola crimsoned, for she dared not let them know it was from her father.

career—the career she had chosen. From now on her own private feelings must take second place.

She was no longer plain Lola Shorman, but La Bella Lola, the dancer.

With a gay smile, Lola took her encore, and it was not till she had repeated her dance twice over that the crowd at length permitted her to depart.

Senor Lopez was delighted. He thrust a little packet of money into her hand before she left the café—a week's salary in advance.

"And my best wishes for to-morrow, *senorita!*" he murmured. "If you please the *senor* it will be a fine thing for both of us."

Lola thanked him, still feeling a little dazed from the mingled anxiety and triumph of her first public performance.

She was grateful to be alone for a while in the quiet seclusion of the dressing-room. Maria Garcia and the rest of the dancing troupe had departed to give their final number, and Lola was undisturbed as she changed from her shimmering attire into her outdoor clothes.

Last of all she removed the jewelled headdress, her father's gift. Her hand trembled slightly as she held the dainty crescent to the light, noting how the cluster of tiny stones flashed and sparkled.

"Dear dad!" she whispered. "It was his present that brought me luck. If only he could have been here—to see me dance!"

There was a little lump in her throat, and her eyes were misted as she slipped the dainty headdress into her case and left the café.

Somehow she could not bring herself to go straight back to her lodgings; she felt over-excited—elated.

She found herself walking almost unseeing through the crowded, colourful streets of the little town—making breathless plans for the future.

She would succeed as a dancer—she must succeed! For her success would not only bring fame—it would bring money; and with the money she earned she would help her father to prove his innocence, and leave his reckless, outlaw life for good!

Where was he now, she wondered. In his secret hiding-place among the hills, perhaps—awaiting news of his daughter's success.

Yet she dared not attempt to communicate with him; it would be dangerous—for both of them. He had his own secret means of communication—as she had discovered by the arrival of his surprise gift.

Hardly knowing where her footsteps were taking her, Lola found herself in the busy market-place.

A crowd of people were surrounding one of the shop windows, lit by the vivid glow of a naphtha flare.

There was a large notice in the window, obviously pasted there recently.

It bore an imposing official seal, and the ink with which it was written was barely dry.

Drawn by an almost uneasy curiosity, Lola found herself at the front of the crowd. The notice bore a list of objects—and Lola's heart contracted as she saw that it was a detailed list of jewellery that had been stolen by handits from a near-by hacienda—the Hacienda de Barranca.

With a kind of dreadful fascination, Lola read the list—and a cold chill ran down her spine as she came to the last item:

"A tiara, of small size, set with precious stones."

Lola's hands clenched at her sides.

It couldn't be—it couldn't be the same! There was no mention of its shape; and jewelled ornaments for the hair were not uncommon.

It was just a coincidence—nothing more.

She dragged her gaze away from the hateful placard—to encounter a pair of dark, vindictive eyes watching her from the crowd.

They were the eyes of Maria Garcia, her bitter rival; and Maria's red lips were twisted in an unpleasant smile!

HER FATHER'S ENEMY!

IT was late that night, before Lola fell asleep. The moonlight streamed through the lattice window of her bed-room, playing on the shimmering finery piled on a chair—the frock of flame-coloured satin, the dainty shoes—reminders of her evening's triumph.

But Lola sat up in bed, a pale, rather wistful figure, gazing out of the window towards the distant hills.

There was little triumph in her thoughts; the cloud that threatened her happiness had become suddenly darker—more sinister.

In spite of her efforts to shake off the feeling, she could not rid her mind of that dreadful nagging doubt.

Where had her father obtained that jewelled headdress—the gift he had sent her in so dramatic and unexpected a fashion?

She drew it from under her pillow, now, turning it over in her hands—the enchanting gift that had brought her such pleasure—that had inspired her to dance as she had never danced before.

She had looked on it as a luck-bringer then, but now—

Lola bit her lips, her fingers trembling as she unfolded the message that had come with the gift—the all-too-brief note from her father.

Her eyes smarted as she re-read the gay message—so typical of the writer!—wishing her the best of luck.

Dad would never have sent her stolen jewels; it was an unthinkable, fantastic thought.

She slipped out of bed and crossed to the window, throwing wide the casement.

The soft, cool air from the hills fanned her heated forehead; the scene was inexpressibly peaceful in the moonlight.

She could imagine her father in his mountain retreat—as she had last seen him—his strong, handsome face lit by the glow of the leaping fire, his head resting on his hand—a far-away look in his eyes.

Instinctively she looked towards the distant mountains, their white crests limned against the darkening sky.

"Dad," she whispered unsteadily, "whatever they say—whatever happens—I'll believe in you!"

Her own words reassured her, calmed her racing thoughts.

With a tremulous smile she crept back to bed—and fell asleep, her father's gift under her pillow.

When Lola awoke, the brilliant sunlight was streaming through the window; the doubts and fears of the previous night seemed like the shadow of an unreal dream.

She sprang out of bed with a little laugh, her eyes shining as she recollected her first success as a dancer.

Her feet were firmly planted on the first rung of the ladder that led to fame—and fortune. There must be no looking back!

To-day, thanks to Tony, she was to have an even bigger chance of becoming well known; and Lola felt just a little apprehensive—in spite of her excitement.

This time her audience would be more critical—less ready to overlook any failings.

She had gathered from Tony's remarks that his friend was someone of high rank in Mexico.

As she dressed, she wondered what kind of dance would appeal to her audience. It would have to be something unusual—yet not too bizarre; something colourful, without being flashy.

Her motherly landlady brought breakfast up on a tray—delicious homemade bread, eggs, honey, and goat's milk.

There was fruit, too—ripe pears and peaches; and Lola expressed her surprise, for she had noticed that many of the trees in the orchard were in full bloom.

"In Mexico, my dear," explained the smiling ranchera, "we have fruit and blossom at the same time. We pluck the fruit while the petals are still falling."

"The petals still falling—" whispered Lola. She caught in her breath quickly, her eyes shining. Impulsively she hugged the good lady, in her excitement.

"You've given me an idea—for my next dance!" she declared gaily.

For the rest of the day Lola was busy—inventing the steps of her new dance, to an old Mexican tune she had known from childhood.

"Falling Petals," she called it; and, luckily, she possessed a costume that almost exactly fitted in with the colourful theme.

She practised the steps in the little orchard behind the house, humming the tune over to herself—tirelessly repeating the movements, until she felt confident of success.

So enthralled was she in her task that she almost forgot the passage of time.

The first faint tinge of the sunset was creeping over the hills when there came a clatter of hoofs in the road outside.

Lola stood motionless, her heart beating quickly. That clatter of hoofs reminded her sharply of another recent occasion when she had heard hoof-beats outside the courtyard of an inn—when the mysterious bandit, the Grey Shadow, had come into her life, with the unforgettable shock of that first recognition.

Would her father have dared to come here—to see her?

The next moment footsteps crunched on the path, and Lola turned, to encounter Tony Creswick's laughing glance.

The boy was dressed in riding-kit, and held his hat in his hand.

"I say," he exclaimed laughingly, "don't look at me as though you'd seen a ghost, Lola! Are you ready for the drive?"

He stared at her in admiration; and Lola smiled tremulously, her momentary disappointment overshadowed by relief.

Though she longed to see her father again, she dreaded the possibility of his risking capture by any reckless act on her behalf.

"You startled me," she replied breathlessly. "I didn't realise it was so late."

"You don't appear to have wasted any time," declared Tony, his eyes twinkling. "Gosh, that costume of yours ought to stagger everyone!"

"You like it?" asked Lola, flushing. "Do I! And what I saw of the dance seemed stunning. I've got a

(Please turn to the back page.)

★ ROSINA the FILM-STAR ★



NOT THE GIRL NOEL HAD KNOWN

JUST in time to see Miss Langton's film test, Raymond. If she shows the same talent that she revealed on the stage, then the contract's hers!

Noel Raymond, the young detective, smiled with unassumed pleasure at his friend, Clifford Baxter, the film producer.

"Glad to hear you say that, old chap. I know this means a lot to Mary Langton, even though I haven't seen her since she showed me round her school some years ago. I was with a party of her brother's friends; she was about fourteen then."

"You'll find she's changed a bit since then!" laughed Baxter. "She's grown into a very charming and sophisticated young woman. But you were saying—about this contract—"

Noel nodded, his expression suddenly serious.

"It means a great deal to her, Baxter. When their father died a couple of years ago, Mary and her brother, Paul, were left with very little money. I've kept in touch with Paul, you see. He was never strong, but he managed to hold down a job to pay for his sister's training at a dramatic school. Now his health's crooked up completely, and Mary is pluckily shouldering all responsibilities."

"She wrote to me a few weeks ago asking if I could persuade someone to go along and see her in the provincial show in which she was appearing. So I asked you—"

"And I went," declared Baxter enthusiastically, "and didn't regret it. She was brilliant. I want an actress to play the role of Mary Queen of Scots in 'The Captive Queen'—and it's a toss-up between Miss Langton and Avril Charmaine, the continental actress. Heard of her?"

"Can't say I have," frowned Noel. "What was she in?"

"A number of French films, I believe. My casting-director has interviewed her, and he says she's the very girl we want; though I'm very keen on having Mary Langton."

Just then the door opened. Mary Langton herself came in.

The young detective caught in his breath. Four years had certainly changed Mary Langton out of all recognition. Then, a long-legged, laughing schoolgirl; now a slim and strikingly

beautiful young woman, graceful, poised, and evidently very sure of herself.

Somehow Noel found it difficult to associate her with the writer of the appealing, rather wistful letter he had received a few weeks ago.

She hesitated slightly as she caught sight of Noel, and the young detective grinned boyishly.

"We're not quite strangers, Miss Langton," he remarked, holding out his hand. "Though it's a far cry back to Leigham Court School—and amateur theatricals!"

The girl flushed attractively, hastily lowering her lovely eyes.

"Why, of course—how stupid of me!" she murmured. "Mr. Raymond!"

"It used to be 'Noel' in those days," grinned the young detective. "Remember how Paul and I ragged you about your ambition to be an actress—and you replied by telling me I'd make a rotten detective?"

Mary Langton smiled composedly.

"We were both mistaken, weren't we?" she murmured. "I always felt I was cut out to be an actress—if only I were given the chance. And, you see, I was right!"

She spoke with a touch of complacency that somehow jarred on Noel's ears. It seemed so unlike the charming, unaffected girl he had once known. He watched her as she turned to Clifford Baxter.

"I suppose you'll be holding my film test this evening, Mr. Baxter? It's rather a bore, but no doubt it's just a formality. Oh, didn't you promise you'd show me your collection of old jewellery while the cameras were being got ready?"

Noel Raymond was delighted when he heard that the sister of his old school friend was to be given a chance of winning film fame. But it wasn't Mary Langton who got the coveted part. It was none other than Rosina Fontaine—the fascinating and unscrupulous girl-crook!

By PETER LANGLEY

The film producer grinned apologetically at Noel.

"That's right," he agreed. "Don't know if you'd care to see my bits and pieces, Raymond, but Miss Langton's very keen."

"I'd be glad to," replied Noel, rather absently. He was still watching Mary Langton.

Yes—she had changed, without a doubt. Her features were thinner, harder. There was a curious, restless gleam in her eyes, veiled by their thick lashes.

There was a rather troubled expression in his blue eyes as he followed Mary and the producer into the latter's study.

Baxter unlocked a cabinet and pulled out a number of glass-topped drawers, each containing an exquisite piece of antique jewellery on its bed of velvet.

"I'll leave you two to look over them at your leisure," he said. "I've got to see Carter, my cameraman. You'll be ready for the test in about half an hour, Miss Langton?"

The girl nodded carelessly, her attention riveted on the sparkling contents of the cabinet.

"You know, you remind me of someone," Noel remarked.

The girl laughed amusedly.

"Do I? What a gorgeous pair of earrings! I can fancy myself wearing them. Some day I'm going to be rich, and then I'll have all the jewellery, all the luxuries I've longed for!"

Noel shook his head gravely.

"That doesn't sound like you, Mary Langton," he said gently. "Remember what you told me in your letter—that whatever money you earn you're going to spend it in getting Paul strong and well again?"

The girl shot him a swift glance from under her lashes; she laughed softly.

"You're a sentimentalist, Mr. Raymond—and so easy to take in," she murmured. "Do you really suppose I meant that tosh I wrote?"

Somewhere a bell trilled.

"What a bore!" she added. "That's my signal to get ready. See you in the studio."

She lit a cigarette with studied nonchalance, and strolled towards the door. Noel stared down at the jewellery cabinet in some perplexity.

Then, after a moment's hesitation, he locked the jewellery cabinet, switched off the light in the study, and went in search of his friend.

He found Clifford Baxter in the private studio near by. The producer was surrounded by cameras, lights, and cables, while a few technicians hovered near, awaiting orders.

"Miss Langton ready?" asked Baxter. "She's just gone up to get changed, and be made-up, I believe," replied Noel, handing his friend the key to the cabinet. "I thought I'd better lock it—as a safeguard."

"Thanks, old man! I wouldn't care to lose any of the collection. Not that they'd be likely to attract an ordinary thief—the stones are only imitation. It's the beauty of workmanship that counts." He glanced at his watch. "I wish Miss Langton would hurry. I'm expecting this foreign star, Avril Charmaine, at seven, and I'm anxious to get one or other of 'em signed on—Hullo!"

The telephone shrilled, and the producer reached for it. He listened, murmured some reply, and then hung up.

"That was Avril Charmaine's chauffeur," he said, with a slight frown, "speaking from the local hotel. They've just arrived, and are coming straight along here. If Mary Langton doesn't hurry, she'll lose her chance."

"I'll give her a call," Noel said quickly.

He hurried up to the dressing-room, and rapped on the door. It was opened by an elderly dresser.

"Will you please tell Miss Langton that Mr. Baxter is waiting for her?" he said.

The woman stared. "I haven't seen Miss Langton, sir; she hasn't been in here."

Noel caught in his breath sharply, his misgivings quickening. On a sudden impulse, he went to the study, and switched on the light.

"Ye gods!" he ejaculated huskily, his face paling.

The jewel-cabinet stood wide open, its drawers pulled out. The glass had been shattered, and practically every compartment stripped bare of its glittering contents!

Noel realised at a glance that the robbery was the work of an expert thief; the window was fastened, the burglar-alarm untouched.

Just then Clifford Baxter himself appeared in the doorway; he took in the scene, and his face whitened.

"Great Heavens!" he gasped. "I—I've been robbed! My collection—"

He made for the phone. "Wait a minute," jerked Noel. "The thief can't have gone far. Let me question everybody here."

The servants and studio staff were hastily assembled; but no one could give any information about the robbery.

"Someone must know something about it," declared the distracted producer. "Where's Mary Langton? You say she isn't in the dressing-room? Where did you leave her?"

"She left the study before I did—" began Noel, and broke off, struck by a sudden, uneasy thought.

He was staring at a massive, Oriental screen just inside the door. Supposing that Mary Langton had only made a pretence of leaving the room! Supposing she had slipped behind the screen!

He strode to the screen, jerking it aside. There came a shout from the producer as Noel pounced on an object lying on the carpet behind the screen; a girl's dainty lace handkerchief, with something wrapped in the folds.

His hand is shaking, Noel unwrapped the handkerchief—revealing a gleaming metal instrument.

"A—a jemmy!" he muttered. "Used for forcing the cabinet."

"And the initials 'M.L.' on the handkerchief—Mary Langton," exclaimed Baxter. "Then she was the thief, Raymond!"

Noel bit his lip, as he bent to examine the handkerchief. His mind felt stunned. Mary Langton, his friend's sister—the laughing-eyed, carefree schoolgirl of other days—an audacious thief!

His every instinct recoiled at the thought.

A faint, elusive waft of perfume reached him as he bent over the handkerchief. A startled look crossed his face. He sniffed again; there could be no mistake!

"Baxter, come with me," jerked Noel grimly. "We've got to catch that girl!"

He sprinted from the room and raced to the end of the corridor. The window there had been opened from the inside. Noel leaned out, flashing his torch on the flowerbeds and lawn—revealing a faintly marked trail of high-heeled shoes.

"Come on!" he breathed, and vaulted through the window, Baxter following at his heels.

They reached the drive, and came to a stop. A baffled expression crossed Noel's face. The footprints ended abruptly on the edge of the gravel.

"She's given us the slip!" panted the producer, flushed with anger. "She's tricked us both—and that brother of hers is probably in the plot—"

"Just a minute," cut in Noel grimly. "You've got this all wrong. It's true enough that the girl I met at your house this evening was the thief; but that girl was not Mary Langton! I suspected it almost from the first—but the idea seemed too incredible. Now I know it for a fact. Heaven alone knows what's happened to the real Mary Langton—for the girl who robbed you this evening is one of the most dangerous and unscrupulous tricksters in Europe."

"Her name is Rosina Fontaine!"

ROSINA'S DOUBLE ROLE

NOEL encountered his friend's amazed stare.

"Rosina Fontaine?" echoed the producer. "The girl jewel-thief? But, man—that's impossible! The girl was introduced to me as Mary Langton by the manager of the Haldon Hippodrome—"

"The girl you met at the theatre was Mary Langton," cut in Noel grimly. "But the girl who came to your house this evening was Rosina. She's an accomplished actress—and she banked on the fact that you'd only met Mary on one occasion. My arrival must have come as a shock, but she carried it off with her usual superb audacity."

"And she took you in?" "Completely—at first. I had no reason to be suspicious. The last time I heard of Rosina, she was hiding abroad; and I was expecting to meet Mary Langton. Mary is as fair as Rosina is dark—and Rosina took care to keep her eyes veiled with her lashes. You noticed how she averted her face when talking to me; I put it down to shyness at first, but later I wondered."

"Even then I wouldn't have guessed the truth if it hadn't been for a certain elusive perfume she invariably affects—that, and the expert way in which she opened that cabinet."

The producer shook his head, unconvinced.

"You can't tell me, Raymond; you're

just trying to invent an alibi for your young friend. I don't blame you for your loyalty, but it won't do. I'm still convinced that the girl was the same Mary Langton whom I saw at the theatre—and that she succumbed to temptation at the sight of the jewellery. An expert jewel-thief, like this Rosina Fontaine, would have seen at a glance that the stuff was imitation!"

Noel bit his lip. The same argument had already occurred to him. If the girl had been Rosina—as he felt convinced—what could have been her motive? She must have known that the jewellery was comparatively worthless, except to its owner—yet she had taken a mad and seemingly fantastic risk to get away with it.

"I can't fathom her motive," he admitted. "But I'm willing to stake my professional reputation that the girl I met this evening was Rosina—"

Just then there came a crunch of wheels in the drive—the soft purr of a powerful car. The next moment a pair of brilliant headlights lit up the drive.

The car drew to a stop; a smart, uniformed chauffeur sprang out and opened the door.

Noel and his friend hurried forward as the occupant of the car stepped out leisurely. A tall, slender figure, the ivory pallor of her face framed in jet-black hair, a flashing smile revealed beneath the short veil that trimmed her fashionable hat.

"Pardon, messieurs, but is this the house of Monsieur Baxter, the producer?"

"My name's Baxter," put in Noel's friend, stepping forward, hat in hand. "Er—you are—"

"My name," put in the visitor graciously, "is Avril Charmaine. I have come to play the leading role in your new film!"

She held out a slender hand, in the manner of a queen expecting homage.

Noel glanced at her keenly, strangely disturbed by the soft, slightly husky tone of her voice.

"Glad to see you, Miss Charmaine!" declared the producer heartily. "You're just in time! This is my friend, Mr. Noel Raymond. Raymond, meet Miss Avril Charmaine."

Noel held out his hand as the girl raised her veil, looking him fully in the eyes.

"Monsieur Raymond, the famous detective?" she murmured softly. "But how thrilling!"

Noel stiffened at the sound of her voice; incredulously he encountered the mocking glance of those expressive violet eyes.

"Ye gods!" he ejaculated under his breath. "Am I going mad?"

For Avril Charmaine was none other than Rosina Fontaine, the amazing girl crook!

NOEL wondered for a moment if he could have taken leave of his senses. Was Rosina becoming some kind of obsession?

A few minutes ago he had been prepared to swear that Mary Langton had been impersonated by the notorious girl trickster, and now here was Rosina, large as life, in the person of Avril Charmaine, Mary's rival!

Noel shook himself angrily, staring hard into those lovely, unmistakable features.

This girl was Rosina, without a shadow of doubt. She had not even troubled to disguise herself! Then—the other girl—

His fingers touched Rosina's cool hand. He realised that she was laughing at him, knowing she had him in a cleft stick.

How could he accuse Avril Charmaine of being the notorious crook, when he had already sworn that Rosina was masquerading as Mary Langton?

If he proved that this girl was, in fact, Rosina, then he would be smashing Mary Langton's only alibi. For if Rosina had not been Mary Langton, then the real Mary Langton must have been the thief!

Clifford Baxter was waiting impatiently, frowning at Noel.

"As soon as you've rested, Miss Charmaine," he cut in, "we'll be ready for the test. Enough time has been wasted, as it is, thanks to Miss Langton. I'd like you to get signed up, and start rehearsals."

"Of course! I shall be ready at once!" Rosina flashed him one of her most dazzling smiles, and glanced tantalisingly at Noel. "You are coming, too, Mr. Raymond? I presume you are employed by Monsieur Baxter to count the spoons, in case I should feel inclined to steal them?"

Noel clenched his hands at the veiled taunt. Baxter laughed, taking it for a joke at Noel's expense.

"Confound it!" Noel thought. "I've got to get to the bottom of this affair! Just what is Rosina's game? What does she hope to get out of it?"

Clifford Baxter showed the pseudo film actress to the dressing-room, leaving her in charge of Miss Feskitt, the elderly dresser.

"Thank goodness for that!" he declared as he rejoined Noel. "If she films well—and I'm pretty sure she will—I'll get her signed up this evening."

"What are you offering her?" asked Noel carelessly.

The famous producer shrugged.

"I'm willing to meet her at her own figure. I understand she wants a hundred pounds a week; but it'll be worth it!"

The young detective whistled softly as his friend hurried back to the studio.

"A hundred pounds a week!" he muttered. "Ye gods! That's money, even to Rosina! And Mary Langton's out of the running. I'm beginning to see her game—"

He broke off as the door of the dressing-room opened, and Rosina appeared, an entrancing figure in her attire as the luckless Queen of Scots.

She flashed a roguish smile in Noel's direction as she made to sweep past.

But the young detective caught her swiftly by the arm. There was no one else in sight.

"Just a minute—Rosina!" he said quietly.

The girl's smile faded; her lovely eyes glittered dangerously.

"Are you not making some mistake, Mr. Raymond?" she asked softly. "My name is Avril—Avril Charmaine."

"Your latest name, you mean," rejoined Noel grimly, retaining his hold on her arm. "You may as well drop this play-acting before I expose you for the impostor that you are!"

Rosina's eyes narrowed.

"Think again, Mr. Raymond," she rejoined. "You say you will expose me? But how interesting! What do you imagine your friend will say if you accuse me of being Rosina? He will laugh in your face—like I am laughing now. He will say 'What of this other girl, Mary Langton? Is she a crook, as well? How many Rosinas are there?'"

She laughed mockingly, staring challengingly into Noel's sternly set features.

"It is not I, Mr. Raymond, but your sweet little friend, Mary Langton, who will be arrested for theft. I—I can prove that I was on my way to the

house at the time, to keep my engagement."

She tossed her head defiantly, then swept past Noel and into the studio.

The young detective stared after her, his hands clenched. His blood was boiling.

Rosina was out to steal Mary Langton's chance on the films—after cunningly blackening the other girl's name! At all costs, Noel was determined to nip her game in the bud.

But at that moment his hands were tied; he could do nothing until the real Mary Langton was found and her innocence proved.

Where was Mary Langton?

With sudden decision Noel crossed to the telephone and gave the number of the Haldon Hippodrome, where Mary had been playing a small part.

The manager informed him that Miss Langton had left at four o'clock that afternoon, to keep her appointment with Clifford Baxter. She had travelled by train.



Dramatically the silence was broken by a shout from Noel. "Quick! I saw a white face at the window; it looked like Mary Langton's," he cried. He was hoping that his trick would make Rosina give herself away.

Noel thanked him and replaced the receiver. His worried expression had deepened.

Mary Langton had set out to keep her appointment—but Rosina had turned up in her stead! Somewhere on the journey, Rosina must have waylaid the other girl, probably with the help of a confederate.

"Pierre!" muttered Noel, his hands clenching.

Rosina's old accomplice was obviously in this; no doubt it was he who had acted as chauffeur and phoned Clifford Baxter to provide an alibi for his mistress.

But where had they hidden the unfortunate young actress?

Noel's eyes glinted as he hit on a plan to find out. Carelessly he strolled into the studio, where Rosina, made up for her part, was posing beneath the glare of the arc-lamps and a battery of whirling cameras.

"That's fine, Miss Charmaine!" called Clifford Baxter. "We'll try that out with sound now. You've got your script? Good! Silence now, please!"

A red light flashed. Softly, with telling effect, Rosina commenced to speak her lines.

Then dramatically the silence was broken by a shout from Noel. The young detective had started forward and was pointing towards the window.

"Cut!" shouted the aggrieved producer, glaring across the room. "You've spoiled the whole test, Raymond. What's up with you, man?"

"Never mind the test," jerked Noel agitatedly. "I saw a white face staring through the window; it looked like Mary Langton's!"

"What?" demanded Baxter, leaping to the window. "If that girl's had the cheek to come back here—"

Noel was watching Rosina, and a grim smile crossed his face as he saw the startled, uneasy look that flashed into the girl crook's eyes. She, too, had hurried to the window and was staring out into the darkness.

"That's got her guessing!" muttered Noel. Aloud he added: "I'd better go and scout round the house, Baxter. I shan't be long."

As he left the room he heard Rosina murmur something about feeling faint.

"I think," she faltered, "that I will go out for a little fresh air!"

Noel smiled dryly as, leaving the house, he concealed himself among the bushes. A few minutes later he saw Rosina slip out through the french windows on to the terrace, a cloak round her shoulders.

"I thought as much," breathed the young detective. "She's afraid that Mary's given them the slip!"

Cautiously he dogged Rosina's footsteps as she made her way quickly across the grounds.

Noel's ruse had worked; the girl crook had doubtlessly slipped out to warn her confederate!

For a moment he lost sight of her; then, reaching a gap in the hedge, he saw a light flashing on the opposite side of the narrow lane!

The young detective scrambled cautiously through the gap, and, keeping in the shadows, moved along close to the hedge.

The winking light had vanished, and Noel could see nothing in the gloom. Then he imagined he heard a murmur of voices scarcely audible above the rippling gurgle of some unseen stream.

Stealthily Noel emerged from the shadows, edging towards the sound. As he drew nearer he could dimly discern the low parapet of a bridge.

The stream ran beneath the road, and the rushing sound of the water suggested the presence of a mill.

Then abruptly Noel saw the light again, flashing below the bridge.

He leaned over the parapet, his pulses racing. Undoubtedly there was something—or someone—moving below him near the open sluice-gates!

His expression rather grim, Noel swung himself over the parapet, climbing down to the grating. The mill-stream, swollen by the recent rains, swept past in a frothing torrent, vanishing through the open sluice.

The young detective whipped out his torch, flashing it into the dark tunnel. The mill-race foamed down a flight of steps and beneath the flanges of the stationary wheel.

Hardly knowing what he expected to discover, Noel stepped beneath the open sluice. At the same instant there came a hollow clang as the grating slammed behind him!

A soft, mocking laugh greeted his ears as he spun round, white to the lips.

"I am so sorry, Mr. Raymond," came Rosina's clear tones above the rush of the water. "I assure you there is no danger, but you will have to stay here until your absence is discovered. By then I shall have signed the contract—and drawn my first month's salary in advance!"

Noel gripped the bars of the sluice-gate, shaking them in desperate chagrin as he heard her depart.

Rosina had got the laugh of him, after all!

THE GIRL IN THE MILL

THE young detective quickly realised the futility of awaiting rescue. There was one other course open to him—an alternative fraught with danger; yet he decided to risk it.

Cautiously, torch in hand, he made his way down the slippery steps of the mill-race, knee-deep in the swirling water.

One false step and he would be flung into the maelstrom below.

Gritting his teeth, Noel stared up at the dripping flanges of the rusted iron wheel towering above him. Steadying himself, he sprang, his fingers gripping one of the flanges. For a moment he hung there, suspended dangerously over the rushing torrent; then, regaining his breath, he commenced to climb.

Directly above the wheel was a small trap-door with a rope and pulley-wheel, evidently used at one time for lowering sacks of flour.

A moment later Noel had hauled himself up through the opening, to grope his way across a disused loft, hung thickly with cobwebs.

Then abruptly he stiffened, his pulses racing; from the gloom beyond came a low, stifled moan!

Noel sprang forward, to drop to his knees beside a motionless, white-faced figure who lay huddled in a corner of the loft.

One glance at the attractive girlish face framed in soft fair hair and the young detective's last doubts were banished. She appeared to be suffering from the effects of a sleeping draught.

"Mary—Mary Langton!" he whispered huskily.

AT that moment Rosina, cool and unflustered, was posing for the second time in front of the whirling cameras.

As the scene concluded, she turned to

Clifford Baxter with her most bewitching smile.

"Will I suit the part, Monsieur Baxter?" she asked softly.

"I'll say you will, Miss Charmaine!" declared the producer enthusiastically. "I'll get you to sign the contract here and now!"

A triumphant glitter crept into Rosina's violet eyes; she gave a little sigh of relief, glancing towards the darkened window.

Baxter led the way into his study and produced the contract—the contract on which Mary Langton had based all her hopes.

Rosina dipped the pen in the ink, and reached out for the document.

And then the pen slipped from her nerveless fingers and she sprang to her feet with a cry; the door burst open, and Noel Raymond stood on the threshold, his boyish face pale and stern—a slender, fair-haired girl supported on his arm.

"Raymond! What on earth—" ejaculated the amazed producer.

"Allow me to introduce Miss Mary Langton," put in Noel grimly. "She is here to prove her innocence, and to claim the contract that is hers by right!"

He led the young actress forward to a few feet from where Rosina stood, her lovely face an expressionless mask, her hands clenched tightly at her sides.

"So?" she breathed mockingly, her eyes narrowed. "This is my so charming rival—the young lady who stole Monsieur Baxter's jewels?"

"You're wrong!" retorted Noel grimly. "Miss Langton had no hand in the robbery. The theft was committed by a confederate of the notorious Rosina Fontaine—a man named Pierre. He is at present in the hands of the police, charged with the crime; and I hold sufficient proof to convict him—"

"That is a lie!" The cry was torn from Rosina's lips as she started forward, her lovely face convulsed. "You cannot arrest Pierre; he knows nothing—nothing! The jewels are in the shrubbery—"

"Thank you, Rosina!" snapped Noel, smiling grimly. "That's all I wanted to know. I fancied there must be a soft spot somewhere in that callous heart of yours—and I happened to put my finger on it. I'm sorry, but you left me no other course."

Rosina's violet eyes flashed with bitter fury.

Clifford Baxter, amazed, passed an uneasy hand over his forehead.

"I can hardly believe it—even now," he muttered, staring from Rosina to Mary Langton. "Eh, what is it, Carter?"

The door had opened to admit a grey-haired studio assistant, wearing a green shade over his eyes.

"The sound-track is developed, ready for running through, sir," he remarked. "Will you be requiring me any more this evening?"

"No, Carter, you can go," returned the producer hastily.

The man retired; Noel saw Rosina stiffen, her slender hands clenching. Grimly he stepped to her side.

"I think, Rosina, that we had better be going, too," he remarked dryly. "My car is outside."

His hand closed on her arm.

"I suppose this is the end," Rosina breathed, glancing bitterly towards the young actress. "I congratulate you, Miss Langton. When you are playing in the role that should have been mine, think of me in prison—in prison—"

Her voice broke; with a choking sob she buried her face in her hands.

Mary started impulsively towards her—but Noel intervened.

"Don't waste your pity on her, Miss Langton," he said grimly. "She would have had no pity on you. Come on, Rosina."

He led the sobbing girl crook into the hall, followed by Clifford Baxter and the young actress.

Just then, with a sudden desperate movement, Rosina twisted from Noel's grasp, and darted down the passage towards the studio.

"Come on, Baxter!" shouted the young detective, as he gave chase.

"She can't escape that way," panted the producer. "The windows in the studio are barred!"

At the corner of the passage they almost collided with the grey-haired cameraman, Carter. Noel grabbed him by the shoulder.

"Did she pass you?" he rapped.

"Miss Charmaine, you mean?" asked the bewildered man. "Yes—she ran into the studio, and locked the door."

Noel reached the door first, and tried the handle; from inside the room came the sound of Rosina's stifled sobbing.

The young detective gave a sigh of relief.

"You're sure she can't escape from the studio?" he demanded.

"Positive," replied Baxter.

Noel rapped on the door.

"Rosina!" he called grimly. "You'd better come quietly."

The sobbing trailed away; Rosina's voice came, weakly yet defiant.

"You have trapped me, like a bird in a cage; what more do you want? I beseech you to leave me in peace!"

Noel frowned, glancing at his friend; there was a puzzled expression on the producer's face.

"What's her game?" breathed Baxter.

"She's just repeating the words of her part!"

Rosina's voice came again—low and passionate.

"Have you not tortured me enough? Must you act as my gaoler, as well as my judge?"

"Confound it," muttered Noel, "she's taken leave of her senses!"

He put his shoulder to the door, sending it crashing open. The studio was in pitch darkness, but the next moment Baxter pulled down the switch.

In the dazzling glare that followed, the two men stared round blankly.

Rosina's voice, soft and pleading, came clearly to their ears; but of the girl crook there was no sign!

"Ye gods!" ejaculated Noel.

He sprang across the room to a piece of apparatus, through which a length of perforated film was slowly clicking. As he pulled a switch, the low, throbbing voice ended abruptly.

"She's tricked us!" he breathed.

"What we heard was her voice—recorded on the sound-track! Pierre must have set it going; it was Pierre we met in the hall, disguised as the cameraman. Rosina was hiding somewhere in the hall—"

As he spoke, there came the sound of a car starting outside. Noel leaped to the window; a mocking voice drifted up to him from the darkness.

"Au revoir, Mr. Raymond; I trust we'll meet again—some day!"

BUT that day was yet to come; and, meanwhile, Noel had the pleasure of being the first to congratulate Mary Langton on her overwhelming success as the youthful actress who took England by storm in the role of "The Captive Queen."

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

"The Phantom of the Bay"—that is the title of next Friday's enthralling detective story, featuring popular Noel Raymond! Don't miss it!



Her Unknown Enemy at School

By GAIL WESTERN

MISS BRAMLEIGH'S DECISION

OLIVE FRENCH, Fourth Form captain at St. Kit's School, and her chum, Letty Johnson, liked Jess Grant, the newcomer to the Fourth, as soon as they met her.

But there was some mystery about Jess, and the chums soon realised that an unknown enemy in the school was trying to get her disgraced. Also, in the village, was a girl who was Jess' double, and who was in league with the unknown enemy.

Thanks to Jess' enemy, Olive & Co. fell into disfavour, and there was unrest in the Fourth.

Jess was sent to Coventry, and Olive came in for criticism. Finally, the Head sent for Olive, and told her that she was to hold a Form meeting. Unless the Fourth Formers passed a "vote of confidence" in favour of her, Olive would lose her captaincy!

"YOU understand, Olive?"

Gravely the headmistress looked across the desk at the Fourth Form captain.

"Yes, I understand, Miss Bramleigh," Olive said quietly.

There was not a quaver in her voice, but the tears were not very far from her eyes.

Like a bolt from the blue had come the Head's ultimatum. "To-morrow a Form meeting was to be called, and unless—Olive's lips quivered, and the blood drained from her face as she thought of what might happen.

Unless the Fourth passed a vote of confidence in her, she was to be deprived of the captaincy—the captaincy she had struggled so hard to win—the captaincy of which she had been so proud.

Oh, it wasn't fair! She could not prevent the bitter thought from rising to the surface. She had done all in her power to uphold the Form's good name. It wasn't her fault that there was all this strife and dissension.

"And it isn't Jess Grant's fault, either," she told herself fiercely. "It is all the work of that unknown enemy of hers. Oh, if only we could unmask her! If only—"

Her lips began to quiver again, and Miss Bramleigh's stern expression softened as she sensed the girl's emotion.

"I am sorry, Olive," she said gently. "I hate to take such a drastic step, but you must realise yourself how essential it is that the captain should enjoy the confidence of her fellows."

"I understand, Miss Bramleigh," Olive said again, and, turning, she left the headmistress' study.

She had no heart to return to the tuckshop. Her chums would be waiting for her there. Ignorant of what had happened, they would be talking gaily; they would be excitedly discussing their plans to visit Peewit Isle again.

Peewit Isle! Bitterly Olive smiled. All the zest of their forthcoming adventure had gone. What did it matter now if they did succeed in solving the secret of that island? By this time to-morrow she might have been deprived of her captaincy.

And obvious it was who would be installed in her place—Stephanie Warner! Stephanie—the girl who had taken full advantage of the treacherous scheming of Jess' unknown enemy!

"Oh, it's not fair!" Olive told herself again.

Then she forced herself to forget her resentment, and, going to the deserted library, she sat down and wrote out the notice calling to-morrow evening's meeting.

She was in the act of pinning it to the notice-board when Letty and Jess, worried because of her non-return, came in search of her. One look at her white face confirmed their fears, and anxiously they came running forward.

"Olive!" exclaimed Jess, in distress.

"What's happened, old scout?" asked the fat girl.

Mutely Olive pointed to the notice

Unless Olive gave up her friendship with Jess Grant, she knew that the Fourth Form would not pass a Vote of Confidence in her. But even though that meant she would lose her captaincy—Olive would not desert the new girl!

on the board. They read it, then turned to her with puzzled frowns.

"A Form meeting," said Letty. "And by old Brammy's orders! But what's the idea?"

"The idea," said Olive weily, "is to see whether I can get the Form to pass a vote of confidence in me. If it doesn't—"

She finished with an expressive shrug, and Jess gave a cry of horror.

"You mean you're to lose your captaincy!" she gasped.

Olive nodded, and quietly she related everything that had happened. Her chums glared angrily when they learnt of the anonymous letter that Jess' unknown enemy had sent the headmistress. They glared even more when they heard of Miss Bramleigh's grim decision.

"Well, I call it a shame!" exclaimed Letty, her plump cheeks aglow with indignation. "Old Brammy's no right to force you to call a Form meeting. Why, it's playing straight into Stephanie's hands!"

Jess caught in her breath. "You mean that—that Olive won't get her vote of confidence?" she faltered.

It was Olive herself who answered. "I'm afraid I won't," she said.

"After all the trouble there's been—Oh, I'm not blaming you, Jess. I know it isn't your fault."

"But it is—it is!" Almost fiercely Jess interrupted her. "What Cecily Savage said the other day is true! I've brought you nothing but bad luck since I've been at St. Kit's."

"Bosh!" cried Olive.

"It isn't bosh! It's true! And you and Letty have been so decent to me. That's what hurts so much. To think that I should be the cause of all this. To think—"

Jess' voice broke, and, with a stifled sob, she turned away. In a moment Olive was at her side, and the Form captain placed a fond arm around her quivering shoulders.

"Don't be silly, dear," she whispered. "You're not to blame. It's all rot to think that you're responsible."

"Of course it's rot," agreed Letty. "Anyway, keep your pecker up." She gave Jess an encouraging clap across the shoulders. "Olive hasn't lost yet, and, if I have anything to do with it,

she won't lose! Come on, Olive, old scout, let's do a spot of canvassing!"

"Canvassing?"

"Yes, like we did before the election. Let's get all the promises we can, before Stephanie gets to work."

"But—"

Olive hesitated. She did not like the idea of asking for votes, but Letty swept aside all her protests.

"Don't be silly! All the best politicians do it," she declared. "Anyway, you won't have to do anything but smile and look your usual charming self. I'll do all the spouting." She turned to Jess. "You coming?" she asked.

Jess hesitated; then she shook her head.

"I—I'd rather not, if you don't mind," she stammered. "I—I've got some lines that simply must be done before call-over."

Actually that was not her reason for staying behind at all. The real reason was that she knew that her presence would be more likely to turn the Form against Olive than to rally them to her side.

So Olive and Letty set off alone. The first place they tried was the school gym. Here Molly Barker and three other Fourth Formers were amusing themselves on the rings. They all gasped with surprise when they learnt about the vote of confidence. But Molly, at least, did not hesitate.

"Vote for you, Olive?" she cried. "You bet I will! We don't want that stuck-up cat Stephanie for Form captain!"

"Splendid!" exclaimed Letty. She made a note in the exercise-book she carried, then challengingly surveyed the others. "What about you?" she asked. "Can I rely on you all to rally round the old firm?"

"Yes, I suppose so."

Their replies were not so emphatic, but Letty knew they would keep their promises, so joyfully she put a tick against their names. Then, when she and Olive were outside in the corridor again, she gave the Form captain's arm a squeeze.

"I told you it would be O.K.!" she said, with a chuckle. "That's four supporters already, and with Jess and myself—why, that's six you can bank on. But come on. We mustn't let the grass grow under our feet. Let's try the Common-room next."

They proceeded there, only to pull up in dismay as they reached it, for from the Common-room came Stephanie's shrill voice. The door was open, and through it they could see Stephanie haranguing a crowd of eight or nine girls.

Letty gave a groan.

"Oh, help! She's heard about the meeting," she grimaced, "and she's doing her best to see they vote against you."

At that moment Stephanie turned her head, and her grey eyes glittered maliciously as she saw Olive and her chum standing there in the corridor.

"If you're fishing around for votes you needn't waste your time here!" she snapped.

"Hear, hear!" chimed in Iris Watts. "Yes, we've finished with you, Olive French," declared Cecily Savage. "We don't want a leader who prefers the company of that upstart Jess Grant to that of the rest of the Form."

Olive flushed, and she plucked at Letty's sleeve as that girl, her cheeks red with indignation, made as if to retort.

"Don't let's argue, Letty," she whispered.

"But—"

"No, please, Letty!"

"Oh, all right!" Rather rebelliously Letty turned away. She crossed out the names of all the girls in the Common-room, glared at the book, then her natural optimism returned. "There's plenty more left," she declared. "Keep smiling, old scout. We're not beaten yet. Come on! The library's our next port of call."

At this time of evening one could always rely on finding the bookworms of the Fourth in the library, and Letty's eyes glistened as she saw Emily Mayer, Doris Figgins, and three other Fourth Formers seated at the magazine table.

"Just the girls I'm looking for!" she exclaimed. "Have you heard the news? There's a scheme on foot to rob Olive of the captaincy!"

"What?"

"Here, whose leg d'you think you're pulling?"

Incredulously the girls stared at her, then their incredulous looks faded, and they all grew serious as Letty explained the position. Rather nervously Emily Mayer regarded the fat girl's exercise-book and businesslike pencil.

"I—I suppose you've come to ask for our support?" she said.

Letty gave a brisk nod, while Olive, feeling rather embarrassed, hovered back by the door.

"Bullseye first time," Letty agreed, and she poised her pencil expectantly. "And I know I can rely on all you girls. You've always been staunch supporters of Olive. You know what a ripping sport she is. You know how she's got the interests of the whole Form at heart, don't you?"

"Y-y-yes," admitted Emily, and her voice was even more nervous than before.

Letty frowned.

"Don't say you're going to let her down," she cried.

Emily flushed and looked confused. She glanced around at her chums, then rather apologetically she turned to the Form captain herself.

"We all like you, Olive," she declared, "and we'd hate to see Stephanie take your place, but—"

She paused, and Letty's frown became a glare.

"But—what!" she snapped.

"Well, it's Jess Grant. Whether she's to blame or not, it can't be contradicted that ever since she's been at St. Kit's there's been nothing but trouble. And the Fourth's sent her to Coventry, you know, so unless you agree—"

Emily's voice sank, then stopped. Olive, her own face pink, drew in a sharp breath.

"Unless I give up my friendship with Jess you refuse to vote for me—is that it?" she demanded.

"Well, yes," admitted Emily.

"We're awfully sorry, Olive," put in Doris Figgins. "We really do like you as captain. But as long as you remain friendly with Jess—"

Doris did not finish, but from the other girls came a series of nods of agreement.

For a moment no one spoke, then angrily Olive caught her chum by the arm.

"Come on, Letty. don't let's waste time here," she said, and she glowered at the unhappy Emily & Co. "If you girls think I'm going to desert Jess you're mistaken."

And dragging the protesting Letty with her, she stamped out into the corridor and slammed the door behind her. That heavy bang drowned the sudden sob that came from the far end of the library.

Seated in an alcove there was Jess herself. She had been busy writing her

lines when Olive and Letty had entered, and, unnoticed, she had remained there. But now all thought of her impot had been driven from her head.

A pathetic figure, she sat there, staring unseeing before her.

"Olive will lose to-morrow—I know she will," she gulped. "While I remain at St. Kit's no one will vote for her. Oh, I wish—"

She paused, and as she choked back her tears a desperate glint appeared in her brown eyes. Suddenly Jess had thought of a way out—thought of how she could repay all Olive's splendid loyalty!

THE RUNAWAY

"I SAY, where's Jess? Any of you girls seen Jess Grant?"

The bell summoning them to call over had interrupted Olive and Letty's recruiting campaign, and as she and her chum entered the Assembly Hall, the Form captain looked around inquiringly.

Most of the girls didn't bother to reply. They had no interest in Jess Grant. They believed all their troubles were due to her. But Molly Barker and one or two others shook their heads.

"Haven't seen anything of her for hours," declared Molly.

"Well, it's jolly queer." Olive frowned worriedly. "If she doesn't soon turn up she'll be marked absent."

At that moment Nita Williams, the prefect whose turn it was to mark the register, entered the Hall. Olive and Letty exchanged wry glances.

"What the dickens can Jess be up to?" Olive whispered. "Anyway, we've got to try to screen her. Thank goodness it's Nita who's on duty."

Nita didn't take her duties very seriously. Her one ambition seemed always to be to get through call over, and get back to her study. As she gabbled out the names she hardly glanced up from the register.

"Mary Briggs," she called.

"Present."

"Olive French."

"Present."

"Jess Grant."

Olive gave her chum a frantic nudge, and hurriedly Letty called out. To their relief Nita did not notice anything amiss. Indeed, she hardly waited for the answer, but rushed on to the next name. Jess' absence had escaped notice!

When the roll call had been finished, the prefect shut the book and made tracks for the door.

"You kids'll have to see yourselves in bed to-night," she announced. "I've got a chess match on, and I'll turn off the light from downstairs. But no larking about, mind—or there'll be trouble."

And with a warning nod around, she departed. The Fourth Formers gave a subdued cheer. There was nothing they hated more than going to bed under supervision. Until recently they had always gone upstairs on their own—but that was a privilege they had lost; one of several for whose withdrawal they blamed Jess.

But where was Jess?

Although there was half an hour's free time before bed, Olive and Letty were perplexed and a little uneasy. They went in search of their missing chum. They visited the gym, they looked in the Common-room, they looked everywhere, but they failed to find Jess.

At last they went to the library. There, on the desk in the alcove, they

found Jess' half-finished lines, but there was no sign of Jess herself.

In growing anxiety Olive stared at Letty.

"What can have become of her?" she asked.

The plump girl shook her head. "Don't ask me. I haven't the—hey, steady on!" She gave a startled gasp. "I say, surely she can't have gone on the trail of that unknown enemy of hers!" she exclaimed.

"Surely not. If she'd found a clue, she'd be bound to have told us. Besides—" Olive broke off and made for the door. "Let's try upstairs. You know how upset she was. Perhaps she's gone to bed," she said.

They made their way to the Fourth Form dormitory, but it was empty. Nonplussed, they were about to leave when suddenly Olive gave a gasp of surprise.

"What's that?" she asked, and went racing across to her own bed in the corner.

Letty, staring in bewilderment, saw her pick up an envelope that lay on the pillow, and she gave a gasp herself as she recognised the writing on the envelope.

"Why, it's from Jess!" she ejaculated.

Olive nodded, but she did not speak, and abruptly her face went very white. Some instinct made her guess the solution of the mystery. She remembered how concerned Jess had been at the thought that she might be deprived of her captaincy, and she remembered, too, those half-written lines down in the library. The letter in her hand forgotten, the Form captain caught her chum agitatedly by the arm.

"Letty," she cried hoarsely. "Jess must have been in the library when we visited it. She must have overheard what Emily Mayer and the rest of them said."

"You—you mean about not voting for you unless you refused to have anything more to do with Jess?" queried Letty.

Olive nodded, and, her heart thumping, a startled suspicion in her mind, she ripped open the envelope and extracted the single sheet of notepaper it contained. One glance was sufficient.

"I knew it," she muttered, and sank limply down on the bed. "Letty, she's gone."

"G-g-gone?"

"Yes, run away!"

"Run—run away?" Letty gave an incredulous gasp. Her mouth fell open and her eyes nearly popped out of her head. "Run away!" she cried again, and made a wild snatch for the letter. "Here, let me see," she urged.

In silent amazement she read what their missing chum had written, then she also sank limply down on to the bed. For the news was so incredible—so staggering—so unexpected. And yet there could be no getting away from it. Jess' letter left no room for doubt.

"Dear Olive," she had written, "I cannot let you sacrifice yourself for me. You have been so decent to me that I would never be able to look you in the face again if you lost the captaincy—and you will lose it if I stay on at St. Kit's. Emily Mayer and all the others will never vote for you to-morrow if I stay on, so I must go. I hate to leave without saying good-bye to you and Letty, and I hate the thought of leaving St. Kit's. I could have been so happy here, if—but it's no good thinking of what might have been. And, anyway, all's not lost yet. My trip to Peewit Isle may enable me to learn the truth, in which case I shall return. But if I do

not come back, please remember that I shall always be grateful to you and Letty for all your kindness. Best of luck to you both.

"Yours," "Jess."

Letty read the letter through a second time, then she gave another gasp.

"Well, of all the chumps!" she cried. "Fancy—" She broke off and looked around. "I suppose she really has gone?" she said.

They went across to Jess' bed and looked in her locker. It was empty, and the suitcase under her bed had gone. Dismally Olive straightened up.

"Yes, she's gone!" she said. "It was sweet of her to think of me, but—oh, she shouldn't have done it! What does the captaincy matter? Let the Form vote for whom they like. I don't care, Letty!" She caught her chum by the arm. "We've got to go after her—we've got to bring her back!"

Letty stared blankly.

"Bring her back! But how can we? We don't know where she's gone," she objected.

"Yes, we do. In her letter she talks



"I knew it," Olive muttered, and she sank limply on the bed. "Letty, she's gone!" "Gone?" echoed Letty. Olive nodded. Their chum had run away!

of visiting Peewit Isle; and that's where she is now—making one last desperate effort to clear up all this mystery. Come on! Olive gave the fat girl a frantic tug. "We've got to bring her back, I tell you. If we look sharp we'll be able to do it without anyone being the wiser. You heard what Nita said."

"About not coming up to see us in bed, you mean?"

Olive nodded. "Exactly! So no one need know until the morning that Jess has gone—except the Fourth Formers, of course! But they won't say anything. They'll think we're all up to some jape or another when they find our beds empty. Anyway, come on! Let's go after Jess."

As she spoke Olive snatched up her hat and coat and put them on. Her brain was on fire. Her heart was thumping. That Jess should do anything so desperate as this had never, even occurred to her. But she wouldn't accept Jess' sacrifice. The captaincy didn't matter. Nothing mattered. The only thing that counted was to bring the runaway back to school.

"Hurry!" she urged, as Letty stood there dazedly. "Every minute may make all the difference."

Silently the other girl put on her hat and coat; then she gave an alarmed gasp, for footsteps sounded on the stairs.

"Stephanie and the rest—they're coming up to bed," she whispered. "They mustn't see us sneaking out."

"Then buck up and get a move on," urged Olive. "Through the window—quick!"

Flinging open the window, they both climbed out on to the fire-escape. Their quest to find Jess had begun.

JESS GOES EXPLORING

"THANK goodness the tide's out!" It was Jess Grant who spoke. Her brown eyes lit up as they glimpsed through the darkness the long, oblong shape that was Peewit Isle.

The boat in which Jess sat was the skiff she had obtained from her mysterious double earlier in the day.

She had found it where her double left it, amongst the reeds by the ferry.

In the bottom of the boat lay the suitcase in which she had packed a few necessities. But Jess had no thought of it now. No thought, either, of what she was to do, or where she was to go.

Certainly, it would be no good returning to London. No home awaited her there, for the surly guardians with whom she had lived before Miss Dalton had appeared on the scene and sent her to St. Kit's had returned to Ireland. Jess was without a friend in the world, and in her purse was less than a pound.

Yet somehow she meant to survive. Perhaps she would be able to find work. Perhaps—

But her future didn't matter. Even the desperate step she had taken in running away didn't matter. All that concerned her now was to land on Peewit Isle and search for the secret passage she knew connected the island with that unknown house marked on the chart in her possession.

Why exactly had her double drawn that chart? What secret lay hidden in

that underground tunnel? And where did it lead?

A thrill of excitement ran down Jess' spine.

"If only I can discover the truth! If only I can clear up all this horrid mystery!" she whispered to herself. "Oh, wouldn't it be wonderful!"

Her pulses raced and her eyes gleamed. She would be able to return to St. Kit's then! There would be no need for her to make her big sacrifice. For, once the school knew the truth they would cease to condemn her; they

Your Editor's Corner



MY DEAR READERS.—I wonder what sort of tricks you have up those schoolgirl sleeves of yours, waiting to play on your friends and your family next Saturday?

Why should you catch them next Saturday, did you ask?

Because it's April 1st, of course! I don't know why it is, I'm sure, but I'm not very clever at "catching" people, somehow, even on April Fools' Day.

If I should say to somebody: "Oh, look, there's a mouse running up your coat!" then, sure as Fate, that person would turn and say: "Oh, yeah!"—or something like that. Then I should be the "April fool"!

I did succeed in catching out Penelope at the office last year, though. As she's probably told you, she finds it rather difficult to remember the date always.

Looking at the alendar, I saw it was April 1st; so I thought swiftly, and then turned to Penelope.

"Isn't that a spider racing across your desk?" I asked her.

Penelope gave one shriek, and fled from the room.

CAUGHT OUT!

I gave her the "all-clear" signal a few moments later, and she returned, breathing grateful thanks to me for my "bravery."

So I simply had to tell her that it had been an April 1st joke—but she wasn't very amused!

I'm afraid I forgot all about it then and got down to work, while Penelope went into her own office.

Presently my phone rang.

"Hallo!" I said.

"Good-morning!" said a deep voice. "This is the Sunshine Car Company. Now, about that new car you ordered. If you'll send us a cheque for six hundred pounds we'll be pleased to deliver the car this afternoon."

"What on earth!" I gasped. "Six hundred pounds! I haven't ordered any car!"

"No?" said the voice, now very different, and quite familiar to me. "That's a pity—because I was going to put a nice, big, crawly spider on the driving-seat for you, knowing how you like them!"

Then click! went the receiver.

would cease to ask Olive to give up her friendship with her.

With these thoughts running through her mind, Jess rowed eagerly towards the reed-covered shore of the island. The moon was hidden behind a cloud, and the cold wind, rustling through the reeds, made an eerie, rather terrifying noise.

Involuntarily she shivered. Then she sat up with a jerk, all her dislike of the darkness forgotten. For ahead could dimly be seen another boat. Silently it was nosing its way through the water, and even as she watched it vanished amongst the reeds and a tall, slender figure leapt ashore.

Someone else was visiting Peewit

**"Girls' Crystal" Office,
The Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street,
London, E.C.1.**

It was Penelope, of course, ringing me from the office next door!

NEXT WEEK'S STORIES

Now I must give you your weekly peep into next Friday's programme of stories.

"The Phantom of the Bay" sounds an exciting tale, doesn't it?

And it is, too. It features our popular young detective, Noel Raymond, in one of the most baffling and amazing mysteries that he has yet had to solve.

"Pat's Boat-Train Adventure" is the title of the tale starring that delightful young girl reporter, Pat Lovell. Wherever Pat is you can always be sure there is "news" and a big story. Next week's tale is no exception, I promise you.

Another charming, complete story featuring Kaye of the Kennels and her lovable pets will also appear; and so will further instalments of our three grand serials which you are all enjoying so much.

Don't forget to order your **GIRLS' CRYSTAL** in advance, will you? Even if it is April 1st next Saturday, you mustn't be caught out because Mr. Newsagent has sold all the **GIRLS' CRYSTALS** before you arrive.

BOOK-LENGTH STORIES.

Some of you write to me from time to time, asking me if our authors publish full-size story-books—as well as writing for our weekly schoolgirl papers.

There's one snag about well-bound books—and that is the expense of them.

So what I have done for many years now is to arrange for author's serials to be published in paper-bound books—for only fourpence each.

This means that, for fourpence, schoolgirls can obtain book-length stories by favourite authors.

Four new titles are published each month. Three of the stories are generally favourite serials that have appeared before—but now all in one book-length whole. Then I try to publish one new and original story each month, too. You will always find the titles of the month's four "Schoolgirl's Own Library" books in our pages—this month's on page 607.

So next time you are in your favourite newsagent's shop, be sure to treat yourself to one or more of these books.

Your sincere friend,

YOUR EDITOR.

Isle! Who could it be? Jess' heart began to thump.

"It's either my double, or my unknown enemy. I'm positive it is!" she murmured.

Eagerly she strained her eyes, and as the moon emerged from behind the clouds, shedding a silvery light over the lake, she got a good view of the distant figure. Her heart began to beat faster than ever, for there could be no mistaking her.

"It is my double!" she murmured and wonderingly she stared as the other girl went striding across the island. Then she roused herself, and again began to ply her oars. She felt that at last her troubles were nearing their end. If only she could capture her enemy!

Excitedly she jumped out on to the wet mud as the skiff grounded, and after dragging the boat out of the water she set off on foot. There was no sign of her quarry, but Jess knew where she must be. Inside the ruined tower—there was no other place of concealment on the small island.

On tiptoe she approached the tumble-down mass of ancient masonry, and daringly she peeped through the arched doorway. Then her eyes opened wide with surprise. The cellar—all that remained of the once tall tower—was empty. Her double had vanished as completely as if the ground had opened and swallowed her up!

For a moment Jess stood there, utterly nonplussed, then, as she thought of the chart in her pocket, a gleam crept into her brown eyes.

"She's disappeared into the underground passage," she told herself. "There must be a secret door here somewhere."

Taking out an electric torch, she switched it on and let the bright light rove round the bare walls and the stone-flagged floor. In the dust the other girl's footprints could clearly be seen, and Jess felt a thrill run through her as she saw that they came to an abrupt end beside a heap of reeds.

Dropping to one knee, she swept the reeds aside, and then a cry of triumph escaped her lips. Set in one of the ancient flagstones was a rusty iron ring. The flagstone was actually a cleverly concealed trapdoor!

With hands that quivered, she tugged at the ring, and after a moment or two the heavy flagstone creaked up, revealing a square, black cavity in the ground—a cavity in which could be seen a rusty iron ladder, clamped to one brick wall.

Hardly daring to breathe, Jess crouched there. At the foot of the ladder she could dimly see an arched opening, that evidently led to the secret passage under the lake, and faintly to her ears came the pit-pat of receding footsteps.

Her double was stealing through the tunnel! But what was her object? Where was she going? Could it be to the house marked on the chart?

Jess did not know, nor did she care. She only realised that at last she had a golden chance to solve the strange mystery that surrounded her.

Pocketing her torch, she clambered down on to the ladder, and as her weight rested on one of the rungs there came a creaking noise, and abruptly the stone trapdoor above her head swung round and closed.

Jess gasped as inky blackness engulfed her, but, gritting her teeth, she slowly groped her way downwards.

What discoveries will Jess make in this secret tunnel? Will she come face to face with her double? Be sure to read next Friday's chapters of this enthralling serial. Order your **GIRLS' CRYSTAL** in advance.



THE GIRL ON THE RAFT

PAT LOVELL, undisturbed by the roaring, raging storm that shook houses, loosened tiles, brought down telegraph poles, blew down hoardings, thundered, whined, and whistled, slept soundly.

She was tired after a day's hard work at the "Midshire Gazette" office, and even when the telephone bell rang in her bed-room, Pat did not wake up instantly. It was only after the third strident ring that she stirred and groped sleepily for the receiver.

"Hallo!" came a sharp, excited voice.

"Oh, hallo, chief!" said Pat, sitting up with a jerk.

The surprise of hearing the editor's voice at this late hour was quite enough to banish all thought of sleep.

"There's a yacht drifting on to the rocks in Halwon Bay," the editor declared. "Foster's ill, and there's no one to go but you. It's the only local shipwreck we've had in years, and someone must be on the scene."

"Shipwreck? Golly! Right-ho, chief!" said Pat briskly. "I'll be ready in a moment."

"Good girl! I'm sending a taxi to collect you. Put on some warm clothes—rubber boots, sou'-wester, if you have it," he replied. "Get everyone's story. This may be a big thing for you."

Pat quickly dressed. Hardly had she done so than she heard the taxi draw up by the gate. The wind was so strong when she went outside that it nearly blew her over.

"Phew! What a night!" she gasped, as she clambered into the car and was driven off.

Halwon Bay was ten miles away, and as the taxi descended the hill to the shore, Pat leaned out of the window, sea-spray cutting her cheeks, the wind whistling past her ears. Out in the blackness of the night a starry light burst. It was a distress rocket from the imperilled ship.

As the taxi pulled up, Pat leapt out and went scrunching over the shingle, joining the small group that was gazing out across the water.

The sea thundered up the beach, hissing and roaring, and away to the left, half-hidden by the rocks, Pat could dimly see the wrecked ship.

"Private yacht!" yelled one of the men.

The yacht, lights still ablaze, seemed to be hopelessly jammed on the rocks a quarter of a mile out to sea. It lurched sideways, and sparks flew from its funnels as if in protest.

"Has the lifeboat gone out?" asked Pat.

"Yes; ten minutes ago. They might get through."

Pat looked across at the cliffs, and, realising she would get a good view from there, she made her way up the now slippery path that wound its way to the top of the headland.

Buffeted by the wind, she crouched down on the edge of the cliff and stared out to sea.

The yacht was fast on the rocks; but now, in the rays of a powerful light from the yacht's deck, she saw the lifeboat. For a moment it rose on the crest of the wave, and then dipped down so far out of sight that she thought it had sunk. But up it came on a wave again.

That rescue was a sight Pat would never forget. Six men and a woman were taken from the yacht. Clad in lifebelts, they were lowered by ropes to the cleverly manoeuvred lifeboat. One man went into the water, but was pulled out. And the last one to leave the ship, a man in uniform, made the rope end fast to the taffrail, and swung over.

"The skipper—last to leave his ship," murmured Pat.

The lifeboat pulled for the shore, but Pat still looked sadly at the yacht, and suddenly she gave a startled gasp, for someone remained on the abandoned vessel—a girl!

Pat Lovell trusted the girl from the wreck. She couldn't believe that the young stowaway had done anything to be ashamed of. Yet how to explain the contents of that box? It was filled with jewels—stolen diamonds!

By ELIZABETH CHESTER

Before she could get over the shock the light on the yacht went out, and the ship was engulfed in darkness. The wind howled; the mighty seas heaved in furious might. And alone, forgotten, deserted, whichever it was, a girl was left on the yacht to the mercy of both sea and tempest.

For a moment or two Pat remained staring, and then, springing up, she turned and went racing back to the path, shouting at the top of her voice, and flashing her torch.

But as she reached the top of the path she paused, and looked back at the yacht. She stood rigid, staring; for somewhere in the water a light bobbed, dull and feeble, seen from a distance, yet sure enough a light.

Pat ran back to the cliff and watched; for the light was drifting shorewards, but away from the bay, away from the lifeboat and helpers.

The light did not now seem quite so feeble. It was clear enough to show the wooden slats of a ship's raft, and a shadowy figure, a white face.

The girl on the yacht had gone overboard with a raft! Now at the mercy of the sea and wind, she was being sent ashore.

Pat Lovell ran along the headland, and frantically searched for the path that led down to the next cove.

For that was where the girl would be washed ashore—there, or not far from it. For, as Pat well remembered, dangerous currents swung in there, and such a current had now taken charge of the raft.

HER SECRET DISCOVERED

PAT scrambled down the slippery path, and quaked inside as she heard the sea's thunder, and thought of the jagged rocks. Her pocket torch picked out those rocks, spiky and treacherous. In the summer-time she had walked over them, and she knew they ran out to sea. On one of them the raft would surely be wrecked.

With the sea half filling the cove, Pat reached the rocks and flashed her torch out to sea. Barely fifty yards

away drifted the raft, rising and falling with the waves, swept crazily onward. The girl clung to it with one hand; the other was raised appealingly.

Pat stepped nearer to the water which swirled up to her knees. A heavier wave filled her boots with icy water, but she did not draw back. She went scrambling over the rocks, and as the raft crashed into one of them she plunged right into the water, gripping at the looped ropes at the edge of the wooden structure.

The power of the water terrified her as it rushed back from the cove. It tugged at her with incredible force, seeming to suck her from the cove like a hungry demon. But, jammed against a rock, she clung to the raft, though her arms seemed to be pulled from their sockets. Then, as the receding waves gave her a moment's respite, she hauled at the raft with new-found, sudden strength.

Over it went, tilting on the rocks, and the girl sprawled from it.

"The box!" she cried. "The box!" The waves rushed over her as she snatched a metal box from the raft. Pat grabbed her, and together they fought their way to safety. Breathless and exhausted, they managed to struggle to dry land, and there they stood, gasping, utterly spent. It was the shipwrecked girl who first recovered her voice. Anxiously she looked at the box she clutched so tightly.

"Those crooks musn't get it," she whispered huskily, and her voice had a trace of American accent.

"The crooks?" asked Pat.

"The men on the yacht. They—" The girl broke off and frantically she stared across the heaving waves. "The envelope! Oh! I've left it! It's in the bureau. If the yacht goes down—"

Pat tried to calm her, assuring her that the yacht would not break up in the night, that the wind would drop, and that on the morrow she could get the envelope.

"What you need is some dry clothes, hot drinks, and sleep," said Pat briskly. "Do you think you can climb up to the top of the cliff?"

The girl looked at her, brows wrinkled. She was ghastly pale now, but her face was attractive. Her age, Pat judged, was something between seventeen and twenty, but she could not quite decide what the girl was by way of occupation.

"Were you a passenger on the yacht?" Pat asked.

The girl looked at her sharply, frowned, and then put her hand out, resting it on Pat's arm; as she did so, a pleading look came to her eyes.

"Don't give me away," she begged.

"Don't even say you have seen me!" Pat stared. It was the most amazing plea she had heard, and she began to think that the girl was delirious.

"Don't say I've seen you!" she echoed. "But—great goodness, you are from the yacht, aren't you? There'll be inquiries. You don't want them to think you were lost with the ship, surely—even though," she added, "they left you."

The girl shook her head, and smiled wryly.

"They're bad—but not as bad as that," she said. "They left me because—can't you guess?"

"No," admitted Pat.

"Because they didn't know I was there. I'm a stowaway," said the girl. "All the way from America; and but for this gale we'd have reached France."

Pat flopped down on a near-by rock.

As a reporter she had to find news, but now it was coming to her without being sought.

"A stowaway," she echoed, and whistled softly. "My golly! You've got a nerve. And now—"

Pat thought quickly, and understood why the girl did not want to face rescuers and helpers. She was a stowaway for one thing—for another, she probably had no passport. If she landed, she would be arrested.

"I see," murmured Pat uneasily.

"I haven't thanked you for rescuing me," the girl went on. "I—I've been too dazed. But it was wonderfully brave of you, and—and I'm sorry that now I—I'm being difficult."

Pat gave a rueful laugh.

"It wouldn't matter a bit ordinarily," she said, "only I'm a newspaper reporter."

The girl gave a sharp cry and drew back.

"A newspaper reporter? You know me then?"

Pat shook her head.

"Afraid I don't," she confessed. "Perhaps if I were an American reporter I might have done. Are you a film actress, a millionairess, or what?"

The girl shook her head.

"I'm—," she hesitated. "I'm someone quite humble, only just at this moment front-page news—No!" she snapped out suddenly. "I'm not! I'm boasting. It's not true. I'm just—well, a work-girl. I—I wanted to see France."

Pat said nothing by way of comment; but she was not so simple as to believe that second story. As she stood there, nonplussed, the girl tugged appealingly at her sleeve.

"Please—please help me," she said. "Help me to get a bed in a hotel. I have some American money. I—I can pay for it. Can't you say that—that we were watching the wreck and slipped into the water? Won't that explain our wet clothes?"

Pat hesitated, and then nodded.

"All right," she said. "Let's go." She sent the girl on ahead in case she slipped, and herself followed close behind. After a few yards, finding climbing difficult with the box to hold, the girl turned back to her.

"Could you hold the box?" she asked. "But be careful with it—and, remember, you haven't seen me with it."

Pat took the box, and they went on, sheltered from the howling gale by the cliff-face and side of the path. As they reached the top voices sounded and torches flashed. Then a group of men—coastguards—loomed into view.

"Hallo, there!" called one of them.

"Are you from the wreck?"

The girl stowaway hesitated for a moment only, and then gave an almost frantic denial.

"No—I—I saw the yacht, and I slipped into the sea from the path."

"Did you now? That's bad! But who is that behind you?"

"A newspaper reporter," said Pat; and without knowing quite why, she held the box out of sight. "We're both wet through," she added. "But I expect we'll be able to wake them up at the hotel by the bay—"

"They're awake right now," said the genial coastguard. He eyed the two girls sharply. "I suppose you didn't see anyone drifting on a raft, did you?" he asked. "The skipper says that everyone aboard came off all right—"

"I should hope they did," answered Pat, ignoring the first part of the question; and with her arm about the other girl's shoulder, she hurried on.

Fifty yards or so farther on the girl

from the yacht halted, and looked at Pat, pressing her arm.

"You've been a pal," she said, with deep emotion. "I'll never, never forget this. You hid that box for me, without asking questions. You've a right to know more than I've told you, and you shall—but not yet. All I do want you to know is that I'm not a crook. The men are—but I can't prove that without the envelope."

"I'm not asking questions," Pat assured her. She made to hand back the box, but the girl pressed it back into her hands.

"Please keep it until I collect it?" she said.

"All right," Pat promised. "But come on—you've got to be dried."

Down the path to the promenade they went, stumbling, tripping, but without mishap. The beach below was now a mass of lights, all the cars on the promenade having turned their headlights on to it.

The lifeboat had been beached, and men were hauling it up, while the survivors from the wreck had apparently been taken away already.

A man in oilskins, seeing the two girls were drenched through, ran to them.

"Are you from the wreck?" he asked.

"No!" answered the stowaway girl.

But a man standing with two others suddenly wheeled. He stared at her, and then, with a muttered exclamation, stepped forward.

"My gosh!" he shouted. "That girl! Here—hold her. She was a stowaway on the yacht!"

PAT VISITS THE WRECK

THE girl, startled, drew back, and then suddenly came to life; she ran, with the wind behind her, reached the road, and dodged people who tried to intercept her.

Pat Lovell was less lucky; she had been unprepared for the girl's sudden sprint, and was caught by the man in oilskins.

"Who are you?" he asked.

Pat kept the box concealed.

"I'm a reporter—" she answered, and to avoid being cross-questioned, added: "That girl said she slipped from the path into the sea."

Another man now came forward, and flicked a hand to his hat, a rival reporter who recognised her at a glance.

"That's Miss Lovell of the 'Gazette,'" he said. "How do, Pat?"

"Fine," shivered Pat. "If you're snooping for news, I've got some—"

"Yes?" he asked eagerly.

"The sea's wet," said Pat, and as the fisherman in oilskins let go of her arm, she ran to the road, teeth chattering.

Cold though she was, Pat hunted amongst the cars, and the quickly gathered crowd for the stowaway. But there was no trace of her. The man from the yacht was hunting her, too, and Pat heard him talking to people.

"Saw her on the quay—New York. Must have stowed away," he said.

"Your police will get her right enough."

Pat moved away, and then, being thoroughly chilled, she returned to her taxi, dumped her coat and the box inside, and told the driver to rush to the hotel as quickly as he could.

At the hotel Pat had a hot bath, and borrowed a change of clothes. The mere fact that she was a newspaper reporter was enough to gain her special privileges, and presently in one of the managers' frocks, Pat was noting the names of the yacht, of the skipper, crew, and passengers.

They were all in the hotel kitchen being given hot soup and coffee—all

save one, a woman, who had gone to bed.

The yacht belonged to a rich American, and the other passengers, she learned, were his friends. They were on a pleasure trip bound for the South of France, but had been blown off their course. The fact that there had been a stowaway on board surprised them all, and they could not guess who she was.

Pat stayed for more than an hour, and then telephoned to her editor. As the fact that there had been a stowaway on board was common property, Pat told him what everyone else knew.

She could not, in any case, have told the girl's identity; but she kept the matter of the box secret.

"Well done," said the chief. "Rush back to the office if you're fit enough, and slam it out on a typewriter; then take to-morrow off. Good girl! Good work!"

Pat went to the office, and there she rattled out all the details. It was early morning before, heavy-eyed, she taxied home. By then the storm had dropped, and Pat, feeling tired out, staggered up to her room, peeled off the borrowed clothes, and dropped into bed.

But on the chief's desk at the office she had left an important message:

"Cable America to find out all girls who are front-page news, not famous actresses, hoireesses, etc.—one of them may be stowaway."

Pat slept like a log until ten o'clock in the morning, when once again the strident sound of the telephone bell awoke her.

"Hallo, chief," said Pat sleepily, as she put the receiver to her ear.

But it was not the chief's voice answering; it was a girl's—the stowaway's! In a moment Pat was fully awake.

"Hallo, yes! How ever did you find this number?" she asked.

"I remembered your name, and while I was hiding I heard a man talk about me and say I was with Pat Lovell, of the 'Midshire Gazette.' That's all. I telephoned your office, and they told me you'd be at this number—I'm afraid I may not be able to keep dodging these men from the wreck."

Pat answered without a second's thought.

"Come here, then," she said.

"I don't know if I can. It's kind of you, but I may not be able to make it, and I want to ask you something. If you can get aboard the yacht—the envelope—the bureau—saloon—ended the girl, her voice rising.

Then the call ended abruptly, and the burring sound of the closed circuit came to Pat. In alarm, Pat got through to the exchange, and asked for the call to be traced.

"Public call-box," came the reply a moment later. "In the village of Halwon."

Pat hurled herself from bed, hurriedly washed and started to dress, but again the telephone bell went. This time it was the chief.

"Thought you'd be awake, and would like to know," he said. "A call has just come through from Halwon. Foster is covering the story. The stowaway has just been arrested leaving a call-box."

"Oh dear!" said Pat dismally. "And—did you get a reply from America?"

"Not yet; but I'm getting a picture of the girl taken. No harm if you're in the mood, drifting along to Halwon. I gave you the day off, but—"

"I'm going," said Pat promptly.

The first thing Pat did when she was fully dressed was to take the box from

the wardrobe. It was a solidly built affair, but now, as she studied it, she saw that it had suffered more than she had thought in the night's adventure. It had been smashed against a rock, and as she turned it round in her hands the lid suddenly sprang open. What a shock Pat got then. For the box contained jewellery—diamond necklaces and other trinkets!

"My—my golly!" she gasped, and sat down on the bed to think.

Diamonds! No wonder the box was precious! Diamonds—crooks—her thoughts ran—front-page news in America!

Pat, shivering with excitement, put the box back in her wardrobe, and then, remembering how easily the stowaway had traced her, the thought came to her mind that the men from the yacht might have some motive for tracing her, too. They might guess that she had the box.

If they were crooks, they might not scruple to come to this house, to search

Lovell, my girl, you'll make a grand reporter one day. That guess about an American crook was right!"

"Right? You mean the girl is a crook?" Pat gasped.

The chief thumped a cablegram on his desk.

"Three girls are front-page news. Two we needn't worry about, but the third was Mrs. Vanhuyen's secretary; she's been hunted by the police in every state of America!"

"What for?" breathed Pat.

"Jewel robbery, robbing Mrs. Vanhuyen of a collection of jewels worth two hundred thousand pounds."

Pat Lovell paled, and clutched the desk for support. Two hundred thousand pounds! Her mind reeled at the thought; for she knew instantly what the box contained—the precious box almost lost at sea, and now in her landlady's care.

"Her name?" she asked.

"Wanda Lennox. Quick—snap into a



"Are you from the wreck?" a man cried. The stowaway girl hesitated only a moment, then: "No; I slipped into the sea," she cried. Pat gazed at her in amazement. Why should the mystery girl deny that she had been on the wreck?

the room for the jewels! In that case, the wardrobe was a poor hiding-place.

Pat decided to fix the lid down and fasten the box with string. Taking it down to her landlady then, she asked her to take care of it, and, whatever she did, not to let it out of her keeping. The landlady, convinced that it held Press secrets, promised that it should be well-cared for, and Pat, knowing how trustworthy she was, had a load taken from her mind.

"Crooks—diamonds—stowaway—" ran her thoughts as she walked out into the spring air.

Breakfasting hungrily in a near-by small restaurant, Pat thought out her line of action. She must interview the stowaway, but also, she had to get aboard the yacht. Press representatives might be permitted to do so if the weather was calm—on the other hand, they might be barred.

Instead of going to Halwon at once, however, she took a taxi to the office. It was well that she did so, for the chief had news.

As she looked into his office, he jumped up in excitement.

"I've got the low-down on the stowaway!" he cried exultantly. "Pat

taxi! Go to the Halwon Police Station and try to interview that girl."

Pat Lovell tottered from the office, shaken by the news; then she flew down the stairs to the street, and, leaping into a taxi, drove to Halwon.

"Oh golly—oh golly—aiding and abetting a jewel thief!" Pat groaned.

"The jewels in my place! And if she gives me away, a nice mess I shall be in, hiding them, keeping it from the chief!"

On arriving at Halwon, a fresh surprise awaited Pat. Foster, the other "Gazette" reporter, met her, and told her that Wanda had been freed. He did not know that she was Wanda Lennox—only the chief and Pat yet knew that, and he referred to her as the stowaway. It seemed that the owner of the yacht—the man who had recognised the girl on the beach—had refused to charge her as a stowaway, and as she had not been able to help landing without a passport, and the yacht owner had promised to pay her expenses for transport back to America, the police were not holding her.

"The yacht owner seems a decent fellow," said Foster. "He's accepted responsibility for her. She's at the

hotel with the rest of them, and with his permission we are all interviewing her in ten minutes' time. You might as well come along."

"I might as well," agreed Pat.

And ten minutes later, with Foster and half a dozen others, she was in the hotel lounge, waiting for Wanda Lennox. She arrived, escorted by the owner of the yacht, a sleek-looking man in the middle thirties, who addressed the reporters as "boys," and was amiability itself.

But Pat's attention was directed on Wanda, who looked even paler and more frightened than before.

The reporters flocked round, and she told her story—how she had smuggled aboard to get a trip to Paris, a place she had always dreamed was like fairyland. As Pat listened, she began to think that, after all, the girl was just a clever trickster.

"A secretary," mused Pat. Suddenly she realised that the girl must know shorthand.

Scribbling hurriedly, Pat wrote a message in shorthand. Then, underneath it, in longhand, she wrote: "Please give autograph."

Pushing forward, Pat easily enough gained her attention, and asked for the autograph, adding:

"If you can read shorthand, you may as well check my notes of your story."

The girl read the notes and started, her eyes widening for a moment in panic; for what Pat had written in shorthand was:

"Cable from America states Wanda Lennox wanted for jewel robbery. How about that box? Are you making me an accessory?"

Wanda took the pencil and met Pat's eyes.

"It wants correcting," she said.

The pencil moved busily, and other reporters craned their heads; but Wanda took care to keep the book hidden from them. And Pat, taking it back, closed it hurriedly.

"Thanks!" she said, and, moving to a quiet corner, read the message the other girl had written:

"I am honest. I swear it. If I am found with the jewels it will be taken as proof of my guilt. Gates, the owner of the yacht, knows me. Why doesn't he admit it? He wants to send me back to the States to be arrested there. He thinks the jewels are on the yacht where he put them, but where he could not find them in the panic. He will go back to the yacht. Please find that envelope. It proves his guilt. Only that will save me from prison. Please trust me!"

Pat, closing the notebook, looked up and saw the yacht owner standing a few yards from her, watching her intently.

"Ah, Mr. Gates!" exclaimed Pat, smiling. "Now for your story, please!"

He came to the point.

"You were the girl with the stow-away?" he said.

"She certainly fooled me!" laughed Pat, bluffing.

"Yes, and you certainly missed a big story," he answered, with a grim smile.

"I did," grimaced Pat; and an idea occurred to her. "If I don't get aboard the yacht to describe it, it'll mean the sack, I'm afraid."

Mr. Gates eyed her narrowly for a moment in silence, and then jerked up his head as though coming to from reverie.

"That's easy. Come aboard with me," he said, "and in return show me just where the girl was washed up on the shore, will you? Meet me outside in five minutes' time, and say nothing to the others. There'll be a riot if they know one reporter is being favoured."

He walked back to the other

reporters, and Pat watched him thoughtfully. She had plenty to think about. That urgent plea from Wanda sounded sincere. She made no bones about her identity, or the jewel-box, and Pat realised that a jewel thief was hardly likely to stowaway with a jewel-box.

But if the men were the thieves, and had the jewels with them, then Wanda might easily have stowed away in order to try to recover the diamonds and prove her own innocence.

"If only I could get that envelope," thought Pat, "then I should know the truth definitely."

She went outside, and in a minute or two the American yacht owner joined her.

"The boat's perfectly safe," he said. "She's just jammed on the rocks, but tugs will pull her off when the tide's right."

Together they went down to the beach, and soon they were being rowed out to the wreck.

PAT, on the sloping deck of the yacht, trod warily, not too sure that even now she might not hear a nasty gurgling sound, and feel the yacht go down.

It was a magnificent yacht, and Pat studied everything with deep interest. She was shown the cabins, the engine-room, the crew's quarters; but it was the saloon that interested her most, and she saw at once with a heartbeat of excitement, the most important item of furniture—the bureau. The other passengers were elsewhere, and Mr. Gates closed the door as he and Pat entered the saloon.

"Now, Miss Lovell," he said, in changed, business-like tones, "you helped the stowaway ashore. Did you by any chance notice—"

He turned, for the door had burst open.

"It's not there!" cried the woman passenger, entering, pale and agitated. "She must have taken—"

But, seeing Pat, she broke off.

"All right!" snapped Mr. Gates.

"It's not all right," answered the woman fretfully. "For goodness' sake make sure about—about the other thing! Have you opened the bureau?"

He shrugged, excused himself to Pat, and crossed to the bureau, opening it. Then, taking something out, he held it up to the woman.

"There! That ease your mind?" he asked.

Pat's heart thumped. The envelope—the proof of Wanda's innocence! For after hearing these people talking together she knew that Wanda's story was true.

The thing that agitated the woman was the loss of the box. They suspected that Wanda had found it, and now, at their mercy, she was to be questioned.

The yacht owner returned the envelope to the bureau, and then turned quickly as running steps came. A man burst into the saloon. He was even more agitated than the woman.

"The cops—" he began; but he, too, broke off on seeing Pat.

"Leave them to me," said Gates. He indicated Pat with a motion of the hand, addressing the woman. "She's a reporter. Show her round."

Pat moved to the door with the woman, and heard voices on deck.

"Wanda Lennox—wanted by the Federal police," came a deep voice. "I have orders to arrest her on a charge of jewel robbery."

A sharp cry came from Wanda, and the woman, leaving Pat, ran on deck. Quick as a flash Pat turned. The keys were still in the bureau, and, almost choking with excitement, she pulled down the flap, looked inside, and snatched out a fat envelope.

Closing the bureau, she tucked the envelope inside her macintosh and hurried on to deck. Wanda was there, her arm held by a policeman, while Gates and the man and the woman Pat had seen stood near by, gasping aloud with exaggerated amazement.

"Gee! Fancy her being the girl who stole the Vanhuyen jewels!" cried Gates.

Wanda faced him, fiercely angry. "I didn't! You did—you and those others, who were supposed to be friends of Mrs. Vanhuyen! And if only I could get that envelope from the bureau I can prove it! Yes, I know about it. Letters—letters that you are keeping to blackmail someone who was in with you and backed out. But they prove you guilty!"

Mr. Gates smiled.

"Guess you must be crazy. I don't know what you're talking about. Take her away, constable!"

Pat stepped forward.

"Well, well, well, this is a reporter's banquet! Hot news," she said, and followed the policeman and Wanda into the launch.

Wanda, hands clasped, was crying brokenheartedly.

"I'm finished—finished! They've fixed it on me!" she moaned. "Oh, if only I could have got that envelope! If only—"

She opened her eyes and stared, opened them wide, and seemed to think she was in a trance; for Pat Lovell was smilingly holding out a fat envelope.

"This is what you want, I think," said Pat.

Wanda, with a strangled cry, took it, hugged it to her, and then laughed hysterically.

"Oh, you wonder—you wonder! How can I ever thank you?" she gasped.

Pat smiled, for the answer was obvious.

"Exclusive story," she said. "Not a word to anyone else!"

"AMAZING!" said the chief, as he looked across his desk at Pat Lovell.

It was a week after the wreck, and Gates and his friends were in gaol, awaiting the arrival of American police officers. Wanda, on the other hand, was free, and had only just left the "Gazette" office, after giving the full story of the cunning robbery. The letters in the envelope had confirmed her story, and provided all the evidence necessary for the arrest of Gates and the others on instructions from America.

"What is amazing, chief?" asked Pat Lovell innocently.

"Just the way things happen," he said. "I was in two minds whether to ring you or not to go to the wreck. And if I hadn't—"

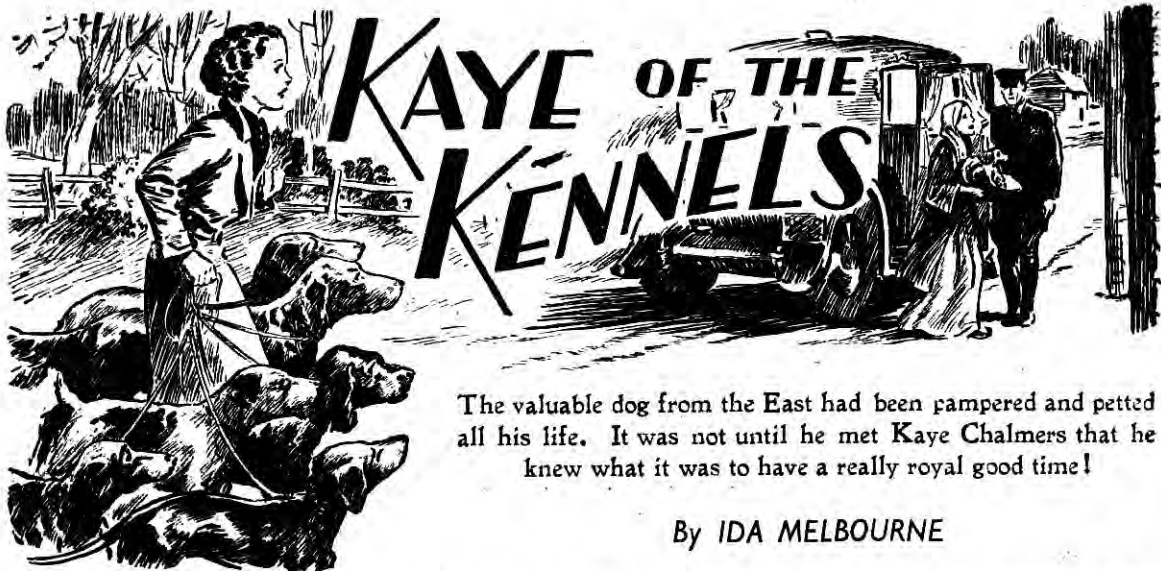
"If you hadn't, I should never have met that girl," said Pat. "Thew! When I think of having two hundred thousand pounds' worth of jewels in my room I just shiver, chief."

But Pat was thinking, really, that if she had not gone out that night, Wanda might not have survived, the jewels would have been lost in the sea, and the crooks would have escaped scot-free.

"A telephone call that cost me two pence, and was worth two hundred thousand pounds," was how the chief summed it up, and Wanda and Pat, at their farewell dinner before the former returned to America, toasted that twopence.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

Another enthralling story about the girl reporter next Friday. Make certain of reading it by ordering your GIRLS' CRYSTAL now.



The valuable dog from the East had been pampered and petted all his life. It was not until he met Kaye Chalmers that he knew what it was to have a really royal good time!

By IDA MELBOURNE

THE DOG FROM THE EAST

"MY golly! What a swagger car!"

Kaye Chalmers, walking home with six dogs on a leash, surveyed with interest the car that had just gone swishing by.

It was large and ornate, and everything about it suggested luxury and wealth. Kaye, idly wondering to whom it belonged, was surprised to see it pull up outside the entrance to her kennels. Then came a fresh surprise. As the chauffeur held open the door a girl stepped out—a girl dressed in a picturequely embroidered silk garment, girdled with a gold cord. And in her hands the girl held a silk cushion, on which lay a small dog.

"My golly!" exclaimed Kaye. "What an unusual kind of visitor! Come on, lads, let's see what she wants."

The dogs, barking excitedly, aware that something unusual was happening, galloped along on their leads, making such a din that the girl with the cushion turned to face them.

Her feet were sanded, her hair was dark and smooth; and Kaye, on drawing nearer, saw that her face was of Oriental cast.

"Good-morning!" said Kaye, reining up the straining set of dogs. "I'm Kaye Chalmers. Can I help you?"

"Honourable lady," the girl from the East replied, "I have heard that you have wonderful ways with dogs, and are to be trusted with confidences."

"Let's hope it's true," smiled Kaye. "What's wrong with the little fellow?" she added, stroking the dog's head.

"Alas!" said the girl, and then looked around as if fearful of being overheard.

"Come into the house," said Kaye, and led the way.

In the sitting-room Kaye offered the girl a chair; but the dog and the cushion were put on it, while the girl preferred to stand.

"Gracious lady," said the Oriental girl softly, "I have the great honour to serve the Zarem of Khyam; it is my proud duty to guard this, the sacred dog."

Kaye looked at the dog with great interest.

"A sacred dog," she murmured. "What breed?"

"The sacred breed of Khyam," said the girl with pride. "Never before has such a dog left the palace; but this one my royal master has brought with him

to England, and now I have dared to bring him here to you."

Kaye petted the little dog.

"Is it ill?" she asked.

"It suffers from sickness," said the girl, speaking more quickly; "and I am afraid. For if the dog is ill, then I shall suffer. I love the dog; to see it suffer makes me, too, suffer. But my royal master will not accept my sorrow as recompense should terrible ill befall the sacred dog. I shall be banished and— Oh, please help!" she ended.

"Help? Why, of course," said Kaye. "My grandfather is a veterinary surgeon; he'll be back in a few minutes. But tell me what is wrong. What has happened?"

There was a good deal of distemper about, and that was Kaye's first thought; but the dog's symptoms hardly endorsed that idea, and, on taking its temperature, she found it to be normal.

"Good!" she mused. And as she continued the examination she became convinced that the dog was not seriously ill. "He's quite young," she murmured. "Has he been eating things that may not agree with him—shoes, for instance?" she added, with twinkling eyes.

"Shoes? The sacred dog—why, no!" cried the girl, shocked. "The best delicacies only."

"Too rich, perhaps," thought Kaye, and looked the dog over. It was bright, alert, and seemed ready to play; it even tried to get down from the cushion.

"No, no!" said the girl, lifting her finger.

The dog understood the signal; for, with an obvious sigh, it settled down.

"Why not let it get down? It looks as though it would like a romp," said Kaye, surprised.

"Romp?" asked the girl, frowning.

"Play, fun—excitement," explained Kaye.

It was the girl's turn to explain then. The sacred dog never played.

"But, sacred or not, it's still a dog," objected Kaye. "Do you live far from here?" she added.

"Five miles. My royal master has taken a large house," the girl said. "I—my name is Felina—was very happy there until poor Tortoi fell sick; but now, if my royal master should learn about it—"

She left it unspoken, but she made it clear by her tone that it would be a

most terrible calamity when the Zarem of Khyam learned of the sacred dog's indisposition.

"If you can leave him with me," said Kaye, "I'll pull him round very quickly. Or perhaps you would like to wait?"

But the girl could not wait, and already was casting anxious glances at the clock. She explained that she was due back, and could not afford to be missing. Fortunately, the dog would not be missed for an hour.

"An hour will be time enough," said Kaye; and, locking the dog in the room, she saw the girl to the gate. When the girl had departed she returned to the house, unlocked the sitting-room door, and entered. But she did not cross the threshold; she stood where she was and laughed; for the sacred dog was not on the cushion, but on the floor.

Growling excitedly, wagging its tail, it was dragging the sacred cushion round the floor, "killing" it, ripping it.

"You scamp!" said Kaye, dropping to her knees.

The dog looked at her with twinkling eyes and seemed to wink; then it dodged sideways, shot past Kaye, and went racing out to the kennels.

"Hey!" cried Kaye in alarm, "Come back!"

But the sacred dog of Khyam was out in the grounds. Before Kaye could stop him he had bolted through a hole in the hedge and vanished.

GETTING BACK TORTOI

KAYE looked in all directions. She whistled and called, but all in vain. There were no signs of Tortoi. Finally, she invoked Brutus' aid, and together they searched for the runaway, but they failed to find him.

More worried than she had been for many a long day, Kaye returned and told her grandfather of what had happened. She found it hard to impress him with the true seriousness of the situation, until he suddenly remembered seeing a picture of the Zarem of Khyam in a picture paper.

He picked a paper off the chair and held it out.

"That's the fellow you must mean," he said.

The picture he indicated showed the

Zarem of Khyam in all his splendour and glory. He was bearded, wore long, richly ornamented robes, had jewels on his fingers, and on his head was a jewelled crown. His expression was severe, and Kaye shivered with apprehension.

"My golly, if this dog really is lost, granddad—" she faltered.

"He's a sovereign prince," frowned her grandfather, "and I gather that he wields vast power, and our Government is most anxious to please, honour, and impress him. And"—he hesitated—"whoever would please the Zarem must please the sacred dog Tortoi. On the health or sickness of this dog even more depends than upon that of a European king."

Kaye heard, but she could not answer. The girl Felina had already impressed her with the gravity of the dog's sickness—but not even Felina had seemed to think that the dog might ever run away.

"How ever did it happen?" her grandfather asked, puzzled.

"He just ran out. I wasn't expecting it. He was as quick as lightning," said Kaye heavily. "But what does it matter now how it happened? We must get him back."

She went out into the near-by field to continue the search, and a sudden shout made her turn with new hope.

Approaching her was an angry man she knew well—a farmer by the name of Higson. Red-faced, heavily built, he stamped towards her, calling out:

"One of your dog's bin chasing my sheep!"

"What? Impossible! They're all locked up except the St. Bernard—"

"St. Bernard? This thing's the size of a rat!" snorted the farmer. "It's chased my sheep twice round the field, scared my chickens, and set the bull galloping like he's never going to stop. If you don't come and fetch it, I'll get my gun—and that is a fair warning."

"Kaye gave a gasp."

"It must be Tortoi!" she cried. "Oh, thank goodness! Where is he, Mr. Higson?"

"Down a rabbit-hole likely as not—it's where he came from!" grunted the farmer.

Kaye ran forward, calling Brutus, and did not stop until she reached the farmer's field. She was just in time to see Tortoi leap from a ditch and liven up a grazing cow, which went away at an indignant trot.

Tortoi was hardly recognisable except for his general outline, and even that was mostly mud. Never had Kaye seen a dog in such a state.

"Tortoi!" she cried. "Here!"

She ran forward, but Tortoi paid no heed to her calls. Like a streak of light he disappeared into the ground by means of a near-by rabbit-hole.

Brutus, leaping to the scene, dug frenziedly, but Tortoi remained in hiding, not to be lured even by the pieces of raw meat Kaye had brought as bait.

"A spade is what we need," she told herself. "I daren't risk sending a terrier down to root him out. A terrier wouldn't know he was sacred."

"A spade it is," agreed her grandfather, who had followed Kaye to the spot.

Then they both turned as they heard the sound of a car on the near-by road. Kaye went white as she recognised it.

"Felina's coming back!" she gasped. "Granddad, run and keep her busy. Tell her the dog's all right."

Her grandfather hurried away and arrived at the gates as the car stopped there.

From the car the occupant of the tonneau alighted, and Kaye's grandfather fell back. For it was not the girl who came, but a man—a tall, dark-bearded man with glittering eyes, of military aspect, dressed in flowing garments, bearing at his side a jewelled-handled sword.

Coldly he saluted Mr. Chalmers.

"I have the honour to represent his Royal Highness the Zarem of Khyam," he said. "It is said that without royal authority you have here the sacred dog Tortoi. You keep him at your peril. I must ask that you bring him here at once. No greater insult has been offered my master in England."

He trembled with anger and his eyes flashed. Arms folded, he entered the gates, closing them behind him.

"At once!" he ordered, and made an almost contemptuous sweep of the hand. "And if ill has befallen him, nothing will satisfy my royal master but your instant imprisonment!"

"COME out!" commanded Kaye.

She had dug with the spade, and now she could actually see Tortoi sitting down in the rabbit-hole, grinning at her.

But in vain she groped for him, and seeing her grandfather approaching, she waved.

"Get a terrier, granddad," she said. "It's the only way. Get Gyp and muzzle him, please."

But her grandfather shook his head and was so pale that Kaye knew that something terrible had happened without the need to ask. And when he explained, her alarmed look matched his.

Whether they could be imprisoned or not they did not know, but there would be trouble, and Kaye's reputation would receive a most severe setback.

"Oh golly! Granddad, go and talk to him. I must get this rascal—I simply must—and I can't leave this spot or I may never find him again."

Reluctantly her grandfather returned to the chief of the Zarem's staff, while Kaye wondered how, without the use of the terrier, she could dislodge Tortoi.

She thought, and then, taking the thin lead she had brought to fasten him with, she used subtlety.

To the swivel of the lead she clipped a piece of raw meat and dropped it in front of the hole; then, crouching back, she motioned Brutus to get behind her.

For two or three minutes they waited. Then slowly out came Tortoi. He saw the meat; but as he made for it, Kaye pulled the lead and it whipped from him.

He was out in the open and too far from the hole to dodge back to it.

Kaye jumped forward, but missed him, as, with the agility of a hare, the sacred dog jumped sideways.

"Brutus!" cried Kaye.

But Brutus was after him with great bounding strides. In fifteen yards he caught him, ran him down, and rolled him over. Then in his mighty jaws he picked Tortoi up by the loose coat at his neck.

"Hurrah!" cheered Kaye. "Oh, Brutus—you wonder!"

Tortoi did not struggle; hind feet drawn up, tail curled in, he admitted defeat.

Kaye took him from Brutus, and to avoid the possibility of accidents, fitted the harness and clipped on the lead. Making assurance doubly sure, she looped the other end of the lead about her wrist and carried him.

From nose to tail he was covered with

mud and with green weed from a ditch; the dirtiest dog Kaye had ever handled. She hurried to the house and into the bath-room.

In a moment water was gushing from the tap, special dog-soap was frothing, and the glimmer of mischief went out of Tortoi's eyes—his escapade was over!

But below in the sitting-room the chief of staff was growing impatient and anxious.

"One minute more," he threatened—"one minute only!"

"My granddaughter is exercising it," said Kaye's grandfather in protest. "The dog is safe and well."

The minute passed, and the chief of staff rose to his feet.

"I must ask you—order you—to come with me to the palace," he said.

Kaye's grandfather, knowing that time was the important factor, and having heard Kaye's hurried steps, and the flow of water, drew himself up and bowed slightly.

"If I be permitted to leave my granddaughter a note, I will go," he said. "I am an English subject, and the Zarem has no authority over me!" Nevertheless, although he walked with head erect, proudly, he had a sinking heart.

Kaye did not know that he had gone. It took ten minutes for Tortoi to be rubbed dry, the process being speeded by an electric hair-dryer. Then she ran downstairs with him.

"Here he is—" she began, and then realised that the house was empty.

In the sitting-room she found her grandfather's note, and, reading it, paled.

"I have gone with the officer to the palace. Follow with Tortoi—if you can—and see that he looks spruce, please. We are in a nasty jam."

Kaye dropped the note, her face clouded with worry, and her heart heavy.

"Tortoi," she groaned, "all this is your fault, you fun-loving scamp, so it's up to you to clear us! Come on!"

Telephoning for a taxi, Kaye groomed him while she waited, and then, putting on her coat, she got into the car, and gave the only address she knew—the Zarem's palace.

"I passed it yesterday, miss. I know the way," said the driver.

"Then step on it!" urged Kaye.

"There's not a moment to be lost!"

AT THE ZAREM'S PALACE

KAYE, Tortoi in her arms, stepped out of the taxi at the so-called palace. It was really a famous English country house. There was a guard at the gates, and another guard mounted at the entrance to the palace itself.

The guards allowed her to pass, and in the hall of the house the chief of staff confronted her. His face was grim, but the sight of Tortoi caused his heavy frown to fade.

"Come at once to his Royal Highness!" he said sternly; but he did not take Tortoi from her.

Kaye followed him to the largest ground-floor room of the house, the floor of which had been tiled with mosaics of white and red and gold. Long velvet curtains hung at the windows, and along the side walls were richly cushioned divans.

But all that Kaye noticed on entering was the dais at the end of the room. On it, in a mighty chair of gold, was the Zarem of Khyam—just as the picture had revealed him.

Kaye was not easily over-awed, but

she quaked a little as the chief of staff nudged her and urged her forward.

The bearded Zarem did not speak until Kaye was three paces from him.

"How dare you take the sacred dog of Khyam?" he demanded.

Kaye could not answer. She put the cushion down and rested Tortoi on it. Only then did she see that the girl Felina knelt a few yards to her left, sobbing.

But at the name of Tortoi, which Kaye whispered as the dog made to move from the cushion, she looked up, and gave a startled cry of pleasure.

"He is here?"

"Silence, shameless betrayer of my trust!" cried the Zarem fiercely. Then he turned to Kaye. "Bring the sacred dog here, girl!"

Kaye's lips tightened, and her head went back proudly.

"Please do not speak so brusquely!" she ordered. "You have no authority over me!"

The court stirred; the people she had hardly seen murmured protest, and the Zarem himself drew back in his throne-like, golden seat.

"Why did you take the dog?" he demanded.

Kaye answered in level tones.

"The dog was sick. But he is well now," she said, "and very healthy and bright, too."

He leaned forward.

"Healthy and bright—not ailing? You swear that?"

"I swear it!" said Kaye.

The Zarem fixed his eyes upon her, cold, keen, searching. But Kaye, far from being intimidated, gained courage.

"Highness, your girl Felina did what she thought best; and it was the best thing."

"Speak not of Felina! She is evermore banished from our gaze!" he answered sternly. "It is not only for taking the dog is she to be punished! She has stolen the most valued pearl from my jewels!"

Kaye, amazed, looked at the tear-stained, stricken face of Felina.

"No, no! Oh, your Highness, no!" cried Felina. "I did not take it, I swear!"

"Then where is it? Who else is the thief? You stole the dog! Evil things happen! The royal tree is uprooted! Look!"

Kaye looked in the direction he indicated and saw that beyond the doorway to the left was a small patch of earth in which a small bush grew, crowned with pink blossom. It leaned sideways, and the earth had been clearly disturbed.

To Kaye it seemed a triviality that the earth was disturbed, but to the Oriental mind it was of great significance; it spelled disaster.

"You," said the Zarem, shaking a finger angrily at Felina, "saw the pearl roll, and you followed it. Where is it? Tell me!"

Felina turned to Kaye, and spoke softly.

"The dog—I—I think he swallowed it!" she whispered.

Kaye gave a start and looked down at Tortoi. Then she looked from him to the tree.

Tortoi might well be capable of both crimes, but to prove it might be another matter. From the dog she looked across at the tree, deep in thought, while Felina begged for mercy.

An officer, approaching, took her roughly by the arms and lifted her.

"No! Stop!" cried Kaye.

"Silence!" the Zarem commanded her. "As for you, girl, what evil you have done the dog has yet to be

learned; only a week can tell. For that length of time you will be a prisoner here!"

Kaye gaped incredulously, and for a moment could not speak.

"A prisoner?" she jerked out. "But—" And then she looked about her. "My grandfather—where is he?"

"A prisoner, too," said the Zarem coldly. "I came here as the guest of your country, and I am insulted! Nothing but evil has happened here! Until the great pearl is found, until the royal tree is restored, until the sacred dog shows joy in life, no happiness can come to me or mine!"

Kaye felt a hand on her right shoulder, then another on the left. A guard stood behind her on either side. A shiver ran through her. Then suddenly she darted forward and appealingly she faced the Zarem.

"Highness, hear me! I can solve your problems, end your troubles!" she exclaimed. "For I know the sacred dog's secret!"

The guards moved back at a signal from their royal master, who leaned forward, impressed by Kaye's dramatic cry.

"His secret? What is his secret?" he asked.

"That he is happy," said Kaye—"that he took the pearl. Give me another, and I will prove it."

The Zarem did not answer for a moment; then slowly, impressed by Kaye's ringing confidence, he unfastened a string of pearls, and, removing one, gave it to her.

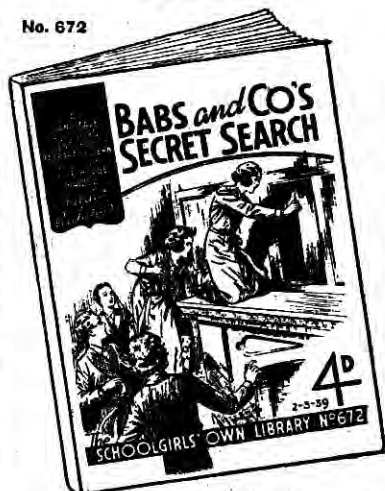
It was larger than the average pea, and Kaye took it gently.

"Tortoi!" she murmured.

To the amazement of them all, she rolled the pearl over the tiled floor. Tortoi looked at her, eyes glimmering.

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looked at the Zarem, then shot off his cushion after the pearl.

He slithered, caught it, tossed it, chased it round the floor, then gave an excited bark as it fell on the damp earth around the royal tree. For a moment he stood there, yapping; then he walked on to the earth, put his nose down, and pushed earth over the pearl, burying it, just like an ordinary dog might a bone.

The Zarem stared, entranced. Then he sprang up, and threw out his arm, giving an exultant cry of joy.

"The sacred dog buries pearls beyond price under the royal tree! It is an omen! There is splendour for us all, peace and prosperity!"

He walked from his throne to the tree, examining the earth; and from a little mound picked up another pearl, a larger one—the pearl Felina had been accused of stealing.

Tortoi barked and jumped; then, as Kaye called, he ran to her, bright-eyed, eager.

"Thinking of rabbit-holes—eh, you rascal?" she asked softly. "All right! You've had your day, but there'll be another. I know your secret, you ragamuffin! You're about as sacred as my boots! All you want is to play!"

She winked, and Tortoi seemed to wink back; then, with solemn expression, he looked at his royal master.

The Zarem took a string of pearls from his neck, walked to Kaye, and dropped them over her head. Then lightly he touched her forehead.

"You are wise! You are a great lady!" he said. "Pray accept the pearls; you deserve them. Your grandfather is free; you are free, and I trust you will honour me at my table! Ask me what favour you will!"

Kaye did not hesitate.

"Set Felina free, please, and let her still be the sacred dog's guardian."

The Zarem gave but a slight sign of hesitation, and then bowed; he had offered a favour, and it must be granted.

"So be it!" he said.

KAYE and her grandfather, as the Zarem's guests, ate the strangest meal of their lives. There were delicious foods and quaint foods, choice rare fruits, and golden tea. Servants waited on them, and Kaye, for the moment felt that she was a princess.

Yet when it ended, and they were home again, she was not sorry.

"I'm like the sacred dog, granddad," she sighed. "I'd rather be ordinary. Poor, wee scrap, he did love his frolic; and if I can work things he shall have another."

Her grandfather smilingly agreed; but there was still one point that perplexed him.

"How was it you solved the riddle of the pearl?" he asked.

"How? Well, the lion-dog of China, the ancestor of Pekingese, is always depicted in ancient Chinese statues with a ball. They love playing with a ball, and Tortoi is playful and high-spirited. Felina thought he had swallowed the pearl; therefore, he had played with it. As the tree had been disturbed, and there was a little mound of earth and the signs of bone-burying I know so well—what else could I guess?"

"You did, but a million wouldn't have done," her grandfather answered.

END OF THIS WEEK'S STORY.

Kaye and her pets will be featured in another delightful story next Friday. Order your GIRLS' CRYSTAL now.

Brenda's Mystery Task in Hollywood



THE UNWELCOME ARRIVAL!

BRENDIA CASTLE came to Hollywood to meet her sister Marion, who had been employed by a Mrs. Benson. But Marion had been dismissed, thanks to the treachery of Mrs. Benson's secretary, Ruby Fletcher.

To clear her sister's name, Brenda obtained a job with Mrs. Benson as guide to her English friends, Molly and Audrey Duncan. She had adopted the name of Collins, but nevertheless Ruby Fletcher was suspicious of her.

Brenda found Marion, who told her that a secret involving their future happiness was hidden in Mrs. Benson's room full of curios.

Accompanied by Molly and Audrey, who had been told something of the mystery, Brenda swam out to a raft in the sea, near to an anchored ship which was used as a floating restaurant. On this old ship she was to meet Marion again; from the raft they could already see Brenda's sister.

Then they received a shock, for Ruby Fletcher swam up to the raft. Had she, too, seen Marion?

"HERE I am, girls! Won't one of you give me a hand up, please?"

Ruby Fletcher, swimming up to the diving-raft and clutching hold of the rope that ran round all four sides of it, raised her head and smiled at the girls already there.

It pretended to be a friendly smile, but in it was a mockery that mad-dened Brenda. And it brought no answering smile to the faces of Molly and Audrey.

All along, since coming to Hollywood, they had felt a vague dislike for Ruby. Now, after what Brenda had told them, they distrusted her, and found it hard to conceal.

Ruby pouted. Then, since no hand was offered to assist her, she dragged herself on to the raft by her own efforts.

"I don't seem very welcome," she observed. "Have I come just when you were going to do something special?"

Brenda looked at her sharply, fear growing in her heart.

Did Ruby suspect? Had she seen Marion on board the Jolly Roger? Out of the corner of her eye Brenda gazed across at the anchored ship; but now there was no sign of her sister at the porthole from which she had waved.

"I—we—were, just going for a swim, that's all," Brenda replied.

"Where?" Ruby persisted.

"Oh, anywhere! Back to the beach," Molly bluffed, knowing how vital it was that Ruby should not have an inkling of Brenda's plans.

"Yes, we thought about having a shot at some surf-riding," Audrey added, saying the first thing that came to her mind.

"Surf-riding?" Ruby looked enthusiastic. "Oh, jolly good! I've done a lot of it. I'm quite good at surf-riding, you know," she said, trying to appear modest.

Brenda had felt desperate, but now a sudden gleam of hope shot into her eyes.

Perhaps, after all, Ruby had not seen Marion. The fact that since boarding the raft she had not once glanced across at the Jolly Roger was surely a hopeful sign.

Brenda's spirits suddenly soared.

It was vital she should see Marion, tell her of the discovery she had made, learn how it fitted in with what her sister already knew.

But it was just as important that Ruby should know nothing of that meeting. And now as Brenda's brain became busy, she began to see a chance of thwarting this girl who was so clearly working against her for her own ends.

"Yes, that's the idea," Brenda said, a twinkle coming into her eyes. "Surf-riding! Fine sport! Didn't know you were an expert, Ruby."

Ruby preened herself.

Those mysterious symbols on the valuable Redskin vase were just a meaningless jumble to Brenda and Marion. Yet the sisters knew that their meaning was of vital importance to their future happiness.

By **DAPHNE GRAYSON**

"Perhaps I could give you a few tips," she suggested.

"Would you? That'll be lovely," Brenda smiled. "Then shall we go back to the beach now and get things fixed up?"

Molly and Audrey were looking surprised; but a wink from Brenda, unnoticed by Ruby, told them that something was in the wind.

"Yes, all of us," Ruby said, determined not to lose sight of Brenda.

One by one they dived into the water—Ruby last. Carefully she positioned herself behind the others as they all struck out for the beach.

Brenda noticed it. Ruby would hang on to them like a leech. She wouldn't miss a single move they made. But somehow she'd got to be given the slip!

They arrived back on the beach, scampering through the water, laughing as a big wave caught them up and flung them forward.

"You know the ropes," Brenda said to Ruby. "Will you hire the boats and things?"

"You come with me," Ruby said promptly.

"Right—ho!"

"There's a chap farther along the beach who keeps a fleet of motor-boats," Ruby said. "He'll take us out."

She led the way.

"Look, there's Gloria!" Molly cried suddenly. "They're filming now. What's the wheeze?" she added, in a hissing undertone.

"Just look at the crowds watching!" Brenda exclaimed gaily. Then she lowered her own voice. "I don't quite know yet. But play up to Ruby's boasting."

Molly nodded.

On the sands the Suprema film unit was now at work. They could see Gloria acting before the cameras, watched by a big crowd of holiday-makers.

But now the four girls had reached a long breakwater, behind which were moored a number of sleek motor-boats, and where trim little sailing craft cut through the sheltered water.

Ruby went up to the man in charge

of the motor-boats, still keeping one eye on Brenda as she spoke to him.

"It's O.K.!" she cried. "Come on!"

There was a roar of engines being started up. The pilots of the motor-boats were fixing up the boards and ropes to the craft.

"How do we get on to the boards?" Molly wanted to know.

"You have to pull yourself on to them when you're in the water," Ruby explained.

Then Audrey asked a question, and Brenda unobtrusively drew nearer to one of the men.

"Take me as near to the Jolly Roger as you can," she whispered.

"O.K.!" The man nodded.

But now they were ready. The girls dived in. The water in this part was shallow, and they grabbed hold of the surfboards.

"Watch me," Ruby said, with a superior air.

She dragged herself on to the board, clutched hold of the ropes, and carefully straightened up until she was standing, swaying a little with the motion of the water, but retaining her balance.

Brenda essayed to follow her example. She got her body on, but when she tried to stand up on the rocking board she was not so successful.

"Goodness, I'm falling!" she yelled.

"I'm doing better than you are—whoops!" Molly's jubilation ended in a shriek as she lost her balance and splashed into the water.

But Brenda's fall had been deliberate. She bobbed up alongside the boat which would be towing Ruby.

"Be a sport and take her as far away from the Jolly Roger as you can," she hissed to the man sitting at the wheel. "But not a word."

He grinned and nodded.

"Do it this time," Brenda said aloud, making another grab at the board.

And this time she did. Molly, too, managed at her second attempt, and then they were ready to start.

"My hat, this is going to be harder than it looks," Audrey called, gripping the rope tightly.

"Just keep your balance," Ruby told her with a smirk. "I'll show you how it's done."

"We're moving!" Molly yelled.

"As fast as you like!" Ruby shouted, eager to be in the limelight and show off in front of the crowds who lined the breakwater.

Away shot the motor-boats, towing the girls after them.

Brenda's eyes sparkled. She'd done a little surf-riding before and she knew how thrilling it was. The salty breeze whipped her cheeks; the sun streamed down on her glossy hair.

"Like it?" she called to Molly.

"Grand!"

But now they had left the sheltered water and were riding the Pacific rollers. The boards bobbed up and down; Molly and Audrey were holding on for dear life, striving to keep their balance, just a wee bit frightened, but laughing and enjoying every second of it.

"Faster!" Ruby yelled, holding on with one hand and waving the other to show just how expert she was.

Brenda grinned. Ruby, in her eagerness to show off, seemed to be forgetting her intention of keeping watch on the girl she feared.

That suited Brenda's plan. And then she grinned again.

Now the boats were spreading out on the courses they each took. Obeying Brenda's whispered instruction, the man

piloting her own boat headed out to sea towards the anchored ship.

The helmsman of Ruby's boat, also remembering Brenda's orders, steered a course parallel with the shore, drawing farther and farther away from the floating restaurant.

Brenda watched tensely, anxiously. In a moment or two, just for a few fleeting seconds, she would be out of Ruby's sight. If Ruby didn't turn during that brief spell of time—

There came a scream from Molly. Swaying precariously on the rocking board, she had at last lost her balance and plunged over into the sea. In a moment the motor-boat was turning to pick her up.

Audrey, still hanging on grimly, went whizzing onwards over the waves. So did Ruby.

"Now!" Brenda breathed.

The Jolly Roger was less than fifteen yards away as the motor-boat swept round to avoid it. For a moment Ruby was lost to sight.

Heart leaping wildly, Brenda threw up her hands and dived. She came shooting up to the surface.

"All right. I'm going aboard!" she shouted to the driver of the motor-boat as he came sweeping round. "But don't tell the others—it's a surprise."

Then with powerful strokes she was swimming towards the sailing-ship. Molly and Audrey would guess where she had gone. Ruby, in time, would assuredly suspect; but Brenda had gained the few minutes she needed.

In those few minutes she would have found Marion; they would find some quiet corner on the Jolly Roger, and there they would be able to talk, unhindered by the girl who was seeking to wreck their happiness.

Now she was swimming alongside the old veteran of the seas, its aged timbers towering above her. She saw people watching her interestedly from the deck. She reached the ladder, and a man in long sea-boots and a rough jersey, with a bright spotted bandana round his head—looking like some pirate of old—was helping her out of the water.

"Brenda!" cried a voice.

Brenda glowed with triumph.

There at the top of the ladder was

Marion, smiling and eagerly awaiting her.

In the distance, Ruby Fletcher was still being towed along on the surf board, unaware as yet of what had happened.

ABOARD THE JOLLY ROGER

MARION!" A happy smile on her dripping face, Brenda raced up the ladder.

And then they were clasping each other—these two sisters who had been separated by circumstances.

"I've been watching you all the time," Marion said excitedly. "How did you work it and get Ruby out of the way?"

Brenda told her, and Marion laughed. "Clever!" she said. "But Ruby will soon guess—"

"I know," Brenda became serious. "Isn't there some quiet spot we can talk—somewhere she won't find us, if she comes aboard? I've such a lot to tell you, Marion. About last night—"

Marion's eyes gleamed with excitement.

"Follow me," she said.

She led the way across the smooth deck. Brenda looked about her interestedly.

Everything had been done to retain the old-time atmosphere of the ship; while at the same time utilising every modern device to provide the maximum comfort and luxury.

The waiters and waitresses were in picturesque period costume, serving on wooden trays food which had been cooked in the latest electric stoves, and ices made in huge refrigerators down in the one-time galley.

The band—Pep Pepper and his Rhythm Pirates—played the latest dance "hits" from a stage on which stood a couple of old-fashioned cannon.

At night illumination came from large storm-lanterns; the small table lights, too, were of the same pattern.

It was all vastly intriguing and quaint; cleverly and enterprisingly the old vessel had been converted into a floating restaurant, and there was every justification for its being one of the



Quick as a flash, Brenda hid the vase in the "props" basket—even as Mrs. Benson came strolling towards them. Whatever happened, she must not see that vase!

"high spots" of entertainment in a place where originality was the keynote.

Marion seemed unusually eager, as if in a state of suppressed excitement.

She led Brenda to the stern of the ship, and then halted beside a cannon which poked its muzzle through an embrasure in the high wooden bulwark.

"We won't be disturbed here," she said. "And we can keep a look-out for Ruby if she comes. Now, Brenda, what happened last night? You went into the treasure-room?"

"I did!"

Swiftly Brenda told her sister of the sensational incidents which had marked her secret visit to Mrs. Benson's museum.

"That faked Redskin vase was exactly the same as the one in the drawing you gave me," she finished. "But where's the original? Ruby must have taken it—"

"She did!" Marion said.

"How do you know?"

"Because I saw her bring it here late last night!"

Brenda's eyes opened wide in amazement.

"Here?" she echoed.

"Yes," Marion's voice was tense. "She gave it to a man named Pedro something-or-other who is living on this boat—there are a limited number of resident guests, you know. Once seen, he's a man never forgotten. He's got glittering green eyes—they really are green—and an ugly scar down one cheek. I've been watching him for some time now, Brenda."

"Oh, my hat! But what part's he playing in all this mystery?"

"I don't know exactly. But I do know that Ruby has been showing him the Redskin vases from out of Mrs. Benson's treasure-room one by one!" Marion said. "There's a secret in one of those vases. Ruby and Pedro are looking for it. We've got to look for it, too—and find it before they do!"

Brenda gasped again.

"But what kind of a secret?" she asked.

"Goodness knows!" Marion shook her head. "But as I've already told you, it is connected in some way with our future and our happiness."

"And that is why daddy's monogram is marked on all the vases?"

"It must be," Marion said. "Though how they come to be there is as much a mystery to me as it is to you. But, Brenda, the vital thing is to discover the secret of these vases. We've got to examine them all. We've got to get back that one now in Pedro's possession!"

Brenda felt a tingling sensation run through her body.

"It's still here?"

"Yes; in Pedro's cabin. We've got to take risks now, Brenda. I came back here this morning to try to get it," Marion said. "But he didn't leave the cabin until just before you came. He hadn't anything with him that could have contained the vase, so it must still be there."

"And he's still out?" Brenda questioned excitedly.

"Yes; I saw him go ashore."

"Then now's our chance!" Brenda cried.

"You're game?" Marion asked eagerly. "If we're caught it will look jolly suspicious—"

"Didn't you just say we've got to take risks?" Brenda said.

"Well, it may be the very vase that will solve the whole mystery," Marion told her.

"Then come on! Lead the way—"

Brenda suddenly broke off. At that moment she had gazed over the top of

the bulwark, had seen a motor-boat speeding towards the old ship.

"There's Molly and Audrey!" Brenda cried, gazing at the boat.

"They're the two girls I've seen you with?" Marion asked.

"Yes; they're staying with Mrs. Benson—friends of hers. They must have arrived after you had left. And they're our friends, too, Marion. They want to help us. They saved me from being trapped last night, and I told them something of the mystery. You— you don't mind?"

"You're sure they're to be trusted?"

"Oh, they are!" Brenda said positively. "You must meet them, Marion."

"I'd love to—"

It was Marion's turn to break off. She, too, had been gazing over the bulwark, watching the approaching boat. But now, as her gaze went beyond it, her eyes suddenly dilated.

A gasp left her lips as she gripped Brenda's arm.

"There's another boat following!" she cried. "Look, isn't that Ruby in it?"

"Oh, goodness, you're right! Marion, she mustn't find you here! She's seen you once already. If she were to suspect we were sisters—"

"But the vase!" Marion cried.

"I'll get it," Brenda said feverishly. "Where's Pedro's cabin?"

"Down the main companionway— No. 6. But, Brenda, I feel as if I'm deserting you—"

"Please go, Marion!" Brenda pleaded desperately. "Ruby mustn't see you. Can you dodge her?"

"Yes. Shore boats leave from the other side of this ship. Good-bye, Brenda! Get the vase, but be careful. But what if Ruby sees you with it?"

"She won't—leave that to me! But when shall I see you again?"

"I'll ring you at Greenways. Good-bye!"

Then Marion, with a flashing smile, had turned and was racing along the deck.

Just for one moment Brenda paused, gazing again over the side of the old vessel.

Molly and Audrey had almost reached it. The boat containing Ruby was still some fifty yards away, was having to take a wide sweep because of a pleasure steamer which was just then passing close to the sailing-ship.

Three—perhaps four—minutes Brenda had in which to find the precious vase that might mean so much to her and Marion and to get away with it before Ruby boarded the Jolly Roger.

Could she do it? She had got to do it!

She reached the companionway, raced down the steps and along a narrow corridor.

Cabin No. 6—this was it.

A swift glance showed her that no one was in sight. Recklessly she grabbed at the door-handle, knew a moment's palpitating anxiety at the thought that it might be locked. But it wasn't. Flinging open the door, she burst into the cabin.

Again the luck was with her. Even as her gaze swept round the little cabin she saw the vase.

It stood on a small table beside the bunk.

Triumphantly she picked it up. This quaint vase, with its queer Redskin symbols, did it contain the secret she and her sister were seeking; the secret that others, too, were seeking?

But no time to ponder that now. She snatched up an old newspaper, wrapped the vase in it, and rushed up the companionway—to dash almost into the

arms of two girls who stood there, looking about them with feverish anxiety.

"Molly! Audrey!"

"Brenda," Molly gasped, "we've been looking for you! We wanted to warn you. Ruby's guessed you came here—"

"I know. I saw her following you."

"She's just arrived."

"Then she'll be just too late!" Brenda chuckled.

She remembered her sister's words, remembered she had said that boats for the shore left from the other side of the ship.

Quickly she raced across the deck, saw a notice pointing to the departure ladder.

Down the steps she raced, Molly and Audrey following her. And even as they entered the waiting boat Ruby was pelting up the ladder on the other side of the ship.

By a fraction of a second they missed each other—but that fraction of time spelt triumph for Brenda.

Once again she had tricked Ruby. She had seen Marion—learned yet another amazing development in this amazing mystery. And she had got the vase.

A vase which might prove to contain the secret that was the key to the whole mystery—their whole future happiness!

THE MYSTERY SYMBOLS

"**P**HEW!" A whistle of amazement left Molly's lips. "And so you've traced Mrs. Benson's missing vase! And Ruby did take it. But who's this Pedro chap? Where's he come into the box of tricks?"

Brenda's eyes were shrewd, her brain active. Every time she thought of what Marion had told her she tingled with excitement.

"Well, I've a theory," she said slowly.

"Trot it out!" Audrey requested.

"That Ruby has been taking out the vases, one by one, to prevent suspicion being aroused, and, as they're all very much alike, substituting that fake, which was smashed last night, every time she took one."

"Yes?"

"And that Pedro is trying to decipher all these weird signs and symbols on the vases because they hold this secret, whatever it is," Brenda added keenly.

"My hat! I should think you've hit the nail on the head!" Molly said.

"Let's have a look at the vase," Audrey put in.

Brenda unwrapped her parcel, and eagerly they examined the piece of Redskin pottery.

The three girls were on their way back to the Santa Monica beach. The Jolly Roger was being left behind in the bay. Brenda had swiftly told her friends of the exciting events, and they were every bit as thrilled as she was.

"Goodness, it's a meaningless jumble to me!" Molly said at last, as she handed back the vase.

Those Indian signs and symbols were meaningless, too, to Brenda. The vase was covered with them, on the inside as well as the outside.

"They're a giddy secret right enough," Audrey remarked. "What ever are you going to do, Brenda?"

"Well, there's one way of discovering their meaning," Brenda replied.

"And that?"

"Take photographs of the vase from all angles, and the other in Mrs. Benson's collections, and show them to an expert in the Redskin language."

Molly clapped her hands.

"That's a brain-wave!" she cried. "I've got a camera—a good one. We'll do it when we get back this evening, after Gloria's party."

Brenda nodded. "But we'll have to be careful," she said. "Mrs. Benson mustn't know, or she'll start asking questions. And that will put Ruby on the scent."

"We'll manage it all right," Molly said confidently. "But here we are at the breakwater."

The motor-boat was running alongside the jetty. It stopped, and then the girls were clambering out, assisted by the boatman.

"Wish I could find somewhere safe for the vase," Brenda said anxiously. "If this gets smashed, it will ruin everything."

"I know. Let's ask Gloria to take charge of it," Molly suggested.

Brenda was enthusiastic.

"Yes. And another thing, it'll be out of Ruby's way as she comes nosing round."

They hurried along the beach. Overhead the sky was still a cloudless blue, and the hot sunshine streamed down.

"This is what I call weather," Molly grinned. "I expect they're having a few gales back in good old England."

"What a hope of running about there in bathing costumes at this time of the year," Audrey chuckled.

"Brrr!" Molly shivered at the mere thought.

"Look, there's Gloria!" Brenda cried, a few moments later.

"And they're still filming," Molly said.

They threaded their way through the crowds, Brenda keeping a tight hold on the precious vase in case it should get accidentally knocked out of her hands.

Gloria Deane, not actually working in front of the camera at that moment, saw them, and waved gaily.

And then suddenly Brenda gave a gasp. Consternation sprang into her eyes.

"Oh, goodness! Look who's coming!"

"Who?"

"Mrs. Benson!"

"Oh, yes, there she is! She's seen us!" Molly cried. "But why the alarm, Brenda?"

"This vase!" Brenda gasped. "If she sees me with it, after what happened last night—"

"My hat!"

Molly herself was looking startled now. Certainly Mrs. Benson would be suspicious, to say the least of it, if she caught Brenda in possession of the missing vase.

"Dodge behind me!" Molly hissed. "Can't you hide it somewhere?"

"But where?"

In that moment, however, Brenda's gaze alighted on a big basket which stood near by. It was evidently a "props" basket belonging to the film unit, and had been put aside out of the camera's range while shooting was in progress.

Quick as a flash Brenda whipped open the lid, laid the vase among some costumes the basket contained.

"O.K.!" she breathed. "Do you think Mrs. Benson saw what I did?"

"I shouldn't think so," Molly assured her. "Auntie's eyesight isn't too good. But, hush! Here she comes!"

Mrs. Benson, a kindly smile on her face, came up to the group.

"Hallo, my dears!" she greeted. "Enjoying yourselves?"

"Rather!" Molly exclaimed. "We've just been across to the Jolly Roger."



FROM ONE GIRL TO ANOTHER

Cheery Chatter and Helpful Hints by Penelope

After all the fogs, storms, and what-not we have had this winter, it wouldn't surprise me in the least if your school hat didn't show some signs of all the battles it has gone through.

Well, here's how to perk it up again, ready for the bright days.

First take off your school hat-band. Now give the hat a good brushing. The next step is to put the kettle on to boil. When it is steaming away merrily just hold your hand in the hat and twirl it in the steam.

This will bring up the "nap" or surface wonderfully, leaving it fresh and new-looking.

After the steaming, give the "chappo" a further brushing, remembering to brush in one direction only.

You won't forget to clean up the lining of the hat as well, will you? Some petrol or ammonia will do this for you.

SQUARE AND BOXY

Haven't you admired those smart "finger-tip" length coats?

They have such a cheery, "boxy" look about them.

The older school girl in particular would look very smart in one of these short coats, worn over a plain skirt or dress.

Supposing you had a full-length coat that was on the short side for you? It would be quite easy to cut eight inches or so from the hem and turn it into the new boxy jacket.

Good-bye now until next week.
Your own

PENELOPE



HALLO, EVERYBODY!—Here is your Penelope again, getting all excited about Easter—as I expect you are, too.

Are you going to have "something new" to celebrate?

When I was a small girl, I nearly always had a pair of new gloves to wear to church on Easter Sunday. How proud I was of them, too—and the penny I slipped inside one for the "collection."

Some of the very latest gloves in Paris are odd!

Yes, I mean that!

A smart pair of gloves can consist of the right in one colour and the left in another!

Can you imagine yourself wearing one turquoise glove and one wine-red one, say?

You can't? Then you just needn't bother your young heads about a fashion that's never likely to invade the schoolgirl world!

FLOWERS AGAIN

But there's one Easter fashion—a new-old one, really—that you must take note of.

You've simply got to buy yourself a posy of artificial flowers. (This craze for flower posies arises every Easter these days.) Get these in the gayest and most cheerful colours you can, and flaunt them at the neck of your dress, on the lapel of your coat, or perched on top of your new out-of-school hat.

THE KETTLE HELPS

While we're on the subject of hats, I want you to look very critically at your school felt (or velour).

And now we're waiting to join Gloria's party."

"I shall be there, too," Mrs. Benson beamed. "I know her slightly, and when we got talking and she learned that you three girls were staying with me, she at once invited me."

"Oh, ripping!"

"But here's Gloria herself!"

The famous star strolled across and joined them.

"Won't be long now," she smiled. "Just one more scene, and that'll be finished for to-day, thank goodness! Looking forward to the party, girls?"

"Aren't we just!"

"I've got a surprise for you," Gloria said.

"Oh, what is it?"

"Well, I'm running a competition in aid of the hospital, and I've entered your names for the events."

"Cheers!"

"But what sort of a competition, Gloria?"

"Ah!" The film star smiled mysteriously. "Tell you over lunch. But there will be prizes."

"You're tantalising us!"

"So I am. But I want to get you enthusiastic," Gloria laughed.

The girls laughed with her. Then a voice shouted across the beach:

"Hey, Gloria! Your scene now!"

"That's Carl, my director," Gloria said, with a sigh. "See you later."

She strolled off. Mrs. Benson, intensely interested in film technique, moved forward to watch operations.

"Think I'll hang about here," Brenda said. "I want to keep an eye on that basket. But now the vase is in it, I think it can stay there until we join Gloria in her bungalow—"

"Shush!" suddenly hissed Molly, a

warning light in her eyes. "Here's Ruby just coming towards us."

Brenda turned with a start. Sure enough, Ruby was approaching from the direction of the breakwater. Ruby's face was a study. She was scowling furiously, and her eyes glittered as she saw Brenda.

"So here you are!" she gritted, coming up to the group.

"Here we all are," Brenda smiled coolly.

"You went on board the Jolly Roger," Ruby accused.

"Well, what if we did?"

"And while you were there a theft occurred," Ruby said, her glittering eyes fixed searchingly on Brenda. "From Cabin No. 6," she added.

"Well, what of it?" Brenda asked.

"Why tell me?"

"Because I think you know something about it!" Ruby snapped. "A valuable vase was stolen—a vase that is similar to those that Mrs. Benson treasures."

Brenda faced the other girl coolly.

"Are you sure that vase doesn't actually belong to her?"

Ruby looked horrified.

"How absurd! Why, Professor Janson is a friend of Mrs. Benson's! He is a famous collector! How dare you suggest that he should have in his possession something that doesn't belong to him!"

Ruby's indignation seemed so real that for a moment Brenda & Co. felt alarmed. Uneasily they exchanged glances. Supposing they had made a ghastly mistake? Suppose the vase Brenda had taken wasn't the one that had been stolen from Mrs. Benson's treasure-room? "After all, Redskin

vases of this pattern were fairly common.

But only for a moment did Brenda entertain those doubts. The glitter in Ruby's eyes, her breathless eagerness, convinced her that that girl was only bluffing, so quite calmly she faced her.

"I'm afraid we can't help you," she said. "If this professor friend of yours really has lost a vase, I suggest he calls in the police."

Ruby went red, then white. Brenda's calm suggestion nearly made her choke. Furiously she glared.

"It's no good you bluffing!" she snapped. "Nor you girls, either!"—with a scowl at Molly and Audrey. "I'm certain you know more than you pretend. Look here, if you didn't take the vase, what were you doing on the Jolly Roger?"

Brenda smiled.

"That's our business," she replied, and turned away.

Ruby glared at Brenda—then at Molly and Audrey. So furious was she, that she could not speak.

But Brenda was calm and collected, though a little pale, while Molly and Audrey were unable to repress their smiles. The tables had been turned completely on the scheming secretary. Brenda had called her bluff, and had emerged triumphant from an argument, which at first had seemed all too likely to lead to dangerous complications.

Ruby Fletcher was left standing on the sun-baked, golden beach, pink with anger and mortification, for once at a loss to say anything. Brenda and her charges moved off a little way.

Brenda felt a hand touch her shoulder.

"Oh, Brenda, you wonder!" came Molly's voice in her ear.

Brenda smiled back. Then she looked more thoughtful.

"I'm afraid it's only for the time being," she said quietly. "Ruby isn't the kind to let a snub or a rebuff stop her. She knows we got that vase from the Jolly Roger, and she'll do all she can to get it back. We must watch our step."

"Well, you must, certainly," put in Audrey.

"You, too," said Brenda. "Ruby knows you've been helping me, so she will have her knife in you as well. But let's forget her for a bit."

But suddenly her smile faded, for as she looked along the beach she saw something that seemed to freeze the blood in her veins.

For twenty yards away a figure stood by the props basket in which she had concealed the precious vase.

The figure of Mrs. Benson!

Mrs. Benson was even then in the act of opening the lid.

And once she did open it, she could not fail to see the missing vase which had disappeared from her treasure-room.

Horror swept over Brenda.

Then Mrs. Benson must have seen her place something in the basket, and now, suspicious, was investigating.

If once she found the vase—

Brenda knew then that all her efforts—and the efforts she must make in the future to achieve success—would be ruined and impossible, and Ruby would triumph.

Further enthralling chapters of this thrilling and colourful serial follow next week. Make sure of reading them, by ordering your **GIRLS' CRYSTAL** to-day!

trap outside. We ought to reach the hacienda in half an hour."

Lola hurried to slip on a coat over her frock. Now that the time had come, she was beginning to feel nervous.

Would she be a success? So much depended on her performance that evening. Her dance at the cafe was nothing compared with the ordeal now confronting her.

During the drive along the wild, mountain road, Lola had plenty of time in which to compose her thoughts. Tony, handling the spirited horse with the sure touch of an expert, pointed out the passing scenery in the manner of a guide.

"To your right, señorita—the ravine of El Gavicho, famous for its caves! To your left, the twin mountain peaks, known as the White Sisters. There's a legend connected with 'em, but I just can't remember it."

Lola had to laugh, in spite of herself. It was impossible to remain serious in the face of Tony's cheery, irresponsible banter.

"But after a while he lapsed into silence, as though occupied with his own thoughts.

The crimson of the setting sun crept like a fiery banner over the sky; the tall cypress-trees stood out like dark sentinels against the deepening glow.

For some reason, Lola felt uneasiness creeping over her.

"Have we far to go?" she asked suddenly, breaking the silence.

Tony started, as though disturbed in his train of thoughts.

"We're almost there," he replied. "You'll see the house as we round the

THE BANDIT'S DAUGHTER

(Continued from page 592.)

next bend. It's the Hacienda—" He broke off, dragging suddenly at the reins. "What's that?" he muttered, under his breath.

The horse had shied violently, and Lola, looking round in a startled fashion, stifled an involuntary cry.

For an instant, silhouetted against the glow of the sunset, she saw the figure of a horseman—tall, statuesque, almost unreal!

Tony was too preoccupied with calming the restive mare to have noticed the apparition.

The next moment the figure had vanished, seeming to dissolve into the shadow of the trees.

"What's come over Marquita?" muttered Tony. "She doesn't, as a rule, play tricks like this. Steady, old girl!"

Lola, her heart beating wildly, was staring in the direction in which the figure had vanished.

Could she have imagined that tall, mounted figure? Was her secret anxiously playing tricks with her imagination?

She tried to shake off the impression, telling herself that it was an illusion by the setting sun.

A moment later the hacienda swung into view—a big, white, rambling house of many windows.

"Here we are!" declared Tony, cheerfully. "The Hacienda de Barranca."

For a moment the name conveyed nothing to Lola, and then with a

sudden shock came the recollection of having heard it before.

"The Hacienda de Barranca?" she faltered. "Isn't that—"

"You're right," nodded Tony. "It's the house that was robbed last night by that scoundrel, the Grey Shadow! But don't worry; he won't dare to show his face here again. Its owner is Señor Ramon Garcia, a friend of the chief of the police. I'm meeting him this evening to discuss plans for trapping the elusive bandit, once and for all!"

Lola's face had turned as pale as death as the trap came to a standstill outside the house.

Señor Ramon Garcia! Her father's most bitter enemy—the man chiefly responsible for his being an outlaw.

And she was here to-night to dance before that man's guests!

Even as she sprang to her feet in the trap the front door opened, and the señor himself stood there, his thin, aquiline face wreathed in smiles.

"Ah, my friend," he remarked, holding out his hand to Tony, "so you have brought the young lady with you? I did not catch the name when you spoke to me over the telephone. My niece, here, is also a dancer—so they should be good company."

He stepped aside, and Lola found herself staring into the dark, malicious eyes of her rival, Maria—the girl who had vowed to bring about her downfall!

How strange that Lola should be at the very house belonging to her father's biggest enemy! And that her own rival should be there, too! There are many dramatic happenings in store next Friday, so be sure to order your **GIRLS' CRYSTAL** in advance.