

Noel's FOUR-FOOTED ASSISTANT

An intriguing
mystery story
featuring Noel
Raymond, the
popular young
detective.

By
PETER
LANGLEY



CHAPTER I

RUFUS MAKES A FIND

"HALLO! What's the trouble?"

Noel Raymond, the famous young detective, walking up from the little country station, paused as he heard childish voices, mingled with the barking of a dog, coming from the field on the other side of the hedge.

The dog's barks were deep and vibrant, and the voices were shrill with alarm. Thinking that the children were frightened, Noel ran across the lane and peered through a gap in the hedge.

To his relief the position was not as serious as he had feared it to be.

Snow had fallen heavily during the last few days. The field was covered with it, and in one corner, on the edge of a frozen stream, the village children had built an imposing snowman. It was this

snowman that the dog—a fine Airedale—was attacking. Barking excitedly, it was leaping up and down, hurling itself at the white effigy.

The children—a small boy and a girl, obviously brother and sister—were standing around helplessly, too frightened to drive the dog away, and they gave eager shouts as they saw the young detective approaching.

"Please stop him, sir!" pleaded the boy. "He won't take any notice of us."

"Yes, and this is the fourth time he's gone for our snowman," added the girl, tears of distress in her blue eyes.

Noel regarded her in surprise.

"The fourth time!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, sir!" It was the boy who replied. "He seems to have taken a proper dislike to it."

Noel regarded the Airedale with interest.

"What's the idea, old chap?" he asked. "Why have you got such a down on this fellow?"

The young detective had a way with him as far as animals were concerned. It was seldom that he was unable to make friends with them, and, despite its excitement, the Airedale paused and turned his head, regarding him with intelligent brown eyes.

Noel held out a soothing hand.

"Come on, tell me all about it," he urged, with a friendly grin. "There's no need to be scared of me."

The dog allowed him to pat his head, then gave a plaintive whine and again regarded the snowman.

"What is it, old chap?" Noel asked. "What is it about the snowman that's bothering you?"

By way of reply the Airedale gave another thunderous bark, and, springing high into the air, made another snap at the snowman. This time his teeth caught in the gaily coloured scarf which was loosely knotted about the effigy's neck. There was a rending sound, and the Airedale dropped back to the snow with the scarf in its mouth. Letting it fall, he placed an excited paw over it and gave a deep, triumphant bark, regarding Noel with gleaming eyes.

The young detective gave an understanding smile.

"So that's it!" he exclaimed, and turned reassuringly to the watching children. "It's all right," he said. "He won't worry you again. It was the scarf he was after, not the snowman. If you don't mind letting him have it——"

"Please, sir, it isn't ours to give him!" blurted out the boy. "We found it lying here in the snow on Thursday."

"And as it didn't seem to belong to anyone, we thought we'd use it," added his sister. "We—we didn't do wrong, did we?"

Smilingly Noel shook his head; then, bending, he tried to take the scarf away from the Airedale. At first he resisted his efforts, growling menacingly, but after a few friendly pats he allowed the young detective to pick up the scarf.

The scarf was an expensive one and almost new. Obviously its loss would be keenly felt by its owner, and, with an admiring look, Noel surveyed the dog.

"It belongs to your mistress, eh?" he said. "That's why you were so agitated. You recognised it, and wanted to return it to her. Clever chap! She must be proud of you."

He ran his fingers through the Airedale's crisp fur. The dog gave a delighted bark. Plainly he now regarded Noel as a trusted friend, and willingly allowed him to examine his collar.

The metal plate on it was old and tarnished. It was impossible to make out the name and address of the dog's owner, but a few disconnected letters enabled the young detective to guess at the Airedale's own name.

"Rufus," he said. "Is that what they call you, old chap?"

Woof, woof!

There could be no misunderstanding those excited barks, and the way the animal pricked up his ears.

"But where do you come from?" Noel asked. He turned to the children, but they shook their heads. They didn't know to whom the Airedale belonged. "Then we'll have to take other steps to find out," Noel declared, smiling at the dog. "You're too valuable a chap to go wandering about on your own."

Again assuring the boy and the girl that now they could play with their snowman undisturbed, he sent them into shrieks of delight by giving them sixpence apiece, then held the scarf out to the eagerly awaiting Rufus.

"Find, old chap—find!" he ordered.

Instantly the intelligent Airedale seemed to understand. Excitedly he sniffed at the scarf, gave a violent bark, then turned, nose snuffing over the snow. Suddenly he began to run, tearing across the field at great speed, hot on the scent. Suitcase in hand, Noel followed. The dog led him to a big, rambling house and the detective gasped as he saw the name on the gate.

"The Gables! Well, I'm dashed!" he exclaimed, for the mystery Airedale had

brought him to the very house he had come to visit.

The reason which had brought Noel here was rather a strange one. It was the result of a promise he had made to Jonathan Merrivale, the eccentric owner of The Gables, who had been an old friend of the young detective's father.

Mr. Merrivale had always been interested in jewellery, and for years he had spent his time and money in collecting pearls. These he had had made into a perfectly matched necklace—a present for his niece in Canada, his only relative.

Before the niece could reach England to receive the wonderful gift, however, Mr. Merrivale had died, and it was Noel's mission to attend with a local solicitor and hand over to Beryl Harman her precious inheritance. The previous day he had had a note from the solicitor, stating that the girl had taken up residence in her uncle's old house, and inviting him to meet him at the house.

As he strode up the gravel carriage drive he grinned across at the impatiently waiting Airedale.

"So you're Beryl Harman's dog, eh?" he said. "Well, that means I'll be doubly welcome. She's sure to be pleased that I've brought you safely back."

He rang the bell, and the door was opened, not by the butler as he had expected, but by a pretty, blonde-haired girl. Though he had never seen her before, he guessed that she was Beryl Harman. Raising his hat, he greeted her with a smile.

"I think you're expecting me," he said. "My name is Raymond—Noel Raymond."

The girl gave a cry of delight.

"Mr. Raymond!" she exclaimed.

"Gee, that's good! Please come right inside! I'm very glad——"

She broke off and recoiled in alarm, for suddenly Rufus had given a thunderous bark. Brushing past her, he went bounding into the hall, to scratch excitedly at one of the doors. Noel raised his eyebrows in surprise.



Noel frowned at the Airedale, who was now whining and scratching at the door. According to Beryl Harman, the dog did not belong here. Then why had he made straight for this house?

"I'm afraid the old chap isn't very polite," he commented. "He might have stopped to say 'Hallo!' to you, but I suppose he's so delighted at being home again——"

"Home again?" Beryl Harman stared at him in bewilderment. "Gee, what ever do you mean?" she asked. "He doesn't belong here."

"What?" It was Noel's turn to be astonished. "You really mean to say he's not your dog?" he cried.

Beryl shook her head.

"He certainly isn't! As it happens, I'm not very fond of animals. But why should you think he belongs to me?"

"Well, he led me here, and he certainly seems at home here——" began Noel; then he paused and, with puzzled eyes, regarded the Airedale, now sniffing excitedly at the closed door. "Perhaps he belongs to someone else in the house?" he suggested.

But again Beryl shook her head.

"I'm certain he doesn't. There's only Jabez Crane and his wife—they were my uncle's old retainers, you know—and I happen to know that they both dislike dogs as much as I do."

Feeling more and more mystified, Noel thrust his hand into his overcoat pocket and produced the scarf which Rufus had so triumphantly wrenched from around the snowman's neck.

"And this doesn't belong to you, either, I suppose?" he said.

The girl examined the scarf, then once more shook her head.

"No; I've never even seen it before," she declared positively. "But say, what does all this queer business mean?"

The young detective, stuffing the scarf back into his pocket, shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm afraid the only person who could answer that question is Rufus," he replied, "and, unfortunately, he can't talk." Frowningly he regarded the Airedale, who was now whining plaintively. "The problem is—what are we going to do with the old chap?" he queried.

The girl frowned rather irritably.

"Oh, the police will take care of him," she declared. "Let's tie him up in one of the outhouses. He will be safe enough there for the time being. I'm too excited to bother about him. Oh, I know that sounds horrid!" she went on apologetically, as she saw Noel's look, "but it's not every day a girl inherits a wonderful pearl necklace! I have been dreaming about it for weeks. Gee, Mr. Raymond, but if only you realised how thrilled I am you would——"

She finished with an ecstatic cry, and,

clasping her hands together, faced him appealingly.

"Please hurry up and let me see the pearls!" she gasped.

"I won't be a jiffy!" he said. "I'll just attend to Rufus. Come on, old chap!" he added, turning to the Airedale. "Fraid you've got to change your quarters."

Reluctantly Rufus allowed himself to be escorted to a near-by outhouse; but when Noel produced a rope and proceeded to tie him to a staple in the wall, he again began to whine plaintively.

Noel regarded him wonderingly.

"I can't make you out," he declared. "You seem so certain that this is your home, yet Beryl Harman's just as positive you don't belong here. I only wish you could tell me what's on your mind, old chap. I'm certain——"

He broke off as there came a girlish hail from the house, and, with another sympathetic shake of the head, he shut the door and rejoined his young hostess.

"Now for the necklace," he said, with a smile. "The safe's in the library, isn't it?"

She nodded.

"Yes. Mr. Sadgrove, the solicitor, is waiting for us there."

She conducted him to the library and introduced him to the lawyer. Mr. Sadgrove proved to be a fussy, rather irritable man, and he testily cut short Noel's pleasant words of greeting.

"I don't want to seem churlish, Mr. Raymond," he said, "but I am in a hurry. I am expecting a long-distance call from Scotland. It is important—most important—and I am anxious to return to my office before it comes through."

"I understand," said Noel. "And there's no reason why our little transaction should take more than a minute or so. Of course, you are satisfied that this young lady"—smiling across at the girl from Canada—"is really Beryl Harman?"

The solicitor raised an impatient hand.

"Of course—of course!" he snapped. "I have examined her papers. They are perfectly in order. Please be good enough to open the safe; then, as soon as I have

seen the necklace handed over, I will depart."

Noel crossed to the mantelpiece and opened a square, oaken panel, revealing the door of a safe let into the wall. Then he felt in his waistcoat pocket for the slip of paper old Mr. Merrivale had given him just before his death. On it was written a string of seemingly meaningless letters and numerals—the combination which would allow the safe to be opened.

While Beryl, a smile of joyous expectation on her face, excitedly watched, the young detective arranged the letters and numerals on the door of the safe so that they matched the combination written on the piece of paper in his hand. Then he listened expectantly, but, to his surprise, there came no tell-tale click.

"That's funny," he muttered, and wrenched at the massive steel handle. But the door refused to budge.

Mr. Sadgrove glared irritably through his pince-nez.

"Well, young man, what are you waiting for?" he demanded.

"The combination—it doesn't seem to

work," Noel explained, with a puzzled frown.

"What?"

The lawyer looked incredulous, while Beryl gave an agitated cry as Noel again fingered the combination. Once again he set it, once again he tugged at the handle, but the door still refused to open. The safe remained locked.

"I'm sorry," said Noel, "but without a locksmith I can do nothing. The door refuses to open. I'm afraid, Miss Harman, that your uncle must have given me the wrong combination. He must have altered it just before his death and forgotten the fact. But a locksmith will be able to open it for us."

"Locksmith!" exclaimed the elderly lawyer. "I've no time to wait for a locksmith. I am sorry, Miss Harman, but this call I am expecting—"

He broke off and all three of them whirled in alarm, for from out in the hall had come a medley of shouts and snarls. It was Beryl who was the first to realise what was happening.

"It's that horrid dog!" she gasped.



"I'm sorry," said Noel, "but the door refuses to open. I'm afraid, Miss Harman, your uncle must have given me the wrong combination of the safe."

"He must have escaped—and now he's attacking Jabez!"

A couple of strides took Noel to the door. Flinging it open, he looked across the hall. He saw a middle-aged man dressed in the sombre clothes of a butler—and an excitedly barking Airedale.

"Rufus—come here at once!"

Unusually stern was Noel's voice, and rather to his surprise the dog obeyed, but not before he had savagely wrenched the article which the butler was holding in one hand.

Bounding forward, the Airedale laid the article at Noel's feet, then gave a loud bark, a triumphant glint in his big brown eyes.

The young detective gave a gasp as he picked up the object. It was a girl's woollen gauntlet glove, and both in colour and workmanship it matched the scarf Rufus had snatched from the snowman.

Undoubtedly both belonged to the same girl—but how had the glove come into the house? It suggested that Rufus' mysterious owner lived there, but according to Beryl Harman that was not so.

Noel examined the glove carefully, and as he saw the tab inside, bearing the manufacturer's name, he frowned. But before he could say anything he made a fresh discovery. Tucked in the glove was a slip of paper.

"Great Scott!" he gasped.

For written on the paper was a string of letters and numerals—an exact copy of the combination which old Mr. Merrivale had supplied to Noel!

Then the owner of the scarf and glove—Rufus' elusive owner—must have been the person who had altered the original combination of the safe. It was thanks to her that Noel and the irritable solicitor had been unable to hand Beryl her wonderful inheritance!

CHAPTER II

AN AMAZING SUSPICION

"JUST a moment!" His face unusually worried, Noel stared at the slip of paper. "Supposing she didn't just alter the combination," he muttered. "Suppose she opened the safe and stole the necklace!"

It was an alarming thought, and, seeing his concern, the girl from Canada ran agitatedly forward.

"What's the matter?" she asked.

"Yes," Mr. Sadgrove asked from the library door, "what is written on that piece of paper?"

Noel showed them, then turned to the butler.

"How did the trouble start?" he asked.

"I heard a scuffling by the cellar door, sir," was the reply, "and on going to investigate I found this—er—animal writing in that trunk." He pointed to where, against the wall, stood a cheap, old-fashioned trunk. "He had the glove in his mouth, and when I took it from him he went for me."

"And who does that trunk belong to?" asked Noel.

"To a young person named Eva Whiston, sir."

"Eva Whiston?"

Beryl seemed as puzzled as Noel and the lawyer. The butler nodded in her direction.

"Yes, miss. She was employed here before you came—as a maid—but the master discharged her. She was proved to be dishonest. He caught her stealing his silver."

"Dishonest!"

Noel, thinking of the altered safe combination, thinking also of the precious necklace it was supposed to hold, gave a startled cry. As for Beryl, she went as white as a sheet. Plainly she despaired of ever seeing her pearls.

"Where is the girl now?" asked Noel.

The butler shook his head.

"Couldn't say, sir. I haven't seen her since she left. She went off in a hurry—didn't even stop to collect her trunk. I fancy she was scared lest the master should have her arrested."

"And this dog?"—Noel pointed to Rufus—"I suppose he belongs to this Eva Whiston?"

"That's right, sir. She went off without him, and ever since she left the poor thing's been wandering about homeless."

"I see."

With a nod Noel dismissed the man.

Part of the mystery seemed to have been cleared up. If Rufus and his mistress had become separated, it was only natural that the Airedale should return to his old home to search for her.

But what about the combination written on the slip of paper Noel had found in Eva Whiston's glove? That supported the butler's statement that she was dishonest. Had she then attempted to steal the pearls? Perhaps she had even succeeded in doing so!

Noel's lips tightened, while Beryl's eyes grew wide with despair.

"The safe's empty—I know it is!" she gasped. "That servant girl's stolen my pearls! Oh, can't we get in a locksmith right away? I shall know no peace until the safe's been opened."

Apologetically Mr. Sadgrove, the lawyer, turned to Beryl.

"I simply must go!" he said regretfully.

"Oh, can't you wait just a little longer?" Beryl pleaded. "We could telephone for a locksmith. And, under the terms of uncle's will, we can't open it unless you're here."

"I'm sorry, my dear. I'd like to stay, but—"

"Why not ring through to your office, sir?" Noel suggested. "Tell them to put through your long-distance call when it comes. You can answer it here just as easily as back as your office."

Beryl jumped at the suggestion, and pleadingly she added her voice to Noel's; and to their delight Mr. Sadgrove nodded.

Noel and Beryl passed out through the french windows.

"Before sending for a locksmith we'd better find Eva Whiston," Noel said. "And Rufus will help us. Sniff, Rufus!" he said, and held the glove to the dog's nose.

With an eager bark Rufus raced off, and, to Noel's surprise, it was back to the field containing the snowman that he led them.

The children had now departed, but the snowman still stood against the frozen stream, and once more Rufus began attacking it, leaping up and barking at it.

Seized with a sudden idea, Noel ran

forward and dug his hands into the snowman, searching in the crisp snow.

Beryl Harman watched wonderingly, but from Rufus came a loud bark. He seemed to approve of Noel's unexpected action.

Suddenly the young detective's efforts were rewarded, and he stood back, for his groping fingers had revealed a leather object hidden in the snowman.

"A—a girl's handbag! Gee! Do you think it belongs to Eva Whiston?" Beryl Harman cried.

"I'm certain it does," Noel replied, as he carefully removed it.

"But why should she hide it in that absurd snowman?" asked Beryl. "Why——" She gave an excited gasp. "Say, what if that bag contains the new combination which'll open the safe? Suppose that girl wrote it down, then, getting scared, stuffed it in her bag and buried it in the snow!"

Noel grinned.

"Exactly what I was thinking," he said. "However, we'll soon see. Perhaps you'd like to look yourself?"

"Oh, please!"

Eagerly Beryl held her hand out for the bag; but, even as her fingers closed on it, Rufus, who all this time had been whining and regarding the bag with frantic excitement, leapt forward.

One angry growl he gave, then he had snatched the bag from the startled girl and gone racing away with it.

Noel stared in surprise. The girl at his side gave an agitated shout:

"After him! That bag contains the new combination! I'm certain it does!"

And, scared lest Rufus should disappear with the vital clue, Beryl went racing across the field after him. But Noel made no attempt to follow. His attention had been attracted by something that lay on the snow. It was a small metal badge. It had been wrenched off the bag when the dog had snatched it.

Stooping, Noel picked it up, and, as he examined it, a thoughtful whistle escaped his lips.

"Shaped like a maple leaf!" he exclaimed. "That's queer, especially in

view of the trade mark I found sewed inside Eva Whiston's glove. Eva's an English girl, so why——"

He broke off and looked sharply across the field. Both Beryl and Rufus were now half-way up the lane. The Airedale still had the handbag gripped between his teeth, and, strange though it seemed, he was heading for The Gables.

Noel took another look at the maple-leaf badge in his hand, then he gave a shrill whistle.

"Great Scott!" he cried.

An amazing suspicion had flashed into his mind—a suspicion which would not only explain Rufus' latest queer action, but would also solve the whole baffling mystery.

CHAPTER III

THE SECRET OF THE CELLARS

By the time the young detective reached The Gables both the girl and dog had vanished from sight, but from the side of the house came the sound of excited voices.

Noel sprinted along the snow-covered path, and, as he rounded the corner of the building, a side door opened and Beryl appeared, her pretty face flushed with triumph.

"Jabez caught the dog," she announced, "and managed to get back the bag."

Excitedly she flourished it above her head. Noel nodded, and he made no comment. Brushing past the girl, he entered the wide corridor. The butler was standing there, but of Rufus there was no sign.

"So the dog bolted into the house, did he?" Noel said.

"That's right, sir, but I was too smart for him. I snatched the bag as he went charging by. And he seems to have cleared off now."

"But didn't he put up a fight for it?" asked Noel, in surprise.

Jabez Crane shook his head.

"Queer!" Noel murmured, frowning.

He broke off, for there had come a triumphant shout from Beryl and, turning, he saw that she was excitedly flourishing

a piece of paper she had taken from the handbag.

"The new combination!" she cried. "Come on, Mr. Raymond! Let's tell Mr. Sadgrove the good news!"

Almost dancing with delight, she went rushing off down the corridor. Mr. Sadgrove, however, was engaged at the telephone, so impatiently Beryl prepared to wait his convenience.

Noel, still in the corridor, waited until the butler had departed; then he examined the red-tiled floor with keen eyes.

Faintly he saw the imprint of wet paws. They led to a door which obviously led down to the cellars, and as he opened it he saw a tuft of coarse brown hairs sticking to the rough edge of the woodwork.

"So I was right!" he murmured.

Taking a torch from his pocket, he switched it on. At the foot of the steep stairs was an ancient oak door, and from beyond it he heard a faint sound.

"Rufus! Rufus, old chap!" he called.

The sound was repeated. It was a plaintive whine, and running down the stairs, Noel flung open the door and turned his torch downward. The bright beam revealed the missing Airedale outstretched on the floor, an ugly bump on its head.

"Poor old chap!" Noel said softly. "So that rascal of a butler cracked you over the head. But why? That's what I want to know."

As there came another pitiful whine, he produced a tiny bottle from his pocket. It contained strong stimulants, and forcibly he made the injured dog swallow the pungent liquid. The effect was instantaneous. New life returned to Rufus' limbs, and, scrambling to his feet, he licked Noel's hand gratefully. Thoughtfully the detective regarded him.

"You still think your mistress is in this house, don't you?" he said. "Well, I believe you're right, old chap. In fact, I think she's not very far away. Search for her, lad—search for her!"

Rufus gave an eager growl, and, dropping his nose to the dusty floor, he sniffed around. Suddenly his tail thrashed in

triumph and, bounding across the large, gloomy coal-cellar, he began to paw at a pile of packing-cases which were stacked in one corner.

Noel, rushing to his side, pulled away the cases, and then he gave a grim shout.

"I thought as much!"

For there, seated on a broken chair, bound and gagged, was a pretty, blonde-haired girl no older than Beryl Harman. And that she was Rufus' elusive owner was proved by the delighted way the Airedale was greeting her. Suddenly, however, Rufus growled.

"What is it, old chap?" Noel asked. "What—Great Scott! The door!"

Too late he realised what was happening; for, even as he sprang to his feet, even as Rufus launched himself across the cellar, the door at the foot of the stairs was slammed to, and next moment there came the thud of a bolt being shot home.

Noel and Rufus were imprisoned!

— "So you have found the right combination, after all, have you, my dear?"

His important telephonic business finished, the elderly solicitor hung up the receiver and turned to Beryl Harman.

"That is extremely gratifying," he declared. "And as soon as Mr. Raymond returns we will open the safe and investigate its contents."

The girl clasped her hands and surveyed him appealingly.



Rufus allowed Noel to pick up the glove, and eagerly the young detective examined it. It might be an important clue to the mystery.

"Oh, don't let's wait for Mr. Raymond!" she gasped. "I can't bear any more of this suspense. Please open the safe now—please!"

The lawyer hesitated a moment longer; then, to her delight, he took the paper containing the details of the combination from her and set to work. As he set the letters and numerals in the correct order there came a click, and next moment the steel door swung open—revealing a plush jewel-case lying in the bottom of the safe. Beryl clapped her hands with joy.

"The pearls!" she cried. "Then that girl didn't steal them, after all!"

She stretched out a quivering hand, seized the oblong jewel-case, and was just about to open it when—

Crash!

The french windows were flung violently open, and a long, lithe shape, covered from head to foot in coal dust, sprang into the room. Rufus! And as both the girl and the lawyer recoiled in alarm, the Airedale leapt up and snatched the jewel-case from Beryl Harman's hand. Furiously she glared at him, snatching up the poker.

"Oh, you brute!" she panted.

"Hold on there! Don't you dare!" cried a commanding voice, and in the french windows appeared Noel Raymond, with the girl he had rescued at his side.

Both of them, like Rufus, were covered with coal dust—which was not surprising, for, like the Airedale, they had escaped from the cellar by wriggling through the small, circular opening which the coalman used for delivering the coals.

"Noel Raymond!" gulped Beryl Harman.

Noel bowed, then indicated the girl at his side.

"In person! And allow me to present—the real Beryl Harman," he said.

"The—the real Beryl Harman?"

The elderly lawyer gazed at Noel as if he thought he had taken leave of his senses.

"Exactly!" said Noel. "This girl is an impostor!"

"An—an impostor?"

"Yes, her real name is Eva Whiston. She is the butler's niece. It was she old Mr. Merrivale discharged for dishonesty, not this other young lady."

"But—but—" Mr. Sadgrove passed a dazed hand over his brow. "But it's impossible. This girl"—he pointed to the girl he had always known as Beryl Harman—"possesses all the papers which prove she is Jonathan Merrivale's heir!"

"Papers which she stole from me, I guess," declared the girl Noel had rescued from the cellar.

"You see, it's like this," said Noel, and swiftly he explained.

It seemed that the Whiston family, furious because their employer had left them out of his will, had plotted to

steal the contents of the safe in the library. Not knowing the combination, they had been unable to open it, and it was too strongly built for them to force the door. So they had decided to kidnap the real Beryl and let Eva take her place.

It was simple; for no one in England had ever seen the girl from Canada, and the papers the Whistons stole from the real Beryl were sufficient to satisfy the lawyer.

But, unfortunately for their plans, Beryl had overheard them talking and had become suspicious. Unknown to them, she had altered the combination of the safe; for her uncle, in his last letter to her, had sent her a copy of the combination.

"Later," concluded Noel, "Miss Harman tried to escape and secure help; but the Whistons chased her, and, knowing she was bound to be overtaken, she buried her handbag containing the new combination in the snowman—and there it would still be but for this smart lad"

And admirably he patted the intelligent Airedale, who squatted beside him, the jewel-case still gripped between his teeth.

The amazed lawyer turned to phone the police, but the real Beryl shook her head, looking across at the impostor.

"No, I don't intend to have you arrested," she said. "Your scheming's at an end, and that's all that matters. Guess you and your aunt and uncle had better pack your grips and go."

Without a word the impostor slunk out of the room, and when she had gone Beryl gave Rufus a hug, then took the jewel-case from his mouth. Opening it, she stared in rapture at the circlet of shimmering pearls which lay in their velvet bed.

"Gee, how lovely! How magnificent!" she gasped, and flashed Noel Raymond a grateful smile. "And it's thanks to you I've got them!" she declared.

"No—thanks to Rufus," said Noel, patting the Airedale's head.

