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Vol. I (New Series), No. 8.

The Mystery of the Empty Compartment.

A Thrilling New Tale of
**PANTHER GRAYLE,
DETECTIVE.**

CHAPTER I.
The 8.12 Express

IT was seldom indeed that Panther Grayle took a holiday. Certainly he rarely prepared to take one. Occasionally he would wake up in the morning with the decision already fixed in his mind that he needed a short rest, and if business were not too pressing he would take one forthwith.

I, Geoffrey Martin, his friend, and occasionally his assistant, was used to his erratic ways. Consequently, I was not greatly surprised when, one cold morning in January, he came round to my bed-room before it was light and informed me that he intended spending the day pike-fishing in Loamshire.

"You'll come too," he said, seizing me by the shoulders with a pair of icy hands.

I replied that his suggestion suited me down to the ground, whereat he ejaculated "Good!" and requesting me to be down within half an hour, hurried off, the long tassels of his dressing-gown sweeping the floor behind him.

While the housekeeper was hastily preparing our breakfast, we packed our rods and tackle, and immediately afterwards set out for Liverpool Street.

We took train for Saffron Ashley, and reached our destination at about half-past ten.

We had a good day with the famous Loam pike, killing seven in all, including one twelve-pounder that gave the Panther a merry twenty minutes.

"We may as well stop here for the night," Grayle said, as we wended our way back to the inn where we had ordered supper.

So we booked rooms, and sat down to a solid meal, the sort of meal you can only get at a country hostelry—English food well cooked in an English style, and plenty of it.

Afterwards, when our pipes were alight, the Panther suggested a stroll.

"Don't be so sluggish," he said, seeing me deeply embedded in an armchair. "A good brisk walk will help you to digest, and you'll be able to sleep after it."

There was truth in his arguments, so I got up and slipped my arms into the heavy overcoat I had been wearing all day.

A minute later we were out in the
(Continued on the next page.)



**CAN YOU TELL
WHAT HAPPENED?**

READ
"THE MYSTERY
OF THE
EMPTY COMPARTMENT."

A Now and Interesting Story for All.

COUSIN ETHEL'S SCHOOL DAYS

YOU CAN START NOW.

A TALE OF TOM MERRY'S CHUM

BY MARTIN CLIFFORD

Ethel's Suspicion Are Confirmed. A SLATHERLY-LOOKING sergeant answered her ring, and Cousin Ethel was admitted to a shabby hall. Her heart was beating fast now. She was dreading this in the hope of and shaking Dolores, but now that she was fairly embarked she began to feel a little afraid. But she did not allow her courage to sink and she was quick to say, "What name, please, miss?"

"Mrs. Scruton does not know my name," said Ethel, "but say it is someone from St. Freda's."

"Yes, miss."

Ethel was shown into a room in which the signs of dressmaking were pretty evident everywhere. The windows were tightly closed, so that the atmosphere was extremely stuffy, and that, added to a stuffy odor of cloth, made Ethel feel quite faint for a moment. There was a looking glass over the mantelpiece in a tedious oak frame, and the furniture glistened with cheap varnish. In the bay window was a stand with an "art" set of a colour that would have made an artist shudder, with a fern in it which seemed to be in the final stages of consumption.

Ethel sat down on one of the shiny, creaky chairs, and waited. She did not long to wait. A stout woman of uncertain age, with a red nose and very red cheeks, entered the room with a sort of sneering motion. Ethel did not know that the redness of the nose was caused by drinking, or that of the cheeks by rouge, and she felt an instinctive dislike of the woman the moment she saw her. She felt that Miss Penfold was quite right in not wishing her to come into contact with Mrs. Scruton.

There was a very agreeable smile upon the disagreeable face now, however. Mrs. Scruton knew that Ethel must be a new girl, and she was ready to welcome and make much of a new customer.

"Good-afternoon, my dear," she said affably, "I hope you have time to stay for a cup of tea."

"No, thank you," said Ethel hurriedly. "I am pressed for time. I have not come by my own account really, but about—about a certain matter—in connection with Ethel Craven."

Mrs. Scruton smiled.

"Quite right. But I told Miss Craven that I should send her the change when I had placed the note in my bag."

Ethel started.

She had come there to learn the truth, half-fraid that she was doing wrong. She had remembered how Ethel Craven had gone out so much early after morning school, and how strangely white and how touchy she had been. The suspicion had forced itself upon Ethel's mind that Ethel's offer of half-sovereign on account had been refused by Mrs. Scruton, and that the foolish girl had been driven to a desperate step to find the money, and had thrown the odium upon another.

But Ethel was startled at having her half formed suspicion so suddenly and fully confirmed.

"The—the note?" she stammered.

"Yes, I do not keep so much money in the house," said Mrs. Scruton, with a smile; "but I shall send the note in the bank to-day, and will send the change up to the hall for it."

Ethel shivered.

"Why have not yet placed the note in the bank, Mrs. Scruton?"

"I have not been out this afternoon yet," said Mrs. Scruton, "but there is ample time before the bank closes. It is open till six in Elm-

GLANCE OVER THIS.

Ethel Cleveland is a new girl at St. Freda's, and on her first day at school as attracted by the personality of Dolores Pelham, a high-spirited girl of Spanish descent. Dolores confides to Ethel that she hates the school, and intends to run away that night. In spite of all Ethel's attempts to stop her, Dolores carries out her rash determination, but is brought back the next morning. Miss Penfold has

"You—you must not take the note there," said Ethel hastily.

Mrs. Scruton looked astonished.

"Why not?"

"Because—because—Oh, did you not think it strange that Ethel should have so much money?" exclaimed Ethel.

The woman's face hardened.

"She told me her aunt had sent her the banknote," she replied. "Of course, I believed her. Do you mean to say that that note did not belong to her?"

"It did not."

"Then she stole it."

Ethel flushed.

"I believe you are right; but it would be better for you to take the note to Miss Penfold, and explain how you came by it. I know that Ethel had no money last evening, and she was very much afraid of what you would do. It is only you who have caused her to do this wicked thing."

Mrs. Scruton threw open the door with a theatrical gesture.

"If you have come to insult me in my own house, you had better go," she exclaimed.

Ethel walked to the door.

"I will go gladly," she said; "but I want you to take the note to Miss Penfold. If it is passed, the number will be traced by the police, and—"

"Leave my house!"

Ethel walked down the garden path and joined Dolly. Her heart was beating hard; she felt as if she had just left the den of an ogre.

Dolly looked at her flushed face.

"Had a row with Scruton?" she asked.

Ethel laughed.

"Not exactly, dear. Let us go away."

"She's going to be easy with Ethel," asked Dolly. "Surely the half-sovereign will keep the Shylock quiet for a time, anyway?"

"I don't know."

"Ethel seems to think that it's all right. She told me that she had paid the half-sovereign on account, and Scruton was all serene."

Ethel did not reply. She did not wish to expose Ethel's falsehoods to her companion.

That Ethel had lied recklessly was certain; but her greatest folly was in overlooking the fact that a note, being numbered, could be traced if Miss Penfold chose to call in the aid of the police. But the foolish girl had been too frightened and confused to even think of that, in all probability.

Ethel was very silent during the walk home to St. Freda's.

That did not matter to Dolly, however, who talked enough for two. When she arrived at the school, Ethel was as soon as she could to the dormitory, and looked in at Dolores's cubicle. Dolores was not there, but Ethel caught sight of her in the window-seat at the end of the dormitory, and hastened to join her.

Dolores looked at her with a faint smile.

"You will still speak to me?" she exclaimed.

"Why not?"

"You do not believe that I am a thief?"

"I never believed it for a moment," said Ethel quietly.

Dolores threw her arms round the

English girl and hugged her, and kissed her upon both cheeks.

"How good and kind you are!" she exclaimed. "How lovely me! If I had had you for a friend when I came here, I should have done much better than I have."

"Nonsense," said Ethel, smiling.

"But it is true! I—I wish I were to stay at St. Freda's now," said Dolores. "I have been thinking—and this—this horrible thing that has happened has seemed to clear my brain. I wish—oh, I wish I had not run away last night, Ethel!"

"I wish you had not, dear."

"And you tried to stop me, and I said I hated you," said Dolores;

(You go on with the story.)



Mrs. Scruton threw open the door with a theatrical gesture, and glared at Ethel angrily. "Leave my house!" she exclaimed.

"But I don't hate you, Ethel, I love you."

Ethel kissed her.

"You shall stay at St. Freda's, and we shall be great friends," she exclaimed.

Dolores shook her head.

"I cannot stay. Even if Miss Penfold forgave me for running away, she thinks I am a thief—and I cannot prove that I am innocent."

"But I can," exclaimed Ethel triumphantly.

"What? You?"

"Yes."

"But how!" exclaimed Dolores, in astonishment. "How can you? Do you know who the thief is? Have you found out?"

"Yes, I have found out."

Light at Last.

MISS PENFOLD sat upright in the high-backed chair in her study, and the high back of the chair was not stiffer than Miss Penfold's. Miss Penfold's face looked as hard as the oak of the table beside her. Her lips were set in a thin hard line. Miss Penfold was receiving a visitor, a person of whom she did not approve, which was the reason why Miss Penfold seemed to be suddenly turned into stone.

Mrs. Scruton looked very uneasy when she was shown in. She had intended to carry matters with a high hand, but the calm, cold stillness of Miss Penfold seemed to take the livid out of the stout, starchy woman. Mrs. Scruton hesitated—and was lost. Her manner was unintentionally humble as she entered. But for the artificial colouring on her cheeks she would have looked pale.

Miss Penfold rose to her feet, but she did not ask her visitor to be seated. Her glance met Mrs. Scruton's like a rapier.

"You weren't expecting me?" said Mrs. Scruton, with an uneasy laugh.

"No."

"You may be glad I came," said the visitor spitefully. "I've come to ask you if this banknote belongs to you."

"And who is it?"

"Ethel Craven."

"Oh!"

"Miss Penfold will know it soon," said Ethel softly. "You will be pleased. But—I hope Miss Penfold will not be very hard on Ethel. The silly girl was frightened into it by a bad woman—though it was very, very wicked of her to let it fall upon you."

"But—had you are sure?"

"Quite sure."

"Then you have saved me, Ethel."

Ethel kissed her again. Dolores did not speak, but she sat with her arm about Ethel's neck, her head on Ethel's shoulders, and the proud, dark eyes were dim with tears. Dolores was crying.

"What was the girl's name?"

"Craven—Ethel Craven."

That was not the name she had expected to hear—though she could not imagine, either, that Miss Penfold paid the note to Mrs. Scruton.

"Miss Craven paid you this banknote?" she asked.

"Yes."

"When?"

"To-day—about half past twelve."

"Why?"

"She owed me an account—for I long enough, too. I had let her I should come to you for it," said Mrs. Scruton insolently. "If you don't teach your girls to pay their just debts, you can't expect—"

"We need not discuss that," said Miss Penfold. "I need not say that Miss Craven's debt to you was unknown to me. What was the amount?"

"Two pounds, and Ethel Craven has my receipt, and you will be paid."

Mrs. Scruton was silent. She was glad to have the money, and yet she had a sense of defeat. Miss Penfold laid two sovereigns upon the table, and the visitor put them into her gaudy, silver-chained purse.

"Why did you bring the note to me?" asked Mrs. Penfold abruptly.

"Because—I thought—"

Mrs. Scruton. "If it was stolen—"

"I did not say it was stolen," said Miss Penfold coldly. "I don't think you are returning it. I don't think you intend to detain you longer."

"Good afternoon!"

And Mrs. Scruton, almost before she knew it was bid, turned out by Miss Penfold. Dolores had intended to simply crush Miss Penfold—to make sneering remarks on the conduct of a school where banknotes were kept in a room where banknotes were trampled. Somehow, it had not worked out like that. She had a feeling of departing defeated; somehow or other the victory was not to be.

And Mrs. Scruton shook the dust of St. Freda's from her feet in a very bad temper.

"Dolly looked at the note again, and locked it up in her desk. Then she rang the bell, and sent the maid for Dolores and Ethel Craven.

Dolores was the first to arrive. She came in with a strange brightness in her face. Miss Penfold looked at her in surprise; it seemed as if the Spanish girl already knew what she was about to be told.

"Dolores, I have discovered that it was not you who took the banknote from my desk," said Miss Penfold quietly.

"Yes, Miss Penfold."

"You look as if you knew it already, Dolores," said Miss Penfold, with a curious glance at the girl. "I need not say how glad I am that the discovery has been made, Dolores. I am very sorry that I suspected you."

Dolores looked down.

"It was my fault," she said, in a low voice. "If I had not run away, you would not have thought so."

"That is true."

"I—I did wrong," faltered Dolores. "I—I was a foolish—and—and wicked. I—I am sorry that I ran away, Miss Penfold."

The head-mistress of St. Freda's drew a deep breath.

This was a new line for Dolores to take. She had never expected those words of humble confession from the proud Spanish girl.

"You mean that, Dolores?"

"Yes, Miss Penfold. I—I did not see it then as—as I do now," faltered Dolores. "Ethel has told me that—that—well, I am sorry."

And I am very glad to hear you say so," said Miss Penfold. "Since your innocence is proved, Dolores, I am inclined to deal more gently with your escapade of last night—as you seem to realize yourself how serious it was. If I should allow you to remain at St. Freda's—"

"Oh, Miss Penfold—"

"Would you try to make a fresh start—to do better?"

Dolores clasped her hands.

"Yes, Miss Penfold, I will try hard!"

Miss Penfold's face softened wonderfully.

"You will have the influence of a dear, good girl to help you, Dolores," she said softly. "Make a friend of Ethel Cleveland, and you will never go far wrong."

"Yes—yes, I know it."

"Then—"

Miss Penfold paused as there was a tap at the door. Ethel Craven came in, with a white, frightened face, her feet dragging unwillingly over the carpet.

"What you?"

"By whom?"

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COUSIN ETHEL'S SCHOOL DAYS

A TALE OF TOM CRUICK'S COURT by Miss Penfold

(Continued.) She had seen Mrs. Scruton come and she realised that she was lost...

Miss Penfold's face was very stern. "I have only a few words to say to you, Enid Craven," she said coldly.

Dolores's glance had been bitter and scornful, but it changed now to one of pity, and she threw her strong arm round Enid, who seemed to be about to sink to the floor.

"You confess, Enid?" said Miss Penfold quietly. "Yes," moaned Enid miserably.

"You knew that Dolores was going to run away, and you hoped that the blame of your action would fall upon her?"

"I thought it would hurt her, as she was going away," said Enid, with dry lips. "I was at Mrs. Scruton's table last night, and who tried to throw the blame of that wicked act upon Dolores?"

"I shall not expel you," said Miss Penfold. "You, of course, but I will spare you the disgrace. This matter need not be spoken of, Dolores, I am sure, will say nothing. You must pack your box to-night, Enid, and leave the school to-morrow morning. I will write to your parents and explain."

Enid fell upon her knees. "I—I have no excuse," she moaned. "Oh, Miss Penfold! Let me stay! I will never—never—"

"You cannot stay." Enid moaned again. Dolores's strong arm was round her; it was strange to see Dolores playing the protectress to the girl who had injured and injured her. But that was the better and nobler side of the wayward nature.

"Miss Penfold, you have pardoned me," said Dolores hesitatingly. "Will you not give Enid a chance? She was frightened by that woman; she did not know how wicked she was. She will never do anything like it again—will you, Enid?"

"Oh, never, never, if Miss Penfold will let me stay." The head-mistress looked curiously at Dolores. "Do you speak for Enid, Dolores?" she exclaimed. "You, who were very nearly disgraced for life by her wicked action?"

Miss Penfold's face softened. "Perhaps—perhaps I may forgive her," she said slowly. "If you can do so, I should. And if I believed that Enid really repented—"

"Oh, I do—I do!" Enid said. "I will do anything at your word, Enid," said Miss Penfold. "I will give you another chance. And remember, too, that you owe it to the girl who has injured you. You may go."

"Thank you, Miss Penfold," said Dolores quietly. And Enid tottered from the room leaning upon the shoulder of the Spanish girl. Ten minutes later Dolores rejoined Ethel Cleveland in the dormitory.

"No," she said. "Oh, Dolores!" "Don't ladies?" "Don't ladies?" "Pratt could not ask questions after that. Cousin Ethel and Dolores were left to themselves. The girls went to look for Enid Craven, she, at least, could be depended upon to tell them what the news; at least, so they thought. Enid was well known to be a lover of battle.

"It is not easy to find Enid. But she was discovered at last in her cubicle. She was lying on her bed, and she turned a red and embarrassed face. The tips of her eyelids were very red, and her face, never beautiful, was more unprepossessing than usual.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Enid. "What is the matter, Enid?" "Nothing," said Enid. "What are you crying about?" "Nothing!" "What has Miss Penfold said to you?" "Nothing!"

"And Enid turned her face to the wall. The girls were amazed. Even Enid was silent; and Milly Pratt exclaimed: "What are we to do about it?" Dolores nudged a gesture of disdain as the girls left her with Ethel. "They are very curious," said Ethel; "but it is natural."

"Oh, it is insufferable!" said Dolores, with curl of her lip. "But there," she added, with a sudden change of tone, "I am not going to be impatient any more. I hope the wretched affair will be forgotten, but I suppose it will be a long time before I allow me to forget that I tried to run away from school. I am going to try and like Miss Penfold."

Ethel smiled. "You will succeed if you try," she said. "Miss Penfold is very kind. Have you seen Enid lately?" Dolores gave a shrug of her shapely shoulder. "I cannot bear the sight of her."

"She must be feeling very unhappy." "Let her!" "Well, it is not more than she deserves," said Dolores. "What does it matter? You must not waste your thought upon her."

"You are just thinking of her," said Ethel quietly. "After all, she is very weak and foolish, and—and—" Dolores laughed a little bitterly. "And you are feeling concerned about her?" she exclaimed. "You want to make a fuss of her—that bad girl, and my enemy?"

Enid looked thoughtful. "I don't know," she said. "I don't know." "I don't know," she said. "I don't know."

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"I want to see her, certainly." "Don't see her. You would not speak to her again." "You would not speak to her again?" "You would not speak to her again?"

"I will," said Ethel. "But you will come, too." There was no denying Dolores. After her passionate outburst, she satisfied her but finding Ethel and ministering to her at once, and Cousin Ethel did not say her impulsive friend nay.

"I think she went to lie down," said Ethel. "Let us see," said Dolores. The crowd of inquirers came out of Enid's cubicle as they reached it. "She won't tell you anything," said Milly Pratt.

Cousin Ethel smiled, and passed into Enid's room with Dolores. The girls dispersed, with the exception of Milly. Milly was curious; and she had got so scrupulous in guarding the next cubicle, where it was quite easy to hear what was said in Enid's room unless the voices were purposely lowered, that the partitions between the rooms did not reach to the ceiling. But Milly was not destined to hear anything of great interest to her.

"Enid!" said Ethel softly. Enid Craven did not move. She lay with her face to the wall, her hair all loose, one arm thrown over her head.

"Enid!" "She stirred at last, and turned her rimmed eyes upon the two girls. "What have you come for?" she exclaimed angrily. "Miss Penfold has pardoned me, and you can let me alone."

Ethel coloured. "Did you think that either of us had come to reproach you, Enid?" she said. "Enid's look was resentful and uncommining."

"What have you come for, then?" she exclaimed. "Because we want to help you." "There's no doubt upon that point," said Enid bitterly.

"Yes, you do," said Ethel brightly. "You have a headache, dear, and you would like your forehead bathed, for one thing. Then you would like to see that Dolores has no illwill towards you."

Enid looked at them doubtfully for some moments, and burst into miserable tears. "I am the most wretched girl in the world!" she sobbed. "Don't cry," said Ethel softly. "It is all over now. Let me see your forehead."

Her head was indeed throbbing, and her forehead was hot and dry. Her tears were shed, leaving her eyelids aching and sore.

"The Squire Lacy," said Pat. "There's no doubt upon that point." "So I believe. But, whomsoever it was, the scoundrel must be trembling in his shoes, and awaiting with fear the hour of Black's recovery."

"Yes, rather! I shouldn't like to be in his place." "He's a desperate man, and he has more to lose by the truth being coming known," said Talbot quietly. "He has attempted Black's life once, and may do so again. The only way to be safe is to have denunciation by Black's never recovering consciousness. Do you understand? I think that he will make some attempt to prevent Black ever speaking again."

Pat Nugent shuddered. "The scoundrel! I believe you are right." "He will find it easy to obtain admission to the school. At the time he desires to enter, his brother will let him in, and Squire Lacy is at the orders of the squire."

"Then, when we saw him he was—" "He was coming here. Seeing you has done some good on him for a time. He may give up the idea for this night, or he may simply leave it till later." "He is desirous to keep on the watch?" "Yes, until dawn."

and look. Cousin Ethel's gentle touch was like balm to her. Dolores' usual looking on. There was a disquieting look upon her handsome face at first, and a pained expression, as if she never would could understand anything, and she would not understand. But this she could not understand.

But her expression softened as the mistress went on. She offered her big tears stood in her eyes. There was a sound in the next cubicle. Milly Pratt had gone on her mad disgust. There was nothing for her to listen to here.

A Letter for Ethel. LETTER for you, Ethel," said Milly Pratt. "It was a bright, fresh note, and Cousin Ethel had with Dolores before breakfast. Milly Pratt always knew there was a letter for anybody. She always knew when anybody came in a letter, and she was expected one. She was especially well informed about postcards, and knew what was written on them, as a rule, before their recipients did."

"Where is it?" "In the box," said Milly. "I would have brought it to you, but letters have to be opened in the presence of the Form-mistress. That's one of the rules."

Ethel was to take the note. Miss Ethel was in the room, and the maid-mistress were bringing in the breakfast. Miss Tyrrell responded very kindly to Ethel's good-morning. She was beginning like the new girl very much to include among the occupants of St. Freda's were.

The Form-mistress looked at all letters received by the girls, and they had to be opened in her presence, which was a precaution to prevent the destined correspondence of any sort. But that did not always prevent unknown communication with the outside world, even in St. Freda's and under the careful eye of Miss Penfold.

Ethel's eyes brightened as she took down the letter. It was in the small and elegant calligraphy of her cousin, Arthur Augustus D'Arcy, of the Fourth Form at St. Jim's. Dolores looked at her a little sadly. "That is a letter from a relation?" she asked.

"Yes; from my cousin." "Ah, you have a cousin?" "More than one," said Ethel, smiling. "This is from Arthur. He has just mentioned to you Arthur is a tremendous swell, but one of the kindest-hearted fellows in the world. I hope you will see him, Dolores, and I am sure you will like him."

(Further Adventures of Cousin Ethel and Dolores will be described in next week's number of the "Empire" Library.)

"I say, let us stop with you, Talbot. It's beastly lonely; and, besides, there may be danger. We could lead a hand, you know, when the pinch comes."

Talbot shook his head in the darkness. "No, my lad, I cannot allow you to remain. Now go and be tucked in in your bed. You know I don't like to refuse you, after what you have done; but I must be firm upon this point. It is very sorry to hear such an alarm the squire will not come at all to-night, and you would lose your sleep for nothing."

"We shouldn't mind that. Still, if you want us in a secret, secret, we'll be there to-night, Talbot! Come along, kids!"

"Outside, however, Pat exclaimed: "We're not going to let Talbot tackle that scoundrel alone. Why, he might be in danger of his very life, and if there's an alarm—" "We'll slip in and help Talbot!"

"Exactly!" "Good idea! I don't mind losing my beauty sleep for the good of the cause."

"Come on! We'll stay near the head of the stairs, and then we shall be able to hear any sound from where Talbot is."

A SHORT INSTALMENT FOR MY OLD READERS.

TORNALS OF SKITS

By CHARLES HAMILTON.

Talbot's Vigil. THE committee of investigation made their way silently to Talbot's room. Pat tapped lightly on the door; he could not venture to knock, as he had no sound from within, and Pat silently opened the door and looked into the room.

The blind was up and the window was wide open, for Talbot was a believer in fresh air. The pale starlight streamed into the room and fell upon the bed. Pat advanced into the room. "Talbot!"

Then he broke off suddenly. "What's the matter?" whispered Blagden uneasily. "He's not here!"

with a vague fear when he thought of it in connection with Talbot. Only in one window of the vast pile of St. Kit's was a light glimmering—only in the room where Seth Black lay in uneasy sleep, his senses not yet returned, perhaps never to return. In the chums, scarcely knowing in which direction to first turn their steps, found the door of the passage upon which the sick-room opened, hardly aware of it till they caught the glimmer of light under the door.

Pat stopped as he caught it. "No good," he whispered. "Talbot isn't likely to be here."

"Nugent!" It was Arthur Talbot's voice. The chums were utterly amazed and startled by the unexpected sound. "Talbot! Talbot! he is spending the night outside the door of Seth Black's room was more than they could comprehend.

"Talbot! You here?" "What are you doing, I say? Don't speak loudly, make a noise, or you may disturb the poor fellow yonder."

"I don't mind explaining," replied Pat. "I've been looking for you." "Looking for me?" said Talbot. "Yes, you weren't in your room, and the bed hadn't been slept in, and we thought at first that you had slooped—I mean, bunked—that is

to say, gone away. Then we thought that perhaps something had happened to you, especially as Squire Lacy is hanging round the school, and we saw him dodging in the Close."

Talbot gave a violent start. "You have seen Squire Lacy in the Close?" "Yes."

"I knew it—I know he would come!" Talbot muttered the words with an amazement. Pat heard them with astonishment. "What's the meaning of this very strange vigil, Talbot?" said Pat. "Greeno suggests that perhaps you were a man, you go off your rocker; but, upon the whole, I don't think that's the true explanation. But I'm blessed if I know why you should be spending a night leaning against a wall in a beastly draughty passage!"

"There will be no harm in telling you. I want you to keep secret that you have seen me here. But I will explain. I am keeping watch over the safety of Seth Black."

"But he's not in any danger." "He was coming here. Seeing you has done some good on him for a time. He may give up the idea for this night, or he may simply leave it till later." "He is desirous to keep on the watch?" "Yes, until dawn."

(To be continued)