

GIRLS' CRYSTAL^{3!}

AND "THE SCHOOLGIRL"

Week
Ending
March 2nd,
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HER MYSTERY FRIEND of the DESERT

The Last Time Kaye Denvers Had Seen Bill Maitland He Had Pretended To Be A Travelling Salesman. Now He Was Disguised As An Arab Sand Diviner!—By RENEE FRAZER

THE SIGN OF THE BLACK DRAGON

"THIS is the land of adventure—so they say!" murmured Kaye Denvers, with a flicker of a smile as she rattled another key on the row of hooks and neatly entered a new name in the hotel register. "Some day, maybe, I'll find it!"

From her cubby-hole in the palm-shaded lobby of the Hotel Acropolis Kaye could just glimpse the sunlit main street of Samarah, with its colourful throng of pedestrians, the donkey-carts and laden camels mingling with clanging trams.

But to look out through her small window at the fascinating scene was a practice frowned on by the manager, with whom Kaye rarely saw eye to eye.

Kaye had arrived from England only a few weeks previously, to take a job procured for her by a relative who had some influence in Samarah. Thrilled at the chance, she had thrown herself with enthusiasm into her work as hotel receptionist; but as the weeks passed she found that the unfriendly attitude of the manager and the tediously long hours were beginning to take the gilt off her first excitement.

But Kaye was not one to be easily depressed, and in her free time she explored the enchanting Eastern city with its glamorous bazaars, its windings streets and mysterious native haunts bordering on the Libyan desert. Some day, Kaye promised herself, she would find real adventure in spite of her dull job.

"Excuse me, miss!"

Kaye looked round with a start, her features automatically assuming that quick, helpful smile expected by the patrons of the Acropolis.

"Can I help you, sir?" Her voice trailed away and she blinked rather quickly at the

unexpected appearance of the visitor. Amid the fashionable throng that crowded the hotel lobby the young man stood out both by an unusually friendly grin and the crumpled shabbiness of his tropical suit.

In one hand he held a well-worn topee, in the other a very battered suitcase. Spinning the former deftly on to a near-by peg, and placing the latter on the counter, he leaned forward, with a confidential smile.

"I wonder, miss," said the young man cheerfully, "if I could interest you—"

Kaye tapped his arm, looking round apprehensively for the commissionaire. Salesmen were definitely not welcome in the exclusive precincts of the Acropolis—and Kaye had taken a liking to this friendly young man!

"I say, be careful!" she breathed. "If the manager should see you—"

The young man winked, not a whit perturbed. "I saw the manager go out—so I took a chance!"

"But I daren't buy anything here," breathed Kaye. "If the manager comes back—"

"I don't want you to buy anything," rejoined the young man surprisingly. "That was just a ruse—to speak to you."

"To—to speak to me?" echoed Kaye, flushing slightly as she met his twinkling glance. "But—but I've never met you in my life before!"

"That's just it!" returned the other cheerfully. "Let me introduce myself. William G. Maitland—at your service," he added, producing a card. "My friends call me Bill."

Kaye gulped as she stared at the neatly printed card, and back to the cheery face beneath its close-cropped, reddish hair. He was little more than a boy, in spite of his businesslike assurance. "What exactly do you want—Bill?" she

demanding, unable to resist that infectious grin. "And tell me quickly, before you're spotted!" "That's easy," said the boy, and his grey eyes became suddenly serious. "I want your help."

Kaye stared at him, her mind in a whirl. Surprised before, she was quite bewildered now. For a moment she suspected him of joking at her expense, but his serious expression and terse, matter-of-fact tone banished the fleeting thought.

"You want my help?" she whispered. "But—I don't understand—"

The boy coughed suddenly, and Kaye became aware of an approaching shadow. Her heart jumped as she thought of the manager, but the newcomer was one of the guests. A burly, dark-bearded man wearing a red fez and immaculate European attire, she recognised him as the wealthy Abdul Bey—known to the manager and staff as a native prince—to be treated with due respect.

To Kaye's practised eye it was evident that the distinguished visitor was not in the best of tempers. He strode up to the reception desk, brushing the young salesman aside with scarcely a glance, and addressed himself to Kaye.

"There is a message for me!" he announced in a gruff, domineering voice. "It was left here this morning."

"A message for you, sir?" inquired Kaye politely, hiding her indignation at his manner. "I will just see."

She turned to the letter-rack, seeking an envelope addressed to Abdul Bey; but there were only one or two letters in the rack, and none had the slightest reference to the prince.

"Hurry, girl!" snapped the visitor impatiently.

"I'm sorry, sir, there's no message for you here," replied Kaye quietly.

The other glared.

"No message? There must be!" he snapped. "Use your eyes, girl! Think, if you are capable of thinking! Has no messenger called for me this morning?"

Kaye crimsoned, biting back an indignant retort. She saw Bill Maitland's eyes glint as he edged forward, but she flashed him a warning glance.

At all costs she must avoid a scene in the lobby.

"I only came on duty at ten, sir," she replied, controlling her feelings with an effort. "No messenger has called since I took over, and—"

"You're lying, girl!" grated the other, losing his temper.

"Look here," protested the young salesman quickly, "you can't go accusing people like that, y'know!"

Abdul Bey spun round, eyeing the speaker as though he would have struck him, but changed his mind as he saw the glitter in the boy's steady eyes.

And just then Kaye's heart gave a sickening jump.

"Bill—look out—the manager!" she whispered.

The hotel manager, a short, pompous individual, was striding across the lobby.

"Miss Denvers, what is all this?" he exclaimed sharply. Then, without giving Kaye time to explain, he turned obsequiously to the visitor. "Have you some cause for complaint, sir?" he asked.

"I have," grated the other, pointing a be-ringed finger at Kaye. "This girl was insolent when I asked a civil question, and this—this fellow abetted her."

The manager looked at Bill, and Bill looked back coolly at the manager, with a reassuring wink at Kaye.

"Who—what are you doing here?" spluttered the manager, eyeing the boy from his tousled red hair to his rather shabby shoes.

"Representing Simpkins' Superb Stationery," rejoined Bill, producing his card. "I was en-

deavouring to interest the young lady in one of our famous blotting-pads when this—this gentleman butted in and—hem!—barked at her—"

"I am insulted—I will sue the hotel!" exclaimed Abdul Bey.

The manager sought to pacify him, and glared at Bill.

"Get out—you," he snapped, "before I have you thrown out! Here, Ali!"

He beckoned to the dusky commissioner who had appeared in the doorway.

Kaye's heart was in her mouth, but before she could speak up she encountered the boy's warning wink.

With a flourish he produced a folded sheet of blotting-paper from his pocket.

"All right—I'll go quietly," he said coolly. "Permit me to leave one of our samples"—he slid it across the counter, with a meaning glance at Kaye—"just in case you change your mind! Lead on, Ali!"

He reached for his topee as the dusky commissioner laid a heavy hand on his shoulder and hustled him through the staring guests towards the door.

Kaye's blood was boiling, but there was something in the boy's parting glance that checked her impulsive protest. There had been warning in that glance—a hint of mystery!

Her heart beat more quickly as she noticed that something was scribbled in pencil between the folds of the blotter. But she thrust it hastily out of sight as the manager returned, having escorted the irascible foreigner to the lift.

"I've warned you before, Miss Denvers," he snapped, "about your attitude to the guests. I shall not warn you again. Next time it will be the sack!"

And he turned on his heel.

Kaye bit her lip, her face paling slightly. The thought of dismissal was not a smiling matter—alone as she was in this Eastern city, with her nearest relative staying at present in Cairo.

But Kaye managed to smile, and something of the accustomed sparkle returned to her eyes as, waiting her chance, she glanced cautiously at the scribbled pencil writing on the blotting-paper.

Now she would find out why the surprising boy wanted her help!

But her eyes became more bewildered than ever as she scanned the scribbled message. It just didn't make sense.

"Look out for the Black Dragon!" she read. "If you should see it, take no risks. Come at once to the Street of a Thousand Perfumes and ask for the stall of the coppersmith.—BILL."

Kaye rubbed her eyes and re-read the message, but still she could make nothing of it. Either it was a fantastic practical joke on the boy's part or she was particularly dense.

But the mystery intrigued her, and in her excited speculations she had almost forgotten her unfortunate brush with the angry guest, when, chancing to move a bulky telephone directory, her heart gave a violent jump.

On the shelf behind the directory, where it had obviously slipped from the rack, was an envelope addressed in a scrawling hand to "Abdul Bey," and marked in the corner "URGENT!"

"Oh crumbs!" breathed Kaye, her face paling slightly. "If the manager finds out—"

The thought made her feel rather sick. Though the lost letter was not her fault—the previous desk clerk was to blame—the manager would almost certainly pick on her.

There was only one thing to do—to take it to the bey's suite and hope for the best.

Kaye glanced hurriedly at her watch. It was nearly twelve, and her lunch-hour. That would be her chance! As soon as her relief arrived she hurried to the palatial suite on the first floor occupied by the wealthy guest.

Her heart beating rather anxiously, she knocked on the outer door, to discover, to her surprise, that it was slightly ajar. Her knocking brought no response, and Kaye stepped rather nervously into the thickly carpeted, gloomy corridor.

Her footsteps were noiseless on the deep pile as she took a few steps, seeking the boy's sitting-room. And then her heart gave a violent jump as she heard a voice that seemed quite close to her in the gloom—a harsh, guttural voice speaking in a language that was certainly not that of an Easterner.

Another voice replied, the sing-song tones of a desert Arab speaking in broken English.

"It shall be done, Highness! The caravan travels at an hour past noon—and the young English dog who seeks us will die if he dares to show his face!"

Kaye crouched back against the wall as a door opened and slammed again. Someone brushed past her in the gloom, and for an instant Kaye saw a gaunt, sinister figure in a flowing burnous climb through a window that gave access to a balcony.

An involuntary cry was torn from her lips as, in that split second, she noticed the crude design embroidered on the dusty robes.

A black dragon!

The dragon of Bill's message!

But the cry had betrayed her presence; and a door was flung open as she straightened herself, to confront the scowling, bearded features and accusing stare of Abdul Bey himself.

"Girl," he grated harshly, seizing her arm, "what are you doing here?"

THE MESSAGE IN THE SAND



KAYE'S heart was in her mouth as she encountered the man's angry stare. But she forced a smile, endeavouring to stifle the uneasy thumping of her heart.

"Pardon, sir," she said politely, "but your door was open, and I brought you message."

"Ah, give it to me, girl!" The boy snatched at the envelope and tore it open, quickly scanning the filmy paper inside.

Kaye, straining her eyes, managed to glimpse several rows of Arabic characters that made no sense to her. Disappointed, she was about to back away when the other caught at her arm.

"Your behaviour will be reported to the manager, girl!" he hissed. "Now go!"

Kaye went, her chin tilted, a defiant glint in her eyes.

"I've got to see Bill," she breathed. "He'll know what this is all about."

Thank goodness, thought Kaye, it was her lunch-hour. Till one o'clock at least she was free to do as she pleased—and there was no time to lose!

As she changed quickly from her white drill uniform into a dainty frock and slipped a sun hat over her dark hair, Kaye took another glimpse at the boy's message.

"The stall of the coppersmith in the Street of a Thousand Perfumes," she murmured. "I think I know it."

It was a dim and narrow street in the heart of Samarah's famed bazaars—a street taking its name from the many vendors of perfumes in long-necked, intriguing flasks, though copper and silver-smiths and dealers in rare gems plied their trade in its dark alleys and sunlit spaces.

At the end of the street was the coppersmith's stall, facing a sandy square bordered by date-palms.

Kaye halted, a little breathless from hurrying, and looked round for Bill. But in that motley and colourful throng there was no sign of his broad-shouldered, perky figure with carrot hair and a humorous smile.

For a moment Kaye's heart sank. Could his message have been a leg-pull? But no! The startling appearance of the Black Dragon con-

firmed his strange note—that and Abdul Bey's suspicious behaviour.

But her perplexity deepened as she stared round her. Still no sign of Bill, and her all-too-brief lunch-hour was flying. The aged coppersmith was nodding behind his stall and a sedentary group had gathered round a ragged sand-diviner who, squatting in the middle of the square, was inscribing mystic hieroglyphics in his shallow tray of sand.

The little group broke up just then, and Kaye, looking round with growing anxiety, noticed that the soothsayer was watching her intently.

And suddenly he raised a dusky hand and beckoned her! It was a swift, commanding gesture—and Kaye, her heart missing a beat, stepped forward in spite of herself.

"Damsel, what seekest thou?" demanded the other in a husky voice.

Kaye plucked up her courage. "Perhaps the strange man could help her!"

"I seek a friend," she replied boldly. "I wonder if you've seen him—an English boy, broad-shouldered, reddish hair—"

The diviner looked up as his other customers moved off.

"You seek a friend," he mumbled. "Then why comest thou here into the native marketplace, white girl? In other words," he added with an unexpected change of tone, "spill the beans!"

Kaye nearly fell backwards in her surprise. Her eyes goggled as she stared at the hooded figure whose shoulders were shaking with mirth.

"Bill!" gasped Kaye, bewilderment and relief struggling with a natural indignation, and amusement finally coming to her aid. "Bill—you!"

"S'sh!" breathed the boy, with a warning glance. "We may be watched. Look suitably impressed—and tell me what's happened in a few words. Careful!"

Kaye's pulses were racing with excitement. This was the kind of adventure she had often dreamed about—and a baffling mystery thrown in!

Her eyes twinkled suddenly as she reached out for the tray of sand.

"Let me, O prophet, read your own destiny!" she breathed.

"I say, what—" mumbled Bill. But with an imperious gesture Kaye waved him aside and commenced to write in the sand.

"The caravan travels at an hour past noon," she wrote, and turned the tray towards him.

The boy started as he bent forward. Kaye heard his swift intake of breath and saw the gleam that flashed into his eyes.

"Gosh!" he breathed. "You've worked quickly, young lady. How did you find out?"

Kaye frowned warningly. She was in her element. She had the boy guessing now!

"That's not all," she breathed, and, smoothing out the sand, wrote slowly: "There's danger for a young Englishman who is meddling in the mystery."

But if she expected the boy to look startled, she was mistaken. His grin broadened.

"I say you know everything!" he rejoined, with a chuckle. Then more seriously: "How did you manage it? What happened?"

Kaye eyed him challengingly.

"If I tell you," she breathed, "will you tell me what it all means—and how I come into it?"

"It's a bargain!" replied the boy softly. "You start."

Quickly, keeping a watchful eye on the passers-by, Kaye told of her visit to the boy's suite. When she mentioned the sinister Arab and the mark of the dragon the boy stiffened, his grey eyes narrowing.

And you're certain about the words you overheard?" he breathed.

"Positive!" whispered Kaye. "And one of them spoke in a guttural language—not Arabic."

The boy nodded, his eyes glinting, his good-humoured features suddenly grim.

"I might have guessed it," he muttered. "Thank goodness we found out—in time!"

Kaye looked at him quickly.

"In time for what? Come on, Bill, it's your turn!"

"Fair enough," said the boy. "To start with, how you came into it, Kaye. Yes, I know your name, you see! His eyes twinkled. "Matter of fact, I've been keeping a watch on the Acropolis, and I've seen you looking through that little window in your cubby-hole, as though you wanted to get out—"

Kaye flushed slightly.

"So would you, Bill—if you wanted adventure!"

"So I would," admitted the boy gravely. "And I guessed that was what you wanted—kind of sensed it. Well, I badly needed someone to help me—someone I could trust. I made a few tactful inquiries—and here we are!" he added, as though that explained everything.

"But you've not told me anything yet!" objected Kaye. "What does it all mean—this business of the Black Dragon and Abdul Bey and this part you're playing, Bill? Own up!"

The boy leaned forward, his grey eyes suddenly earnest.

"It means, Kaye, that there's a dastardly plot afoot—a plot I've got to unearth! And it's taken too dangerous a turn for a girl to be mixed up in—"

"Bill!" gasped Kaye in sharp disappointment. "But you promised—you said—"

"I still need your help," breathed the boy. "But you must stay in the background—help me behind the scenes. Honest, Kaye, it's not safe for you to be out here with me. If they suspected—"

He glanced quickly over his shoulder, drawing his hood across his face.

"But I'm going to help you, Bill!" declared Kaye excitedly, her caution momentarily forgotten. "I've always longed for an adventure—a real adventure. You must let me—"

But at that instant the boy made a startling, angry gesture, overturning the tray of sand.

"Begone, girl of foolish questions!" he thundered. "Waste my time no more with your prattle! Begone, I say!"

As Kaye stared at him, wondering if he had taken leave of his senses, she caught sight of figures approaching—a tall, gaunt Arab, muffled in a dusty burnous, and a young Arab girl, her surprisingly fair features half hidden by a veil.

Kaye's heart missed a beat as, for a fleeting moment, she fancied she had met that gaunt Arab before. Instinctively her eyes searched his robe for the sinister mark of the Black Dragon, but there was nothing to be seen.

And then she heard the boy's terse whisper as he bent over his tray.

"Back to the hotel—quickly! Wait till you hear from me. Danger if you disobey—hurry!"

A rebellious gleam flashed for a moment into Kaye's eyes, but the boy had turned his back on her.

She bit her lip, but a hurried glance at her watch revealed that it was close on one, and unless she ran she would be late back on her job. She didn't take that risk, after what had happened!

Flushed and out-of-breath, she reached the hotel and hurried through the smart crowd in the lobby towards the reception desk.

But her way was barred by the dusky commissioner.

"The manager, he wish to speak to you in his office, mees," announced the man, with a slightly pitying glance.

Kaye's heart sank as she hurried to the office and knocked on the door. The manager, looking a shade more pompous than usual, eyed her sharply as she entered.

"I need not waste your time, or mine, Miss Denvers," he said curtly. "A complaint has

been made by Abdul Bey that he caught you entering his suite in a suspicious manner."

"But I had a message for him!" gasped Kaye indignantly. "It was he who—"

"That will do!" rapped the manager, his eyes narrowed. "The hotel cannot afford complaints against its employees. You will be dismissed with two weeks' salary instead of notice. Your money is waiting for you at the cashier's office. Good-afternoon."

Kaye felt the blood drain from her face and a cold hand seemed to catch at her heart.

"Dismissed!" she faltered. "But—I've done nothing—you can't—"

"My decision is final!" snapped the manager, half rising from his chair. "Kindly refrain from arguing. You are fired!"

THE MYSTERY CARAVAN



DEATHLY pale, Kaye backed towards the door. There was a choking lump in her throat and her dark eyes were stormy. But she realised the futility of protest.

As in a dream she packed her few things in a small suitcase, said good-bye to her many friends on the staff, and stepped from the hotel into the colourful, busy street—the street of adventure.

"Adventure!" breathed Kaye, her lips trembling as she forced a smile. "My great adventure—and this is how it ends!"

And then, with a sharp pang, she thought of Bill.

Bill would not know where to find her—if he wanted her help! He might send a message to the hotel and receive no reply. He'd think she was afraid—trying to back out of her promise.

Kaye's hands clenched. At all costs she must let Bill know!

She turned her steps swiftly towards the scent bazaar, and there, plucking up her courage, asked the old coppersmith in her smattering of Arabic which way the soothsayer had gone. The old man gestured vaguely in the direction of the dusty road that led to the fringe of the desert.

The desert! Kaye drew in her breath sharply, her eyes gleaming. That was it! Bill had gone to find the mysterious caravan spoken of in the message—the caravan that meant danger!

Anxiously she questioned the old man again. Had he seen a caravan pass that way recently, going towards the desert?

The old coppersmith fingered his beard with the aggravating slowness of the East. Then grudgingly he admitted that a train of laden camels and mules had passed through the square not ten minutes since.

Kaye thanked him breathlessly and darted off in the direction he indicated. If she could overtake the mystery caravan she might find Bill—and Bill might need her help!

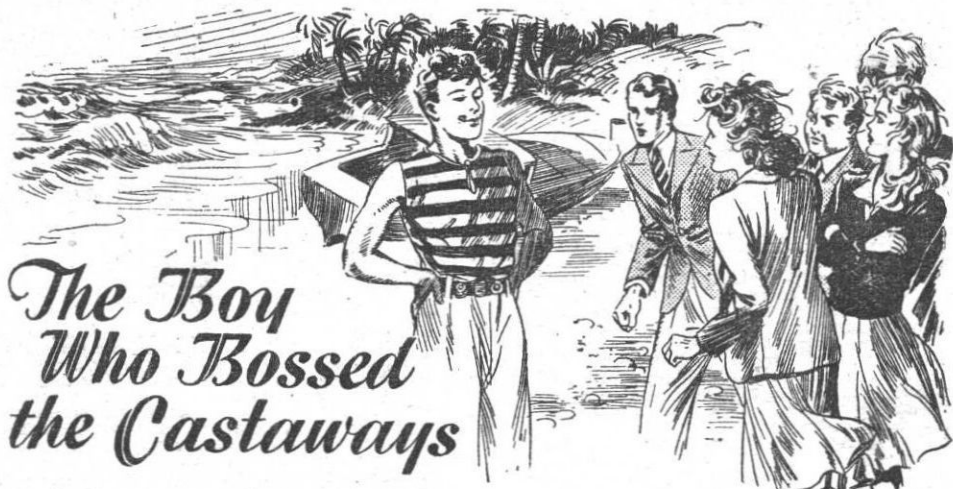
Along the dusty road she hurried, dodging occasional laden camels and ambling donkey-carts, half choked by the sand and dust raised by speeding cars.

She passed several camel trains going towards the city, their dusky drivers half asleep among the bales of merchandise, but nothing except a few fast cars moving desertward.

Kaye was beginning to lose hope. Either the mystery caravan had a longer start than the old coppersmith had suggested, or it had taken another road.

Her feet were lagging heavily and she was beginning to feel parched and faint in the burning sunshine. Then, by a stroke of luck, she saw a big car at a standstill near a wayside cafe, and as she looked at it longingly a group of young tourists trooped out of the cafe, laughing and talking as they entered the car.

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The Boy Who Bossed the Castaways

THE CASTAWAYS' DECISION

JULIE WALLACE and her chums, Elsie and Roly Maynard, and Dick Mardle were travelling to Australia on board the *s.s. Daffodil*, with the Maynards' uncle, an enthusiastic archaeologist.

Also on board was Larry Woodstock, a lawless boy who was to be placed in charge of the police when they reached Darwin. He seemed very interested in a locket which Julie's father had given her just before he died. The locket contained a map of the Island of the Golden Palm, where Mr. Wallace had been marooned for two years. But despite herself Julie found it hard to dislike Larry.

At Julie's request the *Daffodil* changed course so that they could visit the Island of the Golden Palm, but before they reached it Larry Woodstock escaped in one of the yacht's motor-boats.

The professor and his party landed on the island, and, as the result of a false message, the *Daffodil* put to sea.

Julie & Co. were marooned on the island, and they believed their plight had been caused by Larry Woodstock, when they discovered that he also had landed on the island. He told them that he could help them on one condition—that they made him boss!

IN utter amazement the castaways stared at the smiling, self-assured Larry Woodstock. Even Julie, for a moment, felt she could hardly believe her ears.

Yet, despite his smile, the boy was serious. Despite his careless attitude, he was obviously awaiting the castaways' answer with interest.

"Well," he challenged, after a stupefied silence, "what about it? You accept me as boss, and I'll help you until your yacht comes back. You know you can't help yourselves on this island, so why be stand-offish? If you don't accept my offer—" He shrugged his broad shoulders.

"You really mean you'd insist on being boss?" Gilson demanded.

"Naturally."

"And you think we'd accept your orders?"

Larry shrugged.

"I don't see why not. They'd all be for your own good."

There was a pause. Larry thrust his hands

By HAZEL ARMITAGE

into his pockets, as though prepared to wait while his proposition sunk in fully. And Julie, watching him, found herself wondering if, after all, the castaways wouldn't be wise to accept his proposition.

So far they had made a sorry mess of their island adventure. Larry, on the other hand, was so capable, so confident, that privately Julie felt that had the decision been left to her, she wouldn't have had any hesitation in accepting it.

But it was not left to her to answer. It was the professor, his cheeks suddenly mottled in his anger, who broke out then:

"You—you impudent young scallawag!" he exploded. "You dare try to make terms with us? You! You who have been responsible for all this! By gad, sir, how you've got the nerve to face us at all, I don't know! Is this how you were taught to treat your betters?"

Larry smiled scornfully.

"I've not met them yet," he said crisply. "But forget that. I'm making you a sensible offer."

"You're offering a downright insult!" Gilson flashed back.

Larry's smile twisted.

"O.K.! You're easily hurt, that's all I can say."

Gilson faced him indignantly.

"Look here, what is the big idea? Why should you want to boss us?"

"Because, my dear secretary," Larry retorted pitifully, "that's the only way we could possibly work together. If we team up, there's got to be a leader, and—well, as I happen to know more about everything on this island than you others do, I'm the obvious choice; working together, we could get along pretty well, I think. If we separate, I shall certainly not miss you. I shall eat well, sleep well, and enjoy myself. You won't—and you know it. So if you decide to go your own way, don't say I didn't try to help you."

"Well, that's reasonable," Julie found herself saying, only to jump as Gilson whirled on her.

"And what do you know about it?" he demanded. "You leave us to settle this, Julie. You know the fellow's a scoundrel. You know

It was he who deliberately stranded us on this island. Do you think we're going to fall for any more of his dirty schemes? You can bet he's got some scheme on, trying to get us all under his thumb. Well, I, for one, say 'No' to your so-called offers, Larry Woodstock. And the sooner you get out of this, the better for you."

"Yes, be off with you!" the professor blazed. "Get out! How dare you—"

Larry shrugged again. For just an instant his eyes fastened on the burning-faced Julie—Julie, who had now stepped back, humiliated, and conscious all at once that she definitely disliked Gilson.

There was a look of understanding, of sympathy, even of gratitude, in that look the young outlaw fastened on her. Then he spoke again:

"O.K.!" he said again. "Now we know where we stand. I'm sorry—for your sakes, believe me. I've got an idea what's coming to you. All the same, I'll still be generous. When you've had a bit more experience of Golden Palm Island you might think better of your decision. If you do—" He glanced along the coastline where the cliff rose into a headland, and on top of the headland was perched a solitary windblown tree. "When you do," he finished, "run up something for a flag on that tree there and I'll call and see you again. Now, good-night," he added mockingly, and strolled off into the gathering darkness just as the first heavy splash of rain fell.

It was not accompanied this time by crashing thunder and vivid lightning, nor with driving wind. But in great heavy drops which came down in a soaking sheet, put the fire completely out and re-drenched their almost dry clothes.

The Professor, jumping to a sense of responsibility, ordered Gilson, Ada Henshaw, Julie and Elsie to get Mrs. Fry and Aunt Martha into the moored motor-boat. This they did, with Aunt Martha complaining that she would never survive the night, and Mrs. Fry now crying pitifully as she swayed upon the arm of her dutiful husband, who helped to escort her.

Somehow they got the two ladies into the tiny cabin—a space which they almost completely filled. They shut the door and returned to the party in the driving rain on the beach.

"Gad, it's wet!" the professor shivered. "Dark, too. Hm! Have to do something about this. Have to find a shelter of some sort. Can't anybody suggest something?"

They stared at each other in the fast-gathering darkness. Then Julie had an idea.

"There's the tarpaulin that covers the motor-boat," she said. "Couldn't we rig up a shelter of some sort from that?"

"By Jove, splendid!" the professor cried. "Hitchcock—he addressed the sailor—'come and lend a hand, will you?'"

He, Hitchcock, the two boys and Gilson at once boarded the motor-boat again, disturbing the melancholy Mr. Fry, who now stood, a dripping sentinel, outside the cabin door. They removed the tarpaulin and hauled it ashore, only to be immediately scared into replacing it by the anguished complaints of Aunt Martha and Mrs. Fry, who declared that water was pouring through the cabin roof. And then, fortunately, the rain stopped and the moon came out.

They helped Aunt Martha and Mrs. Fry back to the beach. There again, aided by rags soaked in petrol, and some damp wood, they got a fire going. Dick, scrambling over the motor-boat, found a kit of tools, among them a small axe. Armed with this, he set off with Roly to chop down more wood from the trees near by. Elsie and Julie, glad of something to do, went with them and presently returned armed with firewood, and soon had a really good blaze going.

Wood-cutting and wood-carrying became the

order of the night from then on. They all took turns—all except Aunt Martha, Mrs. Fry and Mr. Horace Fry, who seemed to have plunged into an abyss of gloom from which he would never escape. When at last enough wood had been collected, they sat round the fire, dreaming and drowsing, grumbling and muttering, and wishing to goodness they had something to eat.

There was only one topic upon which they seemed mutually agreed, and that was their hearty and heartfelt dislike of Larry Woodstock, the boy who had landed them into this mess, the boy who seemed to have found happiness and content, where they had only discovered hunger and misery.

Only Julie did not join in that condemnation. Her thoughts about Larry—and they occupied most of the time she was not dozing—were varied. She couldn't understand him. Couldn't make up her mind, even now, whether she liked him.

In so many ways he appealed to her. In so many others he awed her, appalled her. How different a boy he might be if only he would throw off that insolence of his! How different if he could only regard her and her "class," as he called her friends, as sufferers in mutual distress. But was that right? He certainly was in no distress, and he had genuinely offered to help the castaways, even if he had insisted on his own terms. It was their own fault that they had now been left to their fate.

"Oh, why can't we all be friends?" she asked herself.

And so, waking and dozing, with intervals for making up the fire, the long night dragged interminably on. They were all cramped and still damp in places when at last the dawn broke like a flame in a pearl-tinted sky. The sun came out overhead and the island woke up with a great screaming and chattering of unseen birds.

With relief, the castaways stretched their aching limbs, all more ravenously hungry than ever, and with Mrs. Fry complaining bitterly that she had contracted her old lumbago.

"And to think," she complained, "that this trip was supposed to cure my lumbago. Oh, Horace, how could you?"

"My love—" the contrite Mr. Fry faltered. "Question is, what are we going to eat?" Roly asked hungrily. "Gosh, we haven't had a bite since yesterday's breakfast."

"Supposing we have a look round?" Julie suggested. "It's dry now. Maybe we'll find some remains of the picnic hamper. Or perhaps," she added, listening to the screaming birds, "some eggs. Come on!"

A hunt was begun at once, Dick and Julie going off in one direction, Gilson and Ada in another, Elsie and Roly in a third. And this time, at least, they had some success, for it wasn't long before Julie, spotting something glistening in the bracken, swooped upon it, and with a yell of glee wrenched it from its hiding-place. It was the box containing the picnic stove and the canisters.

"Tea!" she cried. "And sugar! And dried milk! Gosh, what a find!"

"Whoops!" Dick cheered, and took the box. "Let's find something else. Perhaps our luck's in at last."

But that was all. Though they searched for another hour they found nothing more. But in triumph they took the box to the beach, where they were welcomed with rapturous cries. The tea, when they opened the canister, was intact and dry, but both sugar and dried milk had suffered from the damp, though, in the circumstances, that hardly mattered. They were all still thrilling over their find, when there came another cheerful hail from the thicket near by, and out of it came Roly and Elsie—Roly in his shirt-sleeves.

His coat he had taken off and had turned into a bag, which he was now gingerly but excitedly carrying. His face was one great beam.

"Look!" he cried, and, putting the coat on the ground, joyfully displayed the contents. "How's that for a find?"

"Eggs!" Julie whooped.

Eggs they were—eggs of a delicate green colour dotted with brown spots, and about the size of an English duck or goose egg.

"Are—are they edible?" Aunt Martha asked doubtfully.

"We'll decide that when we've eaten 'em," Roly said cheerfully. "Anyway, I've never heard of a bird's egg being poisonous. Have you, professor?"

"Er—no," the professor said, his eyes fixed hungrily upon the dainties in question. "Most interesting! Most!" he added, still gazing at the eggs. "Where did you find them, Roly, my boy?"

"In the woods," Roly grinned. "A whacking bird suddenly squawked up in front of us. And then I saw the eggs in its nest, and you can bet I said 'thanks a lot.' But that bird," he added, with some of the happiness dying from his face, "it nearly scared me into fits when I was picking them up. It came whizzing at me like a Spitfire. And—Whoa! Look out! There it is again!" he suddenly cried.

There was a whir above them; a shriek. Then a sudden furious, feathery shape came hurtling out of the blue like a comet. With a yell, Roly dived forward; with a scream, the bird—a great blue and green creature—shot at him, zoomed above his back and, with another scream, soared heavenwards again.

Mrs. Fry shrieked in terror. Aunt Martha started to her feet.

"There's our dinner, you dolts!" she cried excitedly. "Shoot it—shoot it!"

But nobody could shoot it, for the simple reason nobody had a gun. With the bird's disappearance Roly recovered a little. Then Mrs. Fry discovered that there were thirteen eggs, and as thirteen was an unlucky number, disaster was bound to happen to all those who partook of them. That again dampened the spirits of the party until they remembered their own hunger.

"Oh, rot!" Roly said crossly. "Anyway, I'd rather risk bad luck than starvation. Look out for that bird," he added nervously. "If it comes near me—" Suddenly he stared at the eggs again. "They—Look, look!" he stuttered. "Gosh, they—they're moving!"

"What?"

But it was true. With the rest of the party, Julie watched the phenomenon which was now taking place before her eyes. The eggs were moving—no doubt about that! They were rolling, wriggling and lumping, and even as she watched, one cracked. A piece of the shell fell away, and there came a squeak, followed by a terrific wriggle, and a tiny little head and an enormous white beak popped out of the hole.

"Gosh, I—I'm seeing things!" Roly stuttered. "What's happening?"

"What's happening," Dick said with a snort, "is that those eggs are hatching out, you chump! No wonder the old bird gave you the bird! Well"—he looked around grimly—"looks as if we've had our breakfast, folks!"

A HUNGRY PROSPECT



"FIRST, we take those eggs back where they were found, so that the mother can look after them," Julie immediately decided. "Elsie, you and Roly had better do that as you know where you found them."

Roly sighed. His face was very woebegone. Elsie, biting her lip now, looked guilty, and only anxious to make amends, began to gather the eggs together. Julie picked up the tarpaulin sheet.

"I'll go and find water so that we can have some tea," she said quietly.

Nobody spoke. In spite of the sun riding in the heavens above, and in spite of the screeching and crying of the birds on the island, a heavy, hungry depression had settled upon the castaway party once more. It had cheered them to be able to anticipate some sort of breakfast. Now, with the meal snatched away before it had even begun to materialise, their spirits had dropped lower than ever.

Julie herself felt something of the depression as she moved away. She was feeling a little giddy, not realising that it was sheer hunger which was responsible for that weakness. Still, it would be something, she told herself, even to have a cup of tea—if they could find something to serve as cups.

"Coconut shells will do, of course," she said. "If they're hollowed out they make lovely little cups. And perhaps," she cheered herself, "it won't be so bad when we've had a look round. Anyway, there seems to be plenty of wild life on the island, and wild life means food. There's plenty of fish in the sea, too—if we can find some way of catching it."

She went on cautiously, following the path which had taken her to her first surprising meeting with Larry Woodstock yesterday. She distinctly remembered, while she had stood talking to him, of hearing the tinkle of nearby water.

In search of that water, she arrived at the spot once more, and for a moment she paused, staring round as though half expecting to see Larry there again, and knowing in her inmost heart that she would have been really glad to see him.

But Larry was not there.

A few yards farther on, however, she found the stream—a little crystal-clear waterfall which splashed and sparkled in the light of the sun.

It looked cool, tranquil and inviting, and suddenly Julie realised that she had not washed since yesterday morning, and made eagerly towards it. On the bank she laid aside the tarpaulin sheet, joyfully stretched forward her hands so that the cold water fell into the cup they made. It tasted sweet, that water. Delicious!

She drank. Then she splashed her arms, her face. She felt better then—but, if anything, the refreshing water had intensified her hunger. Oh, for one of those breakfasts aboard the Daffodil! Even for the old breakfast she and Elsie had grumbled about at school—porridge, toast and marmalade, and—on high days and holidays—perhaps a fried sausage. If only—

The dream suddenly snapped as, kneeling in an upright position, she found herself gazing at the sandy shore of the opposite bank. It was shadowed there, and since the sun had not yet touched the earth, the sand was still damp. And in the sand, showing plainly that feet other than her own had visited this spring in the wood, were footprints.

Large footprints. Staring at them more intently, she realised now that they were prints made by the soles of canvas shoes. And at once, with an electrifying thrill, her thoughts leapt to Larry Woodstock.

They were Larry's footprints!

She knew it. She was convinced of it when, stepping across the rivulet, she examined them. Now she saw that they ran along the shady bank in an unbroken line. Impelled by some secret force it never occurred to her to question, she began to follow them.

She found herself ascending. The rivulet, broad in some places, narrow in others, was a mountain stream whose spring was in the higher slopes of the hills. Presently she found the spring gushing out of the hillside, and, turning her eyes away from it, she thrilled as she saw, some distance away, a spiral of blue smoke ascending from amidst a clump of low-growing trees.

"Larry!" she breathed.

She left the spring. Across the soft, green grass, dotted here and there with nodding little blue and red flowers she knew were orchids, she approached the trees.

A faint breeze, warm and laden with the scent of flowers, was blowing across the island from the sea, and suddenly she paused and sniffed. For that breeze brought other scents than those of flowers to her nostrils.

The smell of cooking—fragrant, keen, hunger-making cooking.

Of what?

Julie did not know, but suddenly, with a painful longing, she was remembering those feeds of crisp, brown, hot, sizzling sausages that she and her chums had so often treated themselves to after keen hockey matches back at the English school.

Suddenly she could scent, more powerfully than anything else, that fragrance of food—appetising, luxurious food, for which her poor empty stomach craved.

Never in her life had Julie realised, until that moment, what it was to be really and terribly hungry. Never had she realised that the smell of wholesome food could be such a powerful attraction. It seemed to hypnotise her. It drew her on.

On—into the trees—until, stepping through the clinging liana beneath her feet, she suddenly paused, a thrill in her heart and a great gulp in her throat.

For there in front of her was Larry—Larry Woodstock! A Larry in such luxurious circumstances compared with her own that her eyes glistened at the sight of his repast. The hunger of which she had been so vividly conscious before became all-consuming.

"Larry," she breathed.

FOOD FOR JULIE



He did not hear. Not yet had he seen her. But for a moment she watched him, marvelling at that expression of happiness on his face, amazed to find him looking so completely different from the mocking, cynical, insolent outlaw she knew so well.

For Larry was sitting in front of a fire, a contented expression on his remarkably good-looking face, a little tune humming on his lips. And on that fire—

Julie's mouth watered.

The fire was in a long trench. At both sides of the trench were forked branches supporting a long iron bar. And on that bar, frizzling, sizzling, with its fat causing little spurts of gurgling flame to jump from the fire beneath it, hung the side of a roasting wild pig.

And by Larry's side were mess tins, a saucepan and a kettle; and, yes, a box of ships' biscuits. She saw tins which she knew contained jam and marmalade and butter and pickles. In her own starved condition the picture appeared unreal and dreamlike to Julie. But that was not all of it.

For now, lifting her eyes, she saw, behind Larry, a cliff. In the cliff was a small cave. A tarpaulin—the tarpaulin she recognised as covering the stolen motor-boat—had been erected over the cave-mouth, but was now drawn aside to admit the light and the air.

And in that cave, snug, warm, comfortable and weather-proof, she saw a bed of dried bracken, saw other boxes and tins which she knew were further stores.

So this was Larry Woodstock's hideout! This his secret retreat—well equipped with all those things for which the famished castaways would have given anything.

No wonder Larry had been so sure of himself, so confident. No wonder he had felt so superior to her own wretched friends.

And the pork which was now roasting on his fire—how had he got that?

His humming stopped suddenly. He looked up, a new alertness in his eyes, as though some secret sense had warned him of her presence. He looked straight at her.

"Oh," he said, and grinned. "It's you, Julie. Come and have breakfast."

She blushed to find that she had been discovered. But she gulped at the smell of the food, trying to fight a fierce temptation which she knew already had got the better of her.

"I—I saw your smoke," she faltered as she went forward.

"And smelt the grub, eh?" he laughed. "Pretty nice pork—I trapped him last night. Smells good, doesn't it? Come along and tuck in."

"No," she said stiffly but weakly.

"Yes," he said.

She knew that she ought to have turned and run away then, but somehow she didn't. He was rising now, and she saw him coming towards her.

She hardly knew what was happening until she found her wrist caught gently in his big hand, felt herself being tugged towards the cooking pork and the cheerfully spluttering fire. To her amazement, she saw something like concern in his eyes as he gently seated her and looked at her.

"You're hungry, aren't you?"

"Well—just a little," she confessed.

"Meaning you're ravenous," he guessed. He frowned. "Why is it people like you will never admit a real truth? Anyway, you're just in time," he added cheerfully. "The pork is done to a turn. Pork and bread-fruit make a delicious meal. Ever tried bread-fruit?"

"No," she said.

"Know what it is?"

"No," she faltered, feeling very ignorant but with her mouth watering as she listened to the fat spluttering in the fire.

"Then you shall see. And you shall taste," he said determinedly. "Yes, you will"—as she opened her mouth to protest. "If I like any of your bunch, Julie, it's you. You're the only one who has shown any human feeling towards me. Look!" And now he poked at the fire, and she saw that under the embers was an oven made of stones, and on top of those stones were green, steaming leaves from which came a delicious odour of newly baked bread. He removed the leaves to uncover several golden brown balls beneath them.

"Bread-fruit," he said. "Wait a minute."

He rose, untied the side of pork, and dropped it on the grass. Then he dived into his cave and came back with two plates—real porcelain plates, each bearing the crest of the s.y. Daffodil—real knives and real forks. "You just rest," he advised. "I'll serve this."

She felt too weak to protest. Too hungry to do anything but stare at the appetising food with longing eyes.

She watched the outlaw with wondering fascination as, with a shiny, long-bladed knife which he plucked from his belt, he cut off a gigantic, steaming hot chop. This he placed on one of the plates, heaping bread-fruit alongside it. Then he placed it before her.

"Eat," he commanded.

She looked at it, held her breath, and fought a last losing battle of resistance. Then she picked up her knife and fork.

Larry grinned as, out of the corner of his eye, he watched her. The food smelt good, but it tasted better than anything Julie had ever eaten in her life. New vitality seemed to course through her veins as she packed the meal away.

Meanwhile, Larry, ignoring his own breakfast, busied himself in making tea. Again it was the Daffodil's utensils—part of the equipment of the motor-boat in which Larry had escaped—which he used. And the tea was the most delicious concoction Julie had ever tasted.

(Please turn to the back page.)



A THRILLING CHASE

By PETER LANGLEY

JUNE GAYNOR, niece and partner of Noel Raymond, the famous young detective, went to Glen Hall to investigate the mystery of a spectral figure known as the Green Rajah, who was supposed to haunt Temple Isle.

June discovered that Colonel Raikes, who had once owned Glen Hall and Temple Isle, had hidden a crystal goblet which was the key to the lost secret of the Purple Mountains. She also found out that the Green Rajah was after the goblet.

It was suspected that the Green Rajah was Jack Linton, a boy who had mysteriously disappeared from Glen Hall.

June found Jack in a cave, his leg injured. He told her that he was really out to unmask the Green Rajah, and also to prove the innocence of his friend Ronnie Baring, who had once been secretary to Colonel Raikes, and who was now a fugitive from the police.

When June returned to Glen Hall she organised a trap for the Green Rajah, whom she had reason to believe would visit Temple Isle in search of the hidden crystal goblet.

June and the young guests at Glen Hall hid themselves on the island, and June's heart gave a leap as she saw the Green Rajah approaching the museum, in which were kept many of the curios which had belonged to Colonel Raikes.

JUNE'S eyes glistened as she saw that eerily glowing figure standing by the museum door.

Her theory that the Green Rajah would visit the island that evening had proved right, and as yet the spectral figure had no suspicion of the trap which had been laid for him.

The thought that in a very few minutes he would be captured set the girl detective's heart pounding, but what thrilled her even more was the knowledge that her faith in Jack Linton had been justified.

For Jack was at this moment nursing his injured leg in the cave on the mainland, so obviously the accusation that he was the Green Rajah could not be true.

But who would the bearded figure in the green costume prove to be?

"We'll soon know now," June told herself, and put her whistle to her lips.

Ph-eee-p!

Piercingly the signal rang out, and instantly Ted Brandish, Mildred Henley, Billie Murdoch, and all the other young guests at Glen Hall leapt from their hiding-places and came running forward.

Excitedly June waved.

"Come on! He can't escape!" she cried.

The Green Rajah, petrified by the sudden outcry, for a moment remained crouching by the door, his tigerish eyes glaring at the boys and girls who came rushing from every direction, then flinging open the door, he plunged into the temple-like museum.

In a flash June was after him, and hot on her heels surged the others.

"It's no use! You're cornered—you might as well give in!" panted June, snapping on the torch she carried, and focusing the light on that madly fleeing figure.

The Green Rajah's only response was to go sprinting down the central aisle. His aim was clear. He meant to escape through the small door at the far end.

But it was not to be.

Before he could gain it, the door burst open, and in rushed Ted Brandish, excitedly flourishing his cricket bat.

"Got you!" the boy exclaimed, and made a grab at the furious mystery figure, but the Green Rajah tore himself free, and, dodging amongst the idols and other curios which were arranged in serried rows on the floor, quickly vanished from sight.

"Guard the doors!" Quickly June took command again. "The rest of you switch on your torches," she ordered. "We'll soon discover where he's hiding."

Half a dozen dazzling beams of light cleaved the darkness, and while some of the young guests from Glen Hall stood watch in the doorways, their sticks raised for instant action, the others advanced cautiously, shoulder to shoulder.

From curio to curio they advanced, their

torches probing into every corner. Suddenly June gave a triumphant shout:
"There he is—behind that big wooden image!" she announced.

Swiftly the turbaned head she had seen glowering around the life-sized idol which stood in a small alcove, dodged back out of sight, but June was certain she had not been mistaken.

"Keep together—he can't escape if we're careful," she ordered.

In a grim, excited half-circle the ghost-hunters closed in on the grotesque idol. As they neared it, Ted Brandish waved his cricket-bat warningly.

"You guys stand back," he urged. "Leave it to us boys—"

But that was as far as he got, for as June saw a brown-skinned hand grasping some glacial object lunge out from behind the wooden image, she gave a scream.

"Look out!"

Involuntarily the boys and girls recoiled, just as a glistening glass ball circled through the air, to drop right at Billie Murdoch's feet. There was a small explosion, then a billowing cloud of dense white smoke leapt up from the floor, engulfing June and her friends and setting them coughing and gasping.

"The—the trickster!" gasped Ted. "Of all the—ouch!"

He finished with a howl as an unseen figure charged him, sending him reeling against two of the others. Then came another chorus of startled yells as another smoke bomb burst by the main entrance.

Blinded and bewildered, the watchers there made a wild grab as dimly they saw what they thought was the fleeing Green Rajah, but it was only Billie Murdoch blundering out of the first smoke cloud.

"Let go, you chumps!" he roared. "Guard the door! Don't let—"

He finished with another burst of coughing as the acrid fumes filled his lungs.

For a few moments there was wild confusion, and by the time June & Co. had recovered from this unexpected attack the museum was empty except for themselves.

"Quick—follow me! He can't have got far!"

Her eyes still streaming, June plunged out into the open. Thankfully she gulped in the clean fresh air as she looked about her, then she gave another shout as she saw a shadowy figure racing down to the beach.

"There he is—making for the boats!" she cried.

Instantly the pursuit was taken up, but by the time they gained the water's edge the Green Rajah had launched one of the boats and was rowing madly for the mainland.

Determined that he should not escape, the boys and girls dragged the two remaining boats into the water, scrambled aboard, and were soon in hot pursuit.

Vigorously the boys rowed, but the boats were heavily laden. Try as they would, they could gain no headway. The Green Rajah had almost reached the landing-stage now. A moment more and June saw him leap up on to it, to go running through the wooded grounds of Glen Hall. Desperately she strove to keep him in sight.

"He seems to be making straight for the house!" she exclaimed, and her eyes narrowed in wonder.

Was it possible that the mystery figure lived there? Could he be one of the guests or servants? It seemed incredible, yet June's suspicions deepened as she remembered the burglary in Mr. Henley's study. All along she had been convinced that that had been an "inside" job.

"If I'm right, then we may get him yet," she told herself excitedly, and as her boat bumped alongside the landing-stage she sprang ashore.

Followed by the rest, she went racing down the path. The Green Rajah had gone from sight now, but the shouts of the boys and girls

had attracted attention at the house, and out of it came streaming Mr. Henley and a crowd of older guests and servants.

"We're after the Green Rajah!" June shouted. "Scatter ground! He's still in the grounds somewhere!"

Eagerly the search was taken up, and soon the wooded grounds were alive with shouting, hurrying figures. June, her torch directed on the ground, gave a triumphant gasp as she saw the mark of sandalled feet, and quickly she beckoned to those around her.

"He came this way," she announced. "Follow me, and keep your eyes open!"

Sticks gripped purposefully, torches flashing into the thick undergrowth, the searchers ranged themselves on either side of the girl detective. The ground became harder, and she lost the tell-tale trail, but as she rounded a bend in the path she gave another excited cry:
"Look! There he is!"

For her keen eyes had glimpsed a shadowy shape crouching at the foot of a hollow oak tree. Instantly there was a wild rush forward, but the figure, straightening up, gave an irate shout:

"Keep off, you kids! It's me—Standish!"

And to their amazement June & Co. found themselves confronted by the tall, scowling figure of Mr. Standish, one hand clapped to the back of his head.

"What's all the excitement about?" he demanded.

June regarded him in astonishment.

"We're looking for the Green Rajah," she explained. "Aren't you one of the searchers?" Mr. Henley's friend shook his head.

"No; I came out for a stroll. But I ran into him all the same," he growled. "And the young scoundrel cracked me over the head—nearly stunned me."

As he spoke he rubbed his head again, and, looking at him in the light of her torch, June saw that his clothes were covered with mud and leaves.

"Oh, I'm sorry," she said, "but how long ago did it happen?"

Mr. Standish waved an irritable hand. Obviously his unpleasant experience had not improved his temper.

"How should I know?" he muttered. "I tell you, the scoundrel knocked me down. Perhaps two minutes ago—perhaps longer."

"Then he can't be far away!" cried June. "Let's search around." As the excited crowd started to obey, she turned to Mr. Standish again. "I suppose you didn't get a chance to recognise him?" she asked.

He shook his head.

"No; the villain attacked me from behind, but there's no mystery about his identity. He's Ronald Baring—that trickster who now calls himself Jack Linton."

June regarded him in dismay.

"Oh, but he isn't!" she exclaimed. "For one thing Ronald and Jack aren't the same person. They're—"

She broke off in confusion as she saw the queer way Mr. Standish was surveying her.

"How do you know?" he demanded.

Realising how her loyalty to Jack had led into being indiscreet, June strove desperately to conceal her embarrassment.

"Oh, I—I discovered that when I went to Black Glen to-day," she declared hurriedly. "I'm certain Jack isn't Ronald Baring in disguise. They're two entirely separate people."

Mr. Standish gave a wrathful snort.

"Whether they're one or two makes no difference. Ronald Baring is a known thief, and Jack Linton is the Green Rajah. They're both in this."

"But they're not!" Though she knew she was foolish to defend Jack like this, nevertheless, June could not bite back the words. "I'm sure Jack is innocent," she gasped.

"Innocent, my dear?" It was Mr. Henley who spoke. He had just approached, and heard June's words. "What ever makes you think

that?" he asked in amazement. "Surely you are forgetting the highly suspicious way in which he left my house to-day?"

"Bah! The girl's a fool!" broke in Roger Standish, with another wave of the hand. "Of course Jack Linton is the Green Rajah. What's more, I can prove it beyond all doubt. Just before the young scoundrel attacked me I made a startling discovery."

As he spoke he turned and crossed to the gnarled old oak.

"Shine your torch down here," he ordered June.

She obeyed, to give a gasp as she saw a jagged hole in the trunk. Bending, Roger Standish put in his hand, to pull out a bulky bundle.

"When I was strolling along I saw someone hide something in here," he declared. "It was too dark to recognise him, and by the time I reached the tree he had disappeared. I was just investigating when he leapt out from behind those bushes and knocked me down—but not before I'd seen what it was he'd hidden here. Look at this!"

Triumphantly he held out a green Indian costume.

"That's what that Green Rajah wears, isn't it?" he growled. "But there's something else stowed away here." From the hole he pulled another bundle, and gazed in triumph at June. "So Jack Linton's innocent, is he?" he cried scornfully. "Then how do you account for these being here—wrapped up in his blazer?"

And, unfolding the bundle, he disclosed it to be a boy's blazer, and bundled inside were four glittering, strangely ornamented Indian vases.

The vases which the Green Rajah had stolen from Mr. Henley's study!

JUNE'S FIND IN THE OAK



"GOSH, there's no getting away from that!"

"That monogram on the blazer is Jack's right enough!"

Their quest for the missing Green Rajah forgotten, the boys and girls eyed in horror the jacket which Mr. Standish held out.

All the young guests at Glen Hall had liked Jack Linton, and ever since this morning they had been hoping against hope that their suspicions about him would prove to be ill-founded. But this discovery settled the matter as far as they were concerned.

"Mr. Standish is right," declared Billie Murdoch, with a rueful shake of the head. "This is gilt-edged proof."

June made no comment.

She was as staggered as the rest, and for one awful moment wondered whether her faith in the mystery boy had been wise. What if the story Jack had told her that afternoon was false? What if he had only pretended to have injured his leg?

Then her deep liking for him took control and drowned the nagging doubts in her mind. She had promised to trust him, and she would keep that promise no matter how black was the outlook.

"This is another trick of the Green Rajah to throw us off the track," she told herself, but she was too wise to make known her thoughts. In their present mood the others would greet such a suggestion with derision.

"Well, I hope you're satisfied now!" June awoke from her thoughts to find Mr. Standish grinning sardonically at her. "Or have you some precious new detective theory to explain this evidence away?" he asked.

His brusque, sarcastic voice brought a flush to June's cheeks. She shook her head.

"It—it seems conclusive enough," she said. "Conclusive? I should just think it is!"

Mr. Standish gave a laugh, then he turned to the others, who were moving off, about to continue the search. "It's no good trying to look for that young scoundrel now," he declared. "He will be miles away, but—don't worry! I've got an idea where he and his confederates have their hide-out—up the mountain near Black Glen. And first thing to-morrow I mean to make it my business to find them. I shan't rest until the whole gang has been rounded up."

He gave a grim, determined nod, then turned to Mr. Henley.

"I think we'd better all be getting back indoors, Henley," he said. "It's turned cold, and my head aches from that blow."

The solicitor nodded sympathetically, and led the way through the trees. One by one the others followed—all but June. She deliberately lingered behind, and when the rest were out of sight she darted back to the tree.

"Although the Green Rajah's gone, he may have left a clue behind," she told herself, and, switching on her torch, she made a thorough search, both of the hollow tree and of the ground round about.

Unfortunately the ground was too hard for footprints to have been left, but in the hole in the oak she found something which Mr. Standish, in his haste, had overlooked. At one side there was a wide crack in the wood, and stuffed in there was a green turban, rolled up into a hard ball. June unrolled it, then gave an excited gasp as something dropped to the ground.

A small gold cigarette-case!

"What ever is this doing in the turban?" she ejaculated wonderingly.

Picking it up, she examined it in the light of her torch. It contained several cigarettes, but no monogram or other clue to the identity of its owner, and any finger-prints which might have been on it had been blurred and spoilt by contact with the cloth.

From the cigarette-case she turned her attention to the turban, and instantly she made another discovery. The turban contained a small pocket in which was still stuck a booklet of matches. Evidently the Green Rajah kept his smoking requisites there.

Again June's eyes travelled to the cigarette-case. She was thinking of her earlier suspicion that the Green Rajah might be a member of Mr. Henley's household. But if that was so, then it suggested he was one of the guests. None of the servants was likely to own a gold cigarette-case.

But which guest? Mentally June ran through their names. All were highly respected men; close friends of Mr. Henley. It seemed incredible to suspect any of them, and yet—

She bit her lip.

"It's a theory worth following up, anyway," she told herself. "Golly, but if only I could devise some plan to trick him into trying to get hold of this case again then—" She broke off, and her eyes lit up. "I believe I have got it!" she exclaimed excitedly.

Snapping off her torch, she hurried across to the house. When she got indoors she found everyone congregated in the large front sitting-room, drinking cocoa and eating biscuits, preparatory to retiring for the night.

As she entered, Mildred Henley looked round in relief.

"Oh, there you are, June!" she cried. "I was beginning to get quite worried. With this horrid Green Rajah at large it isn't safe for anyone to be out alone. Where have you been?"

There came a sarcastic laugh from where Roger Standish sat by the fire.

"Clue-hunting, I expect," he said.

To everyone's surprise, June nodded.

"Yes, and I've discovered something important," she declared, and held out the turban and cigarette-case.

In an instant all the younger guests had gathered around her, and Ted Brandish held out an excited hand.

"Where did you find them?" he asked. "Here, let's look!"

But June shook her head.

"Fraid I can't. You might spoil the finger-prints," she said.

"Finger-prints?"

"Yes, on the cigarette-case." June made a pretence of holding it carefully. "For once the Green Rajah has been too clever. His finger-prints will reveal his identity."

From the fireside came a sardonic laugh.

"Real detective stuff, eh?" said Mr. Standish. "Unfortunately, my dear, we don't want to examine any finger-prints to know that villain's identity. We know it already. The Green Rajah is that young scoundrel Jack Linton."

June smiled calmly.

"That remains to be seen," she said. "First thing to-morrow I mean to dust this case over with finger-print powder. Meanwhile, it's going to be safely locked up." She turned to Mildred. "Is there anywhere you can suggest?" she asked.

To her delight Mildred nodded.

"There's my writing bureau." She pointed to the window alcove. "That's got a key."

"Good! That'll do fine," declared June.

Crossing to the bureau, she unlocked the drawer and carefully stowed away the green turban and the cigarette-case.

Ted, Billie, and the other young guests watched her excitedly.

"Do you really think that case'll help you to bowl out the Green Rajah?" asked the plump boy.

June nodded.

"Certain of it," she replied. "Once I've got a sample of his finger-prints the rest will be easy. This time the Green Rajah has made a fatal slip."

As she spoke she looked around the room, covertly regarding all the guests one by one. She was hoping to surprise a look of uneasiness on at least one person's face, but if anyone did feel dismayed by what she had said he managed to conceal the fact.

A little disappointed, June relocked the drawer, pocketed the key, then smiled across at Mildred.

"If you'll excuse me, I think I'll go to bed," she said. "I feel a bit tired."

She said good-night all around, then made her way upstairs, but once in her room she made no attempt to undress. Instead, she remained seated by the window, waiting and listening.

At last she heard voices and footsteps on the near-by stairs, and knew that the rest of the household was retiring for the night. She waited a few minutes more, then, opening her window, she stepped out on to the balcony, and clambered down one of the supporting pillars to the ground.

The time had come for her to carry out her ingenious plan. Would it work? It all depended whether or not the Green Rajah was really one of Mr. Henley's guests.

If so—

"Then I'm certain he'll try to get back that cigarette-case," June told herself. "And if he does try"—she smiled excitedly—"then I'll catch him in the very act."

THE RUSE IS SUCCESSFUL



CROUCHING in front of the French windows of the drawing-room, the girl detective groped in her sling hand-bag. From it she took a bundle of skeleton keys, and with their aid she managed to turn the lock.

Noiselessly the glass doors swung inward, and June tiptoed into the room. After closing the doors behind her, she cast one look at the writing bureau, then switched on her torch and let the light rove around.

Where should she hide?

The light flickered and went dull. Evidently the battery was giving out. She should have brought a new one with her.

"Never mind, there'll be enough light for my purpose," she murmured. "And that screen by the fireplace is just the place to hide."

She darted across to it, and as she stepped behind—the big ornamental screen, she noticed with satisfaction the old-fashioned plush bell-pull dangling down the wall. That bell, she knew, connected with the servants' quarters. It might prove useful in sounding the alarm.

Squatting on a foot-stool, she settled herself down to wait as patiently as possible.

Half an hour passed. An hour. And still nothing stirred. Was it possible that her theory was incorrect? Was she to have her long vigil in vain? Slowly the minutes dragged on, and then suddenly she stiffened.

What was that?

Stealthy footsteps! Someone was approaching the sitting-room! And suddenly the door-handle rattled. A footboard squeaked, and June caught in her breath. Her patience had been rewarded. She heard soft footsteps padding across the carpet, and, peering round the edge of the screen, she saw a dark, shadowy shape bent over the writing bureau.

Crack!

The sudden sound sent her heart leaping into her throat. It could have only one meaning. The Green Rajah was forcing open the writing bureau; he had come to steal back the cigarette-case. June's trick had worked.

Groping in the darkness, her fingers at last tightened around the plush bell-rope. Again and again she tugged on it. No sound could be heard in the sitting-room, but she knew that the bell must be ringing in the servants' quarters. Its clamour must before long rouse the whole household.

Still pulling on the rope, she peered round the screen again. The Green Rajah had the drawer open; she heard him gasp with satisfaction as his hand closed on the cigarette-case.

But at that moment from the back of the house came startled voices.

The alarm had been given.

The Green Rajah straightened up, and with a gasp of dismay made to flee. June, desperate, realising that assistance might come too late, sent the heavy screen crashing to the floor.

"No, you don't! Stay where you are!" she cried.

At the sound of her voice, vibrating with triumph, the Green Rajah whipped round, and in the darkness his eyes blazed with malevolent fury.

"You!" he snarled. "So it was a trap, was it?"

June laughed.

"Yes, and I've caught you this time! Now we'll see who you really are!"

As she heard footsteps pounding down the stairs, she levelled her torch at the dim figure which faced her, and snapped down the button. For a moment the light flickered, then it flashed full in the intruder's face. With an alarmed snarl he raised his arm to shield his features, but not before June had had a good look at them.

The Green Rajah had left off his false beard, and the girl detective gave a gasp as she found herself staring at the very last man she had expected to see.

There could be no mistaking his identity.

But—

Incredulously June stared, hardly able to believe her own eyes, yet despite her utter amazement, there was a feeling of triumph in her heart. For at last she knew who was the mystery figure whose identity had baffled her for so long.

Another thrilling instalment of this grand serial in next Friday's **GIRLS' CRYSTAL**.

Parcel After Parcel Arrived At The College, Addressed To Don Weston, But Sally's
Chum Denied All Knowledge Of Them!



MORE THAN A JAPE

"WHO'S the parcel for, Handsome?"

"Name o' Don Weston, miss."

"I'll take it for him," Sally Warner said cheerfully, pausing at the college gate and signing the docket handed her by the waiting messenger-boy.

It was mid-morning in Roxburgh Co-ed College. The broad, sweeping campus was silent and deserted, all the students engrossed at their desks in study. Sally and Johnny Briggs had left the lecture-hall for a moment in order to collect some text-books, meeting the messenger-boy just as they were returning from their errand.

A lucky meeting, she reflected, for her chum, Don Weston, would not wish to be disturbed just now with parcels. He was working feverishly hard for his engineering exam, and had been allotted a special room for the purpose, all by himself, in the solitary quietude of the old flag tower.

"There we are, Sunny Jim," said Sally, handing the boy a ten-cent tip for himself, and taking the parcel from him. Then for the first time she spotted the red-lettered label: "On Approval." "Oh, I see! It's not paid for yet?"

"No, miss," the boy said, touching his cap and getting on to his bike. "I'll call for the cash this evening—or return o' the goods if not wanted."

Sally nodded, then looked across at Johnny. "Don certainly seems to be buying a lot these days," she remarked.

Johnny nodded.

"Yes—it's for this new radio device he's working on, I expect," he said. "Shall I slip along with the parcel?" he added.

Sally shook her head.

"No, I'll go," she declared. "I want to speak to him, anyway. So-long! See you later."

Leaving Johnny to return to the lecture-hall, Sally went on to the flag court that stood at the far end of the college grounds.

"Coo-ee, Don!" she called to him, pausing outside the tower, and marvelling that this ancient structure should now be a laboratory for modern wireless experiments.

By DAPHNE GRAYSON

A pause. Then a very dreamy and absent-minded Don appeared at the window above.

"Oh, hallo, Sally!"

And it was as though he still only half-grasped that she was there.

"Parcel for you, Don. Shall I bring it up?" she chuckled.

"Parcel?" he echoed vacantly.

"Something you ordered on approval."

"I didn't," he murmured, blinking down at her. "I didn't order anything."

"You old dreamer, it's got your name on it, and you'll be telling me you're not Don Weston next!" Sally teased him. "Sure it's nothing urgent?"

"Not for me, Sally," she heard him say; but now she was gazing a little blankly at the tradesman's name on the parcel—Radlett's.

Why, that was the gent's haberdashers. Shirts and collars and things. Pity she hadn't noticed that before.

"Sorry, Don; it can wait!" she called to him. "I'll pop it in the post-rack for you!"

She waved to him, and carried the parcel off to J House Community Room, placing it under Don's name in the big wire contraption, like a sectioned cage, which served as the House post-rack.

Then she returned to her lecture, resolving not to interrupt Don again at his studies.

When the class dismissed, Sally, Johnny Briggs and Fay Manners led the rush to the cafeteria for lunch.

It was while they were eating their delicious chicken hash, on the high stools by the counter, that the bursar's clerk put his head in at the door.

"Is Weston here?" he called.

"Not yet. Too busy on scientific work," answered Johnny, with a provocative look at their rivals of K House.

"He's playing with his toys in the tower just like in J," jeered Nat Piggot of K.

"What do you want him for, Peebles?" Sally inquired.

Peebles, the bursar's clerk, was a loud-voiced youth without a whittle of tact or discretion. He blurted out across the crowded cafeteria.

"He's been getting goods on tick all over the town, and the tradesmen are demanding the money. Bursar wants him to settle up at once, or there'll be trouble."

A derisive guffaw went up from Nat Piggot & Co. Sally swung round indignantly upon Peebles.

"You've no right coming in here, broad-casting rubbish like that about Don Weston."

"Then he should have paid up, and saved me the trouble," retorted the clerk.

"Of course he'll pay—it only slipped his mind because he's been so busy," cried Sally, echoed hotly by Johnny and Fay.

Peebles went off then, and Sally waited impatiently for Don.

But Don didn't come in until most of the other lunchers had gone. His eyes were glowing, and he was still in a mood of dreamy abstraction.

"Going well, Don?" Johnny asked.

"Too soon to say," breathed Don, picking up Sally's scarf in mistake for his serviette. "It's only in the experimental stage yet, but, oh, boy, I think I'm on to something absolutely brand new in short wave!" "Scuse me!"

Sally coughed as he was about to begin working out figures on the tablecloth.

"Listen, Don!" she said gently. "The bursar's been asking for you. He wants you to pop round to his office and pay up for these goods you've been ordering."

"What goods?" murmured Don, still scribbling.

"All these gadgets and parcels and things you've had sent here," said Sally, with a patient smile at Johnny and Fay. "Do listen, Don! The tradespeople have been ringing up for their money."

Slowly Don looked up, his absorbed expression relaxing into a grin.

"Sorry. I know I'm in a bit of a trance these days, Sally. But what are you talking about?"

"The bills you owe, my dear Don, for goods delivered from the local shops," Sally said sweetly.

"But I don't owe any bills to any local shops—" Don began, in puzzled wonder.

"Gee, let's put a block of ice on his napper!" gasped Johnny, reaching for a cube from Mrs. Barwell's frig, and pressing it to Don's brow. "For the last week—dopey, you've been phoning the shops from your den in the tower, and ordering goods which you've taken in and signed for. Now do you remember?"

"Is this a joke?" asked Don.

"Joke?" And Sally shook him in humorous exasperation. "I brought you one of the parcels this morning. Some stuff from Radlett's."

"Yes, but I told you it wasn't for me," blinked Don. "I didn't order it. I haven't phoned to the shops for anything."

"But it was your name on the parcel—and your name that was signed for all the others," protested Sally. "You must remember, Don? They've been coming every day."

"Then it's what I thought—it's a jape," sighed Don, and with no further interest he reached for his chicken hash. "Funny how a chap can't get wrapped up in his work without some ass pulling his leg. Sounds like Piggot to me. He won't get me chasing round to the bursar's office wasting my time, if that's what he thinks."

Sally looked stupefied at Johnny, and just didn't know what to think.

Once or twice during afternoon lecture, she stole a suspicious glance at Nat Piggot. But his expression disarmed her. Nor did she believe that it was quite the kind of jape he would play. Don must surely have ordered the goods himself. It wasn't like him to be

forgetful over money matters, but perhaps at a time like this, his work had put everything else out of his mind.

Sally gave up the problem. She had another reminder of Don's absentmindedness, when he forgot to turn up to tea altogether.

"Let's go and rout the old hermit out," she said to Johnny, with a helpless laugh, and away they both went to the flag tower, their feet echoing noisily on the stone steps as they ran to the little room above.

Don didn't even hear them. He was bending rapidly over the bench, a microscope glued to his eye, making some delicate adjustment to the intricacies inside a radio set. He was unconscious of his chums smiling at him from the doorway. It was a sudden commotion from below that roused him.

"Weston! Are you up there, Weston?" came the bursar's voice, echoing sharply up the stone staircase. "You're wanted at once!"

Don jumped up and collided full tilt with Sally and Johnny.

"S-sorry! Didn't know you were there!" he gasped. "What is it, Sally?"

He was soon to know. A group of tradesmen were waiting below with the bursar, all holding bills in their hands, all in a state of grim impatience.

"You should know by now, Weston, that the dean objects to college members getting credit from the shops," the bursar said, with extreme annoyance. "These gentlemen want their accounts paid at once."

"That was the understanding, Mr. Weston, when I sent on the travelling trunk," one of the men said peremptorily, and pushed a bill into Don's hand. "Twenty-dollars-fifty, please."

"One sports suit, two pairs of flannels, and a pullover—thirty-eight dollars, please," said another, with brisk demand.

"I'll trouble you for twenty-five dollars for shoes first—you've had 'em a week," cut in another, pushing his way in front of the rest.

Sally and Johnny gaped, for the bills were not, after all, for working apparatus, but seemed to be entirely for clothes and personal kit. As for Don, his expression had grown completely flabbergasted.

"These aren't my bills. I didn't order any of this stuff!" he burst out.

There was an indignant uproar from the tradesmen.

"Why, I took the order from you myself!"

"You phoned twice for this suit!"

"You met the boy and signed for my goods!"

"And mine!" There was a heated chorus from all. "And mine!"

Sally gazed dumbstruck at Don, for he was still disowning all knowledge of the goods, and he certainly didn't seem to be absentminded now. He was speaking with force.

"D'you mean to say that you deny making these purchases, Weston?" the bursar demanded, agast.

"Of course I deny it, sir! It's some idiotic jape!" Don answered warmly. "I've never ordered the things, and never had them!"

Jape! The tradesmen fairly exploded. Their patience had been short before. Now they were infuriated. Their time wasted—their goods sent on a fool's errand. They had a heated parley amongst themselves. Then their spokesman turned to Don and the bursar in a voice choked with rage.

"We'll give you twenty-four hours to send the money—or return the goods!" he snapped. And his eyes flashed upon Don as he led his colleagues away. "Twenty-four hours—mind that!"

But there was one who didn't budge—a little sandy-haired man whom Sally recognised now as the local haberdasher, Radlett, whose parcel she had taken in that morning.

"My boy delivered a parcel to-day, and I'm not going away without it," he cried—"or the money!"

"That's the one I collected, Don," Sally reminded him breathlessly.

"Where is it?" cut in the bursar.

"Wherever Sally put it. I haven't seen it!" Don said, in wrath.

"It's in the post-rack!" Sally said hastily, and led the way to the community-room, the bursar and the angry haberdasher following.

Hurriedly she pushed open the door, thankful that she could quieten at least one of the rate shopkeepers. Then, with a gasp, she stopped dead before the post-rack. Every section of it was empty!

"The parcel—it's gone!" she said, reeling. "Did you—did you take it, Don?"

"Of course I didn't! I haven't touched it!" exploded Don, only to be faced by a burst of accusation from the haberdasher.

"Are you sure, Don?" gasped Johnny.

"You wouldn't forget taking it?" Sally asked gently.

"You're not seriously suggesting that someone else went to your rack, Weston, and removed your parcel?" the bursar said, in cold disbelief.

"I tell you I didn't lay a finger on it! I tell you it's all a hoax!" cried Don.

Somehow the bursar got rid of the excited Mr. Radlett.

"If you are quite certain it was a hoax, Weston, no doubt you will be able to clear it up," he said sternly and unconvinced. "I must warn you, however, that you will be in a serious position if the goods or the money are not produced by this time to-morrow!"

SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES



SALLY was usually all smiles at breakfast, but Johnny saw a troubled change in her when he came into the cafeteria next morning.

"Where's Don, Sally?" he asked, a little anxiously. "Hasn't he come to brekker yet?"

"No; he's swotting in the tower." And Sally paused, then said in a rush: "I'm worried about him, Johnny. He's got his mind glued on this engineering exam, and he doesn't realise that it's a serious thing about these parcels."

"Just what I've tried to tell him," muttered Johnny. "But old Don won't be bothered—just says that someone's been joking. Piggot is his guess."

"No," Sally shook her head feverishly. "It's not a Piggot jape. Much too serious for a jape, anyhow."

She gazed across at Nat Piggot, who was breakfasting at another table with a crowd of K House. All were talking about Don's parcels, and the money he was supposed to owe—they had been talking about it ever since Sally came in—but although they joked about it, it was in a good-humoured way, and there was sympathy as well as mirth even in Nat Piggot's chortling laugh.

Sally couldn't concentrate that morning. Her mind kept harking back to the angry tradesmen, and their threat to Don. She couldn't believe that their goods had been sent in his name as a mere jape. It had not stopped at a jape. Once delivered, the goods had been signed for in Don's name, and kept! But not by Don. Then who could it have been? Unless the culprit was found out the brute would certainly fall upon Don. How could she trap the culprit?

The morning was nearly over when an idea flashed upon Sally. It was Wednesday, and she remembered suddenly that it was delivery day for Keppell's—Roxburgh's biggest stores. The culprit, whatever his motive, would surely have ordered goods from Keppell's. Their van called at the college at twelve on Wednesday.

"May I ask you to excuse me, Mr. Grittal?" And Sally tottered to her feet, swaying realistically. "I've come over a little faint."

She felt anything but faint as she left the lecture hall, and concealed herself in the bushes by the main gate.

It was an apt time to keep watch. Everybody except Don was at work in the main college buildings. The staff were all busy indoors, either having their lunch or preparing other people's. No one could have any reason for coming to the gate now—except to meet Keppell's van.

With bated breath, Sally watched the deserted scene through the bushes that screened her. Nothing happened. Then at last she heard the distant drone of an engine. Her heart raced as Keppell's green van rolled up to the gates, and stopped there.

The driver got down from his seat, and Sally saw him lift one solitary parcel from the back, then carry it to the gate.

No one came. No stealthy figure emerged to take that parcel as Sally had feverishly expected. The driver was ringing the bell. He rang again and again, impatiently.

Sally chafed with dismay. She could hear the classes dismissing now. They were surging into the cloak-room for their highly coloured blazers and scarves. No hope now of any furtive figure collecting that parcel—but Sally couldn't rest till her suspicions of it were confirmed.

She came out from behind the bushes.

"Who's that parcel for driver?" she asked. "Weston!" he snapped. "D. Weston, J House. Will you sign for it, miss?"

"Is it paid for?" Sally asked quickly. And as she spoke she was conscious of a curious hush in the cloak-room, which had been so noisy a moment ago.

"Paid for?" The driver frowned down at the parcel. "No, miss, not yet."

"Then I can't take it—sorry," Sally said grimly.

She didn't hear the driver's caustic words as he flung back into his van, taking the parcel with him. She was listening, thunder-struck, to the babel that now rose from the crowded cloak-room. A word or two caught her ears. Suddenly she was rushing there in startled horror.

"I tell you, someone's been at my pockets!" Nat Piggot was yelling.

"And mine!" came a heated chorus. "I've lost six dollars!" shouted Sidney Fiske. "There's been a thief here! He's taken all our cash!" came wildy from Elsie Pymm, and a dozen others.

Sally burst into the cloak-room, just in time to see Nat Piggot pushing Johnny out of his way, and talking excitedly to Tony Fry, House-leader of K.

"Listen, Sally Warner—" cried Piggot, breaking off. "Who was last in this room this morning? It was Weston, wasn't it?"

"I don't know. I left him having breakfast—" began Sally, out of breath; then went suddenly red.

"They're accusing Don," Johnny panted. "Trying to accuse him of taking their money."

"Well, somebody's taken it, and I'm only asking where Weston was!" shouted Piggot. "He had the chance, and we all know he's gone."

"Every cent I had in my pocket!" yelled Sidney Fiske, echoed hotly by a score of others who were storming round the coat pegs.

"I'm going to the dean!" shrielled Elsie Pymm, storming to the door. "Think I'm going to be robbed and not report it, do you?"

"Don't be crazy, Elsie!" everyone shouted at her.

"No need for that. We don't want trouble with the dean!" gasped Piggot; but he was too late. Elsie had gone.

Sally flung furiously out of the room. She must see Don. She must tell him what had happened; let him know that he just couldn't

stay in his shell any longer until this whole business had been cleared up.

"Don!" She ran up the steps of the tower and burst open the little vaulted door. "Don—" Then her voice echoed away empty.

Don wasn't here. His wireless apparatus lay idle on the bench, his notes propped up against the telephone, but Don had gone out somewhere.

Where was he? Sally gazed out restlessly through the narrow window, but all she could see was the deserted path leading down to the sea.

She stared about her helplessly. First those mysterious parcels. Now these thefts. What could it all mean? Someone who had forged Don's name when taking in the parcels. Someone who had phoned the shops in his name, and—

Her gaze went to the telephone on the bench, and her heart gave a jump. Was it this very telephone that had been used? It must have been. It was the only one on which a direct call could be made. All the house telephones were connected with the bursar's office, and the bursar would certainly not have put those calls through to the shops.

Then—if this was the telephone that had been used—it meant that the guilty person had come here, to this very room. How? How could he have stolen in? How could he have kept watch on Don and timed his movements? Everyone in the college was at work all day, and yet—Someone had been here. Someone must have shadowed Don!

Was there a hiding-place here in the tower? Sally gazed at the solid stone floor under her feet. She moved out through the door, descending the steps slowly and sounding the wall as she went. That wall, too, was as solid as a rock; it had been built in its day to withstand any encroachment from the sea.

She came to the bottom step. The landing was illumined by the door which she had left open. Her gaze went to an oblong patch low down in the wall. It might have been that the stonework here was weaker and had been patched at some time. She pressed her knee hard against that oblong patch.

It moved! It swung inward, revealing an opening in the wall! Electrified, Sally stooped and darted through that opening.

Then a cry burst from her lips. She was in a small, cellar-like room—but not an empty room. A huge, new travelling-trunk stood on the floor, its lid open, and that trunk was packed with brand-new suits, shirts, coats, shoes—the whole range of goods delivered by the pressing tradesmen. Sally's gaze leaped to another object lying on the floor beside it. A cashbox! The bursar's cashbox! Who—

Sally's thoughts were scattered by hurrying steps outside the tower and an excited clamour of voices.

"But this is incredible!" the dean was saying agitatedly. "There is some mistake, bursar! Where is Weston?"

Then figures were suddenly crowding into the tower. Sally heard a cry of excitement as they beheld that gaping hole in the wall. A cry that changed to horror as the dean and the bursar pushed their way through.

They were gazing, thunderstruck, at the open trunk and the cashbox lying beside it.

"There is no mistake, sir. Weston lied! The goods are here—hidden here all the time!" the bursar cried. "And my stolen cashbox!"

Sally drew back in horror.

"You're not—you're not trying to say—"

"Miss Warner, where is he? Where is Weston?" burst in the dean, his voice remorseless.

"Here he comes, sir!" came a shout from Elsie Pym. "Here's Weston!"

Sally caught one fleeting glimpse of Don, a towel and swimsuit under his arm. He had

been having a dip, and his expression now was a complete blank as Peebles, the bursar's clerk, pounced on him and seized him.

"Take him away!" the dean said in a trembling voice. "I have never dealt before with a student who lies and robs the tradespeople and robs his own fellows! I must consider if the law should deal with him! Take him away! Lock him in the store-room!"

SALLY'S ONLY CHANCE



IT was too serious, too sensational a matter, for any words of Sally's to influence the dean. The evidence had seemed to prove to the hilt every charge against Don. And that evidence had been found hidden in the flag tower, which was used by no one in the college with the exception of Don.

The morning was a long, miserable torture to Sally, and by lunch-time she could stand the inactivity no longer.

Groups were already drifting across the campus to afternoon lecture, yet Sally found herself walking back feverishly to the tower. Don was in disgrace and imminent danger of expulsion, and she was frightened for him—desperately frightened—because nothing could save him unless the real culprit were found, and that culprit was no one whom she could remotely guess at.

If only he were there now—if only she could trap him—

With breathless caution, she crept to the door of the tower, stole inside, peeping into that inner lair. No. Her heart sank. The big trunk stood there, with its guilty hoard, just as before, but no one was there.

Then Sally gave a sudden start.

The thief would surely return for his spoils some time. When? When the coast was clear and everybody at lecture. Perhaps this very afternoon, assuming that he knew the plunder had been discovered.

A reckless idea flashed upon Sally. She was putting it into practice without giving herself time to think. Emptying the trunk of its contents, she rushed them upstairs, hiding them in Don's den.

Then back she ran to the trunk, concealing herself inside, and drawing the lid closed on top of her.

There she lay, painfully hot and cramped in that stifling space, just waiting—waiting. It was the only way to test out her theory—the only way to catch the culprit if he came back for his spoils.

Minutes dragged by and were like a long eternity. Sally eased her cramped position as best she could. Still nothing happened, and the ache in her limbs was becoming unendurable, when suddenly—

She heard only faintly the sound of a footstep, but she heard the metallic snap of the clasp echoing sharply in her ears.

Someone had fastened the trunk on its clasp! She was shut inside it!

Next second she felt a violent jolt, then the sensation of being lifted upward, and a rocking motion, as though someone was bearing her away on their shoulder. It ended in another jolt that shook every bone in her body. Then a jarring drone vibrated the trunk, and now she knew that she was being wheeled away on a trolley.

Fear galvanised her, and she beat wildly with her fists on the inside of the trunk. But the wheels of the trolley went grating on beneath her, their noise drowning her own muffled thumpings.

Then suddenly the trolley stopped with a bump. She felt herself being heaved upwards.

(Please turn to the back page.)



HER MYSTERY FRIEND of the Desert

(Continued
from
page 404.)

Kaye, plucking up her courage, begged a lift from the gentleman who appeared to be in charge, and her request was instantly granted.

A few minutes later, comfortably ensconced among the cheery crowd of young sightseers, she was speeding along the desert road, listening to the merry chatter as she kept a watchful eye on the passing traffic.

They were talking of the days that now seemed like a distant dream—of the retreat of the defeated Germans, followed by the victorious British forces.

One boy had got hold of an exciting rumour concerning a fabulous treasure, the property of an Eastern prince friendly to the British—stolen by the Germans and supposed to have been buried by them somewhere in the desert.

The story was greeted by incredulous murmurs, but it helped to pass the time on the journey, and Kaye, her eyes sparkling, had almost forgotten her surroundings as the car slowed up in the crowded street of a sun-baked village on the outskirts of the desert.

And then her heart gave a violent bound as she caught sight of a stationary train of camels and mules tethered in the shade of a clump of palms.

The rich trappings and the crowd of dusky attendants and outriders suggested the train was that of some important person.

Kaye felt her pulses quicken as she stared at it, holding her breath.

Could this be the mystery caravan? At least, she would take a chance!

As the car slowed to a crawl in the narrow street she begged the driver to pull up, and, breathlessly thanking her new friends, she sprang out, waving her hand as the car was swallowed up in the crowds.

Her heart beating quickly, Kaye walked past the camels, noticing a richly draped litter supported by four mules, its silken curtains drawn back to reveal that it was unoccupied. She noticed, too, that the Arab outriders were heavily armed and keeping a suspicious watch on passers-by.

Somehow she had hoped to find Bill among the crowd of onlookers; but her hopes were dashed. There was no one bearing the slightest resemblance to the surprising and elusive boy.

Kaye, jostled by the crowd, took refuge in a dim alley between two sun-baked houses, determined to keep watch on the caravan and to find a clue to the baffling mystery.

And then her heart gave a jump, and her hands clenched as from somewhere close at hand she heard a girl's broken cry, a scuffle, and a sound of running feet.

She turned quickly in time to see a slim, veiled figure dart into the shadow of a doorway. The next moment another figure appeared, tall and gaunt, and wrapped in a dusty burnous. As Kaye pressed herself close to the wall the man muttered angrily under his breath and hurried past her.

She waited till he was out of sight, then, her pulses racing, she crept towards the dark doorway. As she approached she heard an unmistakable sound—a girl's stifled sobbing.

Throwing caution aside, Kaye darted impulsively into the dim walled entrance, to drop to her knees beside a slim figure crouched in the farthest corner.

The girl was sobbing convulsively, her veiled face buried in her hands; but she turned, with a broken cry, as Kaye touched her arm.

"It's all right," whispered Kaye quickly, "I am an English girl—and your friend. Why do you cry? Please let me help you, if I can."

The girl stared at her wonderingly, her dark eyes shining wistfully above her veil. Her complexion was fair for an Arab, and Kaye judged that she was about her own age.

"No one can help me," she whispered brokenly. "My uncle will beat me when he finds me. He tried to force me to go with the caravan, and I refused."

Kaye felt a thrill of excitement she could not explain.

"Why—why did you refuse?" she breathed.

"Because"—the girl's voice broke—"because I would have no part in tricking a young Englishman to his death!" she whispered. "For that is what my uncle plans—he and the hateful man—"

"Wait!" breathed Kaye, her heart racing. "What do you mean? You say they are planning to lead an Englishman to his death. What—what is his name?"

The girl shook her head.

"I do not know. I know only that it is a young man who has sought to cross their plans. They believe that he will attempt to join the caravan, and it was to be my part to beguile him to the tent where they would seize him. I won't do it—I won't—"

Kaye gripped her arm tightly, trembling with excitement.

In a flash she saw a glimmer of the dastardly plot at which Bill had hinted, and she had stumbled into the very thick of it—on her own!

If only the boy had been here—but it was useless to think of that. Somehow she must grapple with the situation in his absence—find out what she could.

It was her chance to show what a girl could do. Bill's safety, his very life, might depend on her next move!

She drew the Arab girl towards her, her thoughts racing.

"What is your name?" she whispered.

"Yasmin," came the faltering reply.

"And your uncle?"

"My uncle is the sheik, Haroun al Vathek; his followers call him the Black Dragon—"

Kaye drew in her breath sharply, her dark eyes flashing. She might have guessed it! It seemed as though Fate itself had taken a hand in her destiny, and she was being swept into an adventure from which she had no chance, or wish, to escape.

She knew exactly what she intended to do, and her mind was clear as she took her reckless decision.

"Stand up, Yasmin," she whispered. "I think I can help you."

The girl stood up wonderingly, and Kaye saw that they were of practically the same height and build. Yasmin's hair might be a little darker than hers, but it was scarcely noticeable; their eyes were of the same deep brown, and her own sun-tanned complexion matched the other's.

"Supposing you could escape—have you any friends you could go to?" she breathed.

Yasmin nodded wonderingly.

"I have friends in the next village—but how can I escape while my uncle and his men are searching for me?"

"I'll tell you," whispered Kaye, her voice shaking with excitement. "Listen carefully, Yasmin!"

Breathlessly she outlined her daring plan, while the Arab girl listened in wide-eyed amazement.

Five minutes later, while the camels waited restlessly, a slim figure in a smart European frock and shady sun-hat hurried quickly across the crowded street, drawing not more than a passing glance from the watchful guards.

But at the same moment a shout went up as a veiled girl in flowing Eastern garments darted through the crowds towards the curtained litter and flung herself face down on the cushions, sobbing bitterly.

A tall, gaunt Arab strode across to the litter, a sneer of satisfaction on his cruel face.

"So, Yasmin, you have repented of your folly!" he grated. "For this I would have beaten you, had there been time. You have delayed the caravan for half an hour, and it must travel fast to keep the appointment with the bey. I cannot accompany it, as I have business here, but you will hand to him these papers and take your orders from him. If you fail me, I shall have the whip ready on your return. You understand?"

The girl nodded, stifling her sobs as she held out a hand for the bundle of papers secured by tape and a massive seal.

With a curt nod the Arab drew the curtains across the litter and rapped out an order.

With much shouting from the attendants, and protesting grunts from the camels, the caravan moved slowly on its way towards the desert.

And in the curtained litter an excited if rather scared girl drew back her veil and peeped through the curtains at the mounted Arab guards prancing on either side of the swaying vehicle.

"Crumbs," breathed Kaye, her eyes shining, "if only Bill could see me now!"

THE SECRET OF THE SANDS



SLOWLY the gaily decked caravan straggled its length across the desert, and Kaye, jolted from side to side in the swaying litter, had plenty of time in which to think!

Her reckless action had been taken on the spur of the moment, and she could have no time for regrets.

Bill's life was in peril, and she was determined to do everything in her power to hoodwink his enemies.

The boy had known the danger himself, and had warned her of it, but he had not known the method his enemies would adopt.

His daring quest was shrouded in mystery. She did not even know his real business. He was certainly not what he appeared to be—a travelling salesman.

But, come to that, the role of a veiled Eastern girl was a startling change from that of a hotel reception-clerk!

Kaye's eyes sparkled as her naturally high spirits conquered her misgivings. She wished that Bill could see her!

The thought brought a more serious train of reflection, and her forehead wrinkled.

Where was Bill now? It was clear from Yasmin's story that a young Englishman—Bill—had planned to intercept the caravan somewhere on its journey, and his enemies suspected the ruse, and had laid their own plans accordingly.

Somehow she must find means to warn him of his danger!

If only she had an inkling of the mystery that lay behind his quest—

Kaye drew in her breath sharply, staring at the sealed bundle of papers lying among the cushions. Her hand trembling slightly, she picked it up and examined the seal.

There was no way of opening it without removing the wax or cutting the tape, and that would bring immediate suspicion on her.

A sudden muffled shout and a violent jolting of the litter interrupted her cautious attempt to loosen the seal.

Her heart in her mouth, Kaye swiftly concealed the papers under her robe as the curtains of the litter were pulled back, and a deep, grating voice caused her face to pale.

"Welcome, daughter of my old friend! You have brought the message?"

Smiling benignly down at her, an avaricious gleam in his eyes, was the swarthy face of the man she had cause to fear—Abdul Bey!

He held out a beringed hand to assist her to alight. Kaye shuddered at his touch, but forced her eyes to smile brightly at him over her veil.

At all costs she must play her part, and avoid arousing the bey's suspicions.

"I bring you my uncle's salutations," she murmured, lowering her eyes.

"And the papers?" demanded the bey eagerly.

Kaye bit her lip. Once the papers left her hands, the vital clue would be lost. Yet she could not deny having brought them. Her quick wits found a momentary solution.

"Not here, highness!" she murmured cautiously. "My uncle instructed me to hand them to you while no other eyes were watching."

"Ah," grunted the other approvingly. "Your uncle is wise. Come, your tent is ready—and there is a woman to wait on you. I will call for the papers when there are none to see."

His manner was suave, almost benevolent. Kaye wondered how it would change if he discovered her identity! She shivered at the thought, hastily dismissing it as she stepped from the litter.

It was a colourful scene that met her gaze—an encampment in the desert, in the shade of a clump of palms.

Obviously the strange meeting had been arranged for a secret purpose. The mystery caravan had not been sent on its journey, with camels, baggage-mules and a score or more Arab guards, for the purpose of delivering a message!

Kaye sensed that there was something big and breath-taking behind the plot—something that Bill had intended to discover at the risk of his life.

In a luxurious tent, screened by silken curtains and surrounded by piled satin cushions, Kaye was waited on by an obsequious Arab woman whose shifty eyes she mistrusted.

Seeking an excuse to get rid of her attendant, she peeped out of her tent. Moving among the crowd of Arabs, intoning his wares, was a ragged pedlar of fruits and sherbet.

Kaye drew a quick breath. "Go," she ordered the woman. "Buy me fruit—and mind you choose carefully. I would rest awhile."

She leaned back on the silk-covered divan, closing her eyes. But as the woman departed on her mission she sat bolt upright, her eyes gleaming.

Now for the papers! Swiftly she drew out the bundle she had concealed in her robes, and examined the heavy seal. On a low table near her elbow a small lamp was burning beneath a silver coffee-jug. Kaye drew a slender silver dagger from her girdle, heated it over the flame and slid it beneath the seal.

Her heart thumping, she examined the papers. Most of them were covered in hieroglyphic writing, but one of them was different. It was a carefully drawn chart, with scribbled

comments in the margin—and the language was not Arabic.

Kaye caught in her breath. She felt convinced that the words were written in German!

Her thoughts were racing now—flashing back to a conversation she had overheard in the car. If only she could find Bill, and tell him of her exciting discovery!

Her hand trembling, she reheated the knife and replaced the seal, and just then she heard a stealthy movement behind the curtains screening the entrance of the tent.

Paling, Kaye thrust the chart into her robes, as the curtains parted to admit a bent, ragged figure carrying a tray laden with oranges, pomegranates and sherbet.

"Greetings, maiden," he croaked, salaaming deeply. "Your servant was dissatisfied with my wares, so I came myself to enchant your eyes with their luscious beauty. Take your choice—"

Kaye was staring at him as he rambled on, staring at him intently.

Drawing a quick breath, she took a reckless chance.

"Bill!" she whispered.

The pedlar started violently, almost upsetting his tray of fruit. He bent forward, half raising his hood. Had the situation been less serious Kaye would have burst out laughing at the comical look of amazement in his grey eyes.

"Kaye!" breathed Bill. "Gosh, am I dreaming?"

"S'h!" whispered Kaye, with an anxious glance towards the entrance of the tent. "Don't ask questions, Bill. I came to help you—to warn you. They're plotting to trap you, Bill—to—kill you! You've got to get away from here. Quickly—take this!"

She thrust the crumpled chart into the boy's hand.

"Jumping camels!" he breathed, staring at it. "I've been searching for this for weeks! And you—a girl—well, I'll be frazzled—"

A cold hand clutched at Kaye's heart as she heard heavy footsteps outside the tent, the harsh voice of Abdul Bey speaking to one of his men.

"Oh—it's too late!" she gasped.

The boy started up, thrusting the chart under his tattered burnous. Next moment the curtain was jerked back, and Abdul Bey stood in the opening, a cruel glitter in his eyes.

"So," he grated, "a pedlar of oranges forces himself into the tent of my fair guest. It is as I suspected—the pedlar has two faces, and one of them is white!"

He gave the boy a thrust that sent him stumbling back into the tent.

"Before I deal with you," went on the man, reaching for a leather-thonged whip that hung in the tent. "I would speak with the fair Yasmin. Where are the papers your uncle handed you?"

Her heart cold, Kaye held out the sealed bundle. The bey snatched it, examined the seal quickly, and opened the bundle. Kaye, holding her breath, saw the fury that leapt into his eyes.

"Where is the chart, girl?" he snarled. "The map?"

"I—I don't understand, highness," faltered Kaye, desperately playing her part.

"A lie!" snarled the other, turning on her. "A messenger has come from your uncle, informing me that he had sent the chart by your hands. Tell me where you have hidden the chart, or—"

He took a step towards her, raising the whip. Kaye screamed, and she saw Bill spring like a panther, landing on the man's shoulders. There was a scuffle and a dull thud as the man measured his length on the ground, the boy on top of him.

"You—you cad!" panted Bill, and Kaye blinked dazedly as she saw him tug angrily at the other's bushy black beard, jerking it from his chin, and revealing a heavy, brutal face, obviously made-up.

"Carl Krauss, the German secret agent!" rapped Bill. "I guessed as much, my beauty—"

But he had reckoned without the other's colossal strength. With a cunning twist the man was on his feet, snatching a revolver from his pocket.

"Bill—look out!" screamed Kaye.

Careless of her own safety, she flung herself at the man's arm; there was a deafening report, but the bullet went wide, tearing its way through the tent.

At the same moment Bill wrested the weapon from the other's grasp. Bellowing for help, the German lurched out of the tent.

"Gosh," panted Bill, "you saved my life, Kaye—but we'll have to look slippery. The whole horde will be round our ears in a minute."

Snatching a knife from his girdle, he ripped the canvas and thrust Kaye through the gap, following himself.

Kaye could hear hoarse shouts and running footsteps, but Bill was staring at a group of horses tethered beneath the palms.

"Come on—we'll just about make it!" he panted.

Catching her firmly by the arm, he ran her towards the tethered horses.

Kaye heard a distant shout, the vicious crack of a rifle. A bullet whined past them as they reached the horses.

"Hold on, and don't worry!" jerked Bill, lifting her into the saddle of the nearest horse.

He sprang up behind her as another shot rang out. A moment later they were galloping for dear life across the desert, and distantly Kaye could hear the muffled thunder of hoofs as the robber band recovered from their amazement and gave chase.

"They'll never catch us!" exclaimed Bill, with his old, familiar chuckle. "I took the best horse of the bunch. Carl Krauss and his scoundrels haven't heard the last of this—thanks to you, Kaye!"

IN a wild, rocky valley in the heart of the Libyan desert, a party of English officers accompanied by an Egyptian prince watched the unearthing of a long-buried treasure.

Superintending the excavation was a cheery, red-haired boy, the son of a secret service man, and beside him, her eyes shining, stood the one-time reception-clerk of the Hotel Acropolis!

To Kaye it seemed like an incredible dream, and she had to pinch herself furtively to make sure that she was awake.

"Well, Kaye," said Bill, with a broad grin, as the treasure was brought to light, and the prince had come over to thank her personally with the senior British officer, "looks as though you've created a bit of a stir in these parts! They're speaking of a reward, and a job for you in dad's office—if you'd like it."

Kaye gripped his hand.

"It's thanks to you, Bill!" she whispered. "Rot," said the boy. "Without your help I'd have been flummoxed. It's clear now that the Germans hid the treasure during their retreat, and the map was handed for safe keeping to a chap known as the Black Dragon."

Carl Krauss was given the job of finding it, and he took up his headquarters at the hotel while he was making inquiries. That was where you came in—

"Where you came in— you mean, Bill," laughed Kaye happily. "You were the boy who brought adventure, and I'll never forget it."

"Never?" asked Bill, looking at her quickly. "Never!" repeated Kaye, flushing slightly as their hands closed on the compact.

THE END.

JEAN'S THRILLING WINTER SPORTS HOLIDAY—that is the title of next Friday's long complete.

THE BOY WHO BOSSED THE CASTAWAYS

(Continued from page 408.)

"Good?" he asked.

"It's—wonderful!" she gulped gratefully. "I never guessed you were such an excellent cook. But—but aren't you going to eat?"

"In a minute." He waved the suggestion aside. Then he looked at her, pondered as if some thought had suddenly struck him, and broke into a low laugh. "Weird, isn't it?"

"What?"

"You being here, and me waiting on you like this. I vowed I'd never lift another finger for one of your crowd. I vowed that in future it should be your sort who would wait on me. Still," he added, with a slight shrug, "I'm glad you enjoyed it. Come again when you're hungry. And—"

He paused. Now there was a different expression on his face—an expression which filled her with a vague uneasiness. And that uneasiness became alarm when she saw that his eyes were fixed on the tiny portion of gold chain which was visible round her neck.

Too late she remembered her locket. Too late she remembered the fury the first sight of it had caused him. She backed away.

"Larry—"

"Oh, don't worry!" His eyes flickered in amusement. "I guess I won't pinch it. All the same, I'd like to know some more about it." He frowned with sudden ferocity. "If that isn't mine, it's its twin. Let's have a look at it—"

"No!" she cried, and put her own hand up to her neck defensively. "You dare, Larry Woodstock! You dare—"

He had taken a step towards her. But now, abruptly, he stopped, wheeling.

For from the bushes in front of them came a sudden crashing sound, the sound of voices. And even as Julie turned, feeling ashamed of her outburst, there came bursting on to the scene Dick, Roly, Neil Gilson, and Hitchcock, the sailor.

"Here she is!" cried Gilson. "And—look!"

They stopped, staring.

"Julie!" Dick cried. "We followed your footprints, and—"

He stared at her, from her to Larry Woodstock, from them to the remains of Julie's meal. "Julie, what—what have you been doing?"

"Having breakfast—with me," Larry insolently drawled. "Like some? There's plenty left if you wait on yourselves and wash up my dishes afterwards."

Perhaps for a moment they all weakened. But it was Gilson who made himself the spokesman of the party.

"Thanks, you can keep your food, Woodstock," he said curtly. "We'd rather starve than touch it! We came for Julie—"

"And here I am," Julie said.

"So I observe!" Gilson's lip lifted. "Apparently," he said, "no sense of loyalty prevents you from hobnobbing with this lout. I thought better of you than that, Julie!"

Julie flushed. She felt her dislike of Gilson—now apparently assuming the leadership of the party—intensify. The feeling was not lessened by the silent reproach she saw in Dick's eyes.

"I'm sorry," she mumbled, and hated both herself and Gilson. "Let—let's go," she said, and she stumbled towards them, trying not to hear the harsh scornful laugh that came from the outlaw whose guest she had been.

Look for further dramatic chapters of this enthralling serial in next Friday's **GIRLS' CRYSTAL**.

THE MERRYMAKERS AT COLLEGE

(Continued from page 416.)

A sickening jerk. Then the trunk lay suddenly still, as if dumped on to a flat surface, and she heard the ominous rattle of a tail-board—the tailboard of a lorry!

With all the force of her cramped limbs, Sally thumped and kicked at the inside of the trunk. It seemed that all her efforts were in vain. Then, with a rasp, the clasp snapped open, and the lid was flung open.

"What the—!" Sally heard a snarling voice suddenly choke off with rage. "Hey! Who are you?"

She saw the glaring eyes of a boy, a stranger, and one look at his hard, desperate face was enough. At the top of her lungs she let out a shout:

"J House—HELP! JOHNNY—"

Then the boy's hand crushed over her mouth, stifling her, and all Sally knew was that she was struggling with him frantically, struggling to get out of that trunk.

"Help!" Sally managed to cry out again.

"J House! HELP!"

Then a hideous drumming sounded in her ears, and she couldn't breathe enough to cry out any more. But still that drumming grew louder and louder, though her struggles grew weaker; and suddenly the drumming was like a roar all around her, and she heard voices—Johnny's voice:

"Hold the brute—hold him! Oh, Sally! Are you all right, Sally?"

But Sally had fainted.

"AH, feeling better now, my dear? Do you think you could sip a little of this coffee?" the dean was saying in trembling relief. "We all did Weston a terrible injustice, all except you, Sally, and he wants to tell you, as I do, how grateful he is to you for clearing it up!"

"And for capturing one of the worst young rascals who ever broke out of gaol!" came from the bursar. "That boy was the notorious thief and forger—Dave Merino!"

"He's been hiding in the tower, in that secret lair you found, Sally, ever since he broke gaol," said Johnny, speaking in a whisper that one reserves only for invalids. "He stole that lorry to-day, after knocking the driver out, and came here pretending he'd been sent by the tradesmen to collect their goods. Here's Don—he'll tell you the rest."

"Sally, I think that was the gamest, sweetest thing you ever did for me, hiding in that trunk!" And Don took her two hands in his. "That crook had collected all the clothes and money he needed—in my name. He'd arranged for a passage on one of the shady cargo-boats lying in the harbour. And if it hadn't been for you, he'd have got away by two-thirty to-day, and—"

"Never mind him, Don!" Sally put in radiantly. "It's only you that matters; and now I won't have to worry about you any more, and I'll let you go and bury yourself away in that old tower again—but only till you've won your exam."

And Don did win his exam. He won honours for his new wireless device, and all the examiners said it was a gem. That's why Don christened it Sally.

(End of this week's story.)

Another delightful complete story, featuring the ever-popular Merry-makers, will appear in next Friday's **GIRLS' CRYSTAL**.