PRIZES—CAMERAS, MODEL YACHTS, and PENKNIVES—OFFERED

IN A SIMPLE COMPETITION INSIDE!

No. 906. Vol. XXVII. Week Ending June 20th, 1925.

The Magnet Library

EVERY MONDAY.

Complete School Stories.

BILLY BUNTER, FOR ONCE, IS GENEROUS!

A PIECE OF CAKE FOR HUNGRY, RAGGED DICK!

(An episode from the dramatic long complete story of Greyfriars, in this issue.)

3 CAMERAS, 6 MODEL SAILING YACHTS & 12 TOPPING PENKNIVES MUST BE WON!

THIS is the second of our new and fascinating WEEKLY competitions, the simplicity of which is manifest at a glance. Everybody is invited to join in. NO ENTRANCE FEE is required.

Below is a set of eight pictures dealing with OBJECTS and PICTURES SEEN IN THE COUNTRY, and as the majority of you have been to the country at some time or another the competition should offer little difficulty. Even those who have not been fortunate enough to spend a holiday in the country know enough to solve the pictures below.

To show you how easy it is, the first picture is solved for you. That gives you a good start. Now, surely, you can find the answers to the remaining seven pictures.

To the three readers whose efforts are correct or nearest to correct I will award

3 MAGNIFICENT CAMERAS

made by the famous firm of Kodak, Ltd. To the six next best

6 TOPPING MODEL SAILING YACHTS

will be awarded. These models are guaranteed to sail. That's a point worth remembering. Last, but by no means least, on the list of prizes come

12 USEFUL POCKET KNIVES.

RULES

(Which must be strictly adhered to.)

Readers must write, IN INK, in the space provided beneath each picture the name of the object or feature they think the picture represents.

When you have solved the complete set of pictures, sign your name and address IN INK on the coupon adjoining the picture set. Then cut out the whole tablet—do not separate coupon from picture—and post the effort to **"What Is It?" Competition No. 2, Cough House, Cough Square, London, E.C. 4,** so as to reach that address not later than Tuesday, June 30th, 1925.

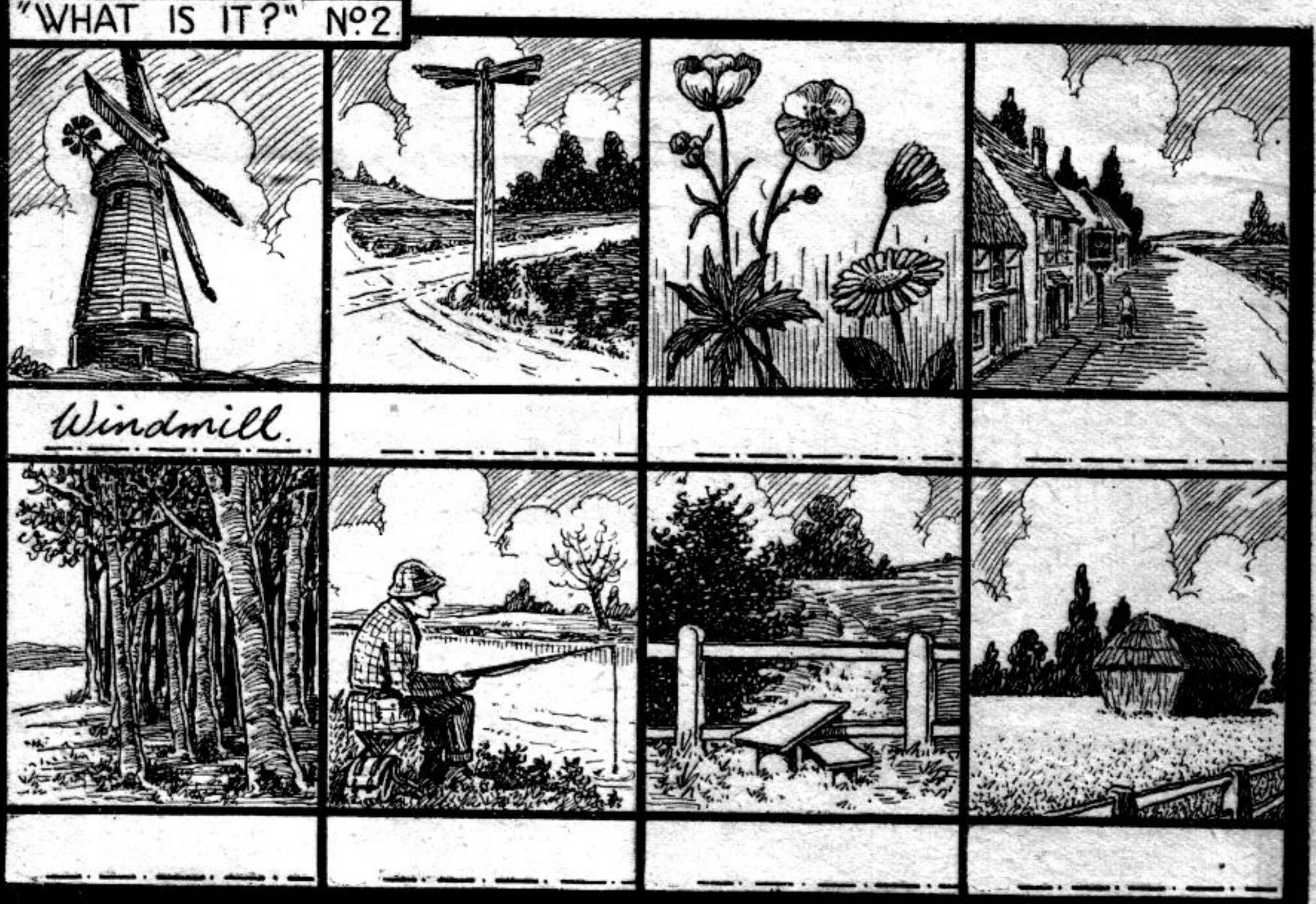
Readers may send in as many attempts as they like, but each effort must be separate and complete in itself and made out on the proper pictures and coupon.

Entries mutilated or bearing alterations or alternative solutions will be disqualified.

It is a distinct condition of entry that the Editor's decision be accepted as final and binding.

Employees of the proprietors of this journal are not eligible to compete.

"WHAT IS IT?" No. 2.



I enter "What is it?" Competition No. 2 and agree to accept the Editor's decision as final.

Name .....

Address .....

.....

CLOSING DATE, TUESDAY, JUNE 30th, 1925.

THE BOY WITHOUT A NAME! *Ragged Dick, a homeless waif, a tramp of the roads, meets Harry Wharton & Co. in strange circumstances, but the unknown lad little realises what amazing adventures are to come his way from that dramatic moment. He little realises the excitement, the thrills, and joys and sorrows that await him in the near future!*

A Magnificent Long Complete Story, dealing with the thrilling adventures of Harry Wharton & Co., the chums of Greyfriars.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Bunter, Too!

"WAITING for you!" said Billy Bunter.

"Eh?"

"Ready at last—what?" asked Bunter affably.

The Owl of the Remove detached his fat figure from the old stone gateway of Greyfriars School, as Harry Wharton & Co. came along.

He blinked at the Famous Five with a cheery grin, his very spectacles gleaming with propitiation.

Bunter seemed to be glad to see the chums of the Remove. But the gladness seemed to be all on his side.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! What are you waiting for?" inquired Bob Cherry.

"For you, old fellow," said Bunter affectionately. "You didn't think I'd desert an old pal on a half-holiday, did you?"

"No; only hoped so," answered Bob.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Roll away, fatty!" said Johnny Bull. "We're going for a jolly long tramp, and you'd crock up after the first mile."

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"The crockfulness would be terrific, my esteemed Bunter," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"I suppose I'm as good a walker as any fellow here," said Bunter, with a sniff. "It's all right. I'm coming."

"Don't be an ass, old man," said Harry Wharton. "We're going as far as Compton Woods, up the coast. That's a good six miles, and rough going most of the way."

"Why not have it in Friardale Wood?"

"Eh? Have what?"

"The picnic," said Bunter.

Bunter's eye was on a little bundle that Bob Cherry carried slung over his arm.

The Owl of the Remove, as usual, was after the loaves and fishes. Evidently it was not the fascinating society of the Famous Five that attracted him.

"What's the good of walking that distance?" argued Bunter. "Sheer waste of time. Now, if you have the picnic in Friardale Wood, you can have a nap under the trees afterwards, instead of a long walk home. See? Ever so much better."

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"But we're not going out for an afternoon nap," he explained. "We're going out for fresh air and exercise."

"What utter rot!"

"Every chap to his opinion!" assented Bob cheerfully. "Good-bye, Bunter! Go and take a nap."

"Pleasant dreams!" grinned Nugent.

And the chums of the Remove walked out of gates. They tramped away cheerily in the sunshine up Friardale Lane. There was a patter of feet on the road behind them.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here comes Bunter!"

Bunter came up, panting.

"I say, you fellows, don't walk so fast, you know! Give a chap a chance!"

"Good-bye!" said Wharton.

"The fact is, Harry, old man, I want to have a look at Compton Woods," said Bunter. "I've been going there for a long time, only—only——"

"Only you were too lazy to walk the distance!" suggested Johnny Bull.

"The fact is, it's a jolly good idea to get some fresh exercise—I mean, some fresh air and exercise—on a half-holiday," said Bunter. "This idea of a walk to Compton Woods is simply tiptop. I'm glad you fellows thought of it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's really ripping!" said Bunter. "I shall enjoy it no end! Can I carry the parcel for you, Bob?"

"And do the vanishing-trick round the first corner?" grinned Bob. "No, thanks!"

"Oh, really, Cherry! If you think I know there's a cake in that bundle, you're mistaken. I never looked into the study while you were packing it."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's just the walk I want," said Bunter, trotting on cheerily, "and the society of you fellows, you know. I've turned down a lot of chaps to come out with you this afternoon."

"Turn 'em up again!" suggested Johnny Bull.

"Lord Mauleverer wanted me to go out in the car with him," went on Bunter. "He fairly begged me to go, but——"

"Does Mauly beg with his foot?" asked Frank Nugent.

"Eh?"

"I saw him kick you when you were hanging round the car."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The fact is, Mauly's a bit of a bore," said Bunter. "I decided not to go, after——"

"After he kicked you?"

"No, you ass! After I found that you fellows were going for a walk. After all, you're one of my oldest pals at Greyfriars, Harry. You remember how I stood by you the first day you came?"

"I remember you borrowed half-a-crown the first day I came," answered the captain of the Remove.

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"And I remember you never squared."

"The fact is, I was going to square that half-crown this very afternoon, Wharton——"

"Shell out, then!"

"Only I've been disappointed about a postal-order——"

"The same postal-order you had been disappointed about the day I came?" inquired Wharton.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No!" roared Bunter. "Another postal-order. I say, Bob, don't you find that bundle a little heavy?"

"A little," agreed Bob, shifting the bundle to his other arm.

"Let me carry it, old chap."

"It would soon grow lighter if Bunter carried it!" chuckled Nugent.

"The lightfulness would soon be terrific."

"I think I'll stick to it," grinned Bob. "Good-bye, Bunter! We're coming to the hill now."

"Think I can't walk up a hill?" snorted Bunter.

"Better chuck it before you crock up. The farther you go the longer the walk home, you know."

"Rats!"

"Stick it if you like," said Harry Wharton, laughing. "Mind we're not stopping this side of Compton Woods, Bunter. If you get there alive, you're welcome to a whack in the tuck. But it's six miles."

"I could do sixteen."

"Oh, my hat! Stick it, then!"

And the Co. walked on cheerily, and Billy Bunter tramped after them laboriously, breathing in jerks. With the prospect of tuck before him, Bunter felt as though he could walk unnumbered miles. His fat little legs fairly twinkled to keep pace with the strides of the sturdy Removites. To Harry Wharton & Co. it was quite an interesting question whether Bunter would crock up after the first mile, or whether he would last out two. Two, they considered, was his limit.

But Bunter was in a resolute mood.

He was as impecunious as usual that afternoon, and as it was an hour since dinner he was more than ready for another meal. Nobody had been willing to cash a postal-order which he was expecting by the next post, and at the school shop Mrs. Mimble sternly declined to supply tuck on tick. The Famous Five were his only resources, therefore, if he was to get anything to eat before tea-time.

So, after two miles had been covered, Bunter was still fagging along the dusty road, with perspiration streaming down his fat face, and his podgy cheeks growing redder and redder, till they rivalled in hue a freshly-boiled beetroot.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Bunter's Luck!

"I SAY, you fellows——"

"Save your breath, old man!" advised Bob Cherry. "You'll need it for the other four miles."

"I—I say——"

Bunter gasped and halted. More than two miles had passed behind him; two hundred, it seemed to Bunter.

"Stop a minute, you chaps! Let a fellow get his breath!"

The chums of the Remove considerately stopped.

"We'll give you two minutes!" said Harry Wharton.

"I say, I've got a proposition to make," said Bunter, leaning on a tree, and dabbing his damp face with a handkerchief that needed washing. "Suppose we stop here for the picnic——"

"Bow-wow!"

"Let a fellow finish. Let's have this tuck for a snack on the way, you know, and I'll stand you a topping feed at Compton Hall."

"Eh?"

"That's the idea!" said Bunter, blinking at the chums of the Remove. "I've never happened to mention it before, but Sir Henry Compton is an—an old friend of my pater's, you know——"

"We don't know!" grinned Bob.

"Well, you know now I've told you!" snapped Bunter.

"Not at all. We don't know even now you've told us."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"They were schoolfellows together at—at Eton!" said Bunter. "I can tell you that Sir Henry will be delighted—overjoyed, in fact—if I come in with a few friends. He—he loves to have bright young faces round him."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Famous Five.

Compton Hall was a good distance from Greyfriars, but the juniors had heard of Sir Henry Compton—a great landowner, and reputed to be a rather crusty old gentleman. It was said that he had been soured by the death of his only son, who had been killed in the War, leaving a little boy in delicate health to carry on the ancient name.

Local gossip told of the grandfather's anxiety about the lad's health—not so much because of his affection for him, according to the gossips, but because he was on the worst of terms with a cousin who was the next heir to the title and estates. What truth there might be in that tattle of the countryside, the Greyfriars juniors neither knew nor cared, but they knew that Sir Henry was about the last man in Kent to welcome an unexpected crowd of schoolboys in his ancestral hall.

"I say, you fellows, there's nothing to cackle at!" howled Bunter. "I suppose you can take a fellow's word?"

"Pile it on!" said Bob Cherry. "Make the most of your two minutes, old fat man!"

"We'll have what you've got in that bundle for a snack now," urged Bunter, "and then I'll use my influence with Sir Henry to get you a jolly good feed at the Hall—what?"

"Time's up!" said Harry.

"I say, you fellows——"

"Trot's the word!"

"Oh dear!" gasped Bunter.

The juniors tramped on cheerily, and Billy Bunter tramped after them with lagging footsteps.

Apparently, the Famous Five were not prepared to hand the picnic over to Bunter on the prospect of a glorious spread at Compton Hall, that prospect being a little too nebulous to satisfy them.

In fact, Bunter's "yarn" was even thinner than his yarns usually were, and had evidently been invented on the spot. Had he enjoyed the entree at Compton Hall, his visit there would certainly have been paid at a much earlier date. His acquaintance with the wealthy baronet was limited to a distant view of Sir Henry riding about the country lanes.

Billy Bunter gasped and panted, and puffed and blew, as he tramped on.

By this time he repented him, from the bottom of his podgy heart, that he had joined in the excursion at all.

Every mile seemed at least a league now, and the distance to Compton Woods simply illimitable.

But Bunter kept on.

It was as far back to Greyfriars now as to the woods that looked over the sea near Compton Hall, so it was useless to turn back. Having come so far, Bunter was determined to be in at the death.

"Only a mile now!" said Bob Cherry encouragingly, as the juniors entered a deep, shady lane, along which ran park palings for a great distance.

"That's Compton Park," said Frank Nugent. "There's the gates, Bunter, if you'd like to drop in and see Sir Henry."

Bunter snorted.

"I say, you fellows, let's stop here, and——"

"And call on the giddy baronet?" asked Bob, with a chuckle.

"Nunno! On second thoughts, I'd rather stick to you chaps. I'm not keen on grandeur and all that; I have enough of that at home at Bunter Court," said the Owl of the Remove. "I'd rather camp down by the roadside here, and—and——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"My hat! This jolly old bundle is getting heavy," remarked Johnny Bull.

The bundle had changed hands during the walk, all the five taking charge of it in turn. Johnny Bull was the present bearer.

"Let Bunter take a turn with it," said Frank. "We can keep an eye on him."

"Good egg!" said Bob. "There's no turning here; these palings keep right on to the woods we're going to. Bunter can't dodge away with it!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Here you are, Bunter!"

"Yah!"

Bunter made no movement to take the bundle now.

Under the eyes of the Famous Five he could not venture to open it and devour the contents, and there was no escape for him if he scudded off with it. One side of the lane was bounded by the high park palings, the other by a thick hawthorn-hedge and ploughed fields. So Bunter's desire to carry the parcel had quite departed from him.

But the circumstances which made him unwilling to take his share of the burden made the Famous Five willing that he should take it.

"Here you are!" repeated Johnny Bull.

"Carry it yourself, and be blowed!" said Bunter sulkily.

"Right-ho! But he that will not work, neither shall he eat!" grinned Bob Cherry. "Put on speed, you chaps! Bunter's tired of our company!"

"I say, you fellows!" howled Bunter. "Hold on! I'll carry the bundle! I'm keen on it! I——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Buck up, then, fatty!"

William George Bunter sulkily took the bundle, and tramped on with it on his fat shoulder savagely.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" exclaimed Bob Cherry suddenly. "What's the game? Look at that!"

The Famous Five halted. Bunter, only too glad to halt, leaned on the park palings, breathing hard, and dripping with perspiration. He did not even blink at the scene that had attracted the attention of the Famous Five. Through the clear, sunny air there had come a sharp, loud cry—a cry of pain; and by a gap in the hawthorn hedge Bob Cherry had seen what made him cut quickly across the lane, and dash through the hedge, his chums following him fast.

Something evidently was going on in the field; but what it was was of no interest to the Owl of the Remove.

He blinked after the five juniors, and he was amazed and could scarcely believe in his good luck when he saw them vanish one after another through the gap in the hedge—forgetful of him, forgetful even of the bundle he carried.

Bunter's eyes gleamed.

He was tired—but he was not too tired for one more effort, if he had time. The chance was too good to be lost.

Like Moses of old, he looked this way and that way—but he realised that flight was vain; he was not the man to win a foot-race, even with a good start.

Then he blinked at the park palings.

Here and there the ancient wood was cracked and broken, offering handhold and foothold to an active climber.

Billy Bunter was by no means an active climber; but he was spurred on by the dazzling prospect of enjoying that picnic all to himself, and leaving in the lurch the beasts who had made him walk five miles from Greyfriars.

His fat mind was made up at once.

With a swing of his arm, he hurled the bundle over the wall, and heard

it drop among the ferns and bracken on the other side. Then he clambered desperately up.

Never had the Owl of the Remove exerted himself so swiftly and energetically. At every second he expected to hear the voices and the footsteps of the Removites on the road behind him.

He clambered with desperate speed, and reached the top of the palings, and rolled over, hanging by his fat hands on the inner side. Then he dropped, and landed with a grunt in a bed of ferns.

He sat there only a few moments to gasp for breath. Then he picked himself up, clutched up the precious bundle, and disappeared among the trees of Sir Henry Compton's park.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

Rough on a Ruffian!

"OH! Don't—don't!"

"You rotter!" shouted Bob Cherry.

He burst through the gap in the hedge.

On the inner side, on the strip of grass between the hawthorns and the ploughed field, there was a camp. Three sticks had been set up over a smouldering fire of hedgerow wood, and an iron pot swung there. By the hedge lay a sack and a bag, and some ragged articles of attire, which had apparently been washed in a pond and spread out to dry in the sun. A pedlar's pack lay near at hand, and there were two or three dirty utensils for eating and drinking. It looked like the camping-place of some tramp in hard luck.

There were two occupants of that camp—a man and a boy. The man, a thick-set, stubbly-faced fellow, whose *face was hardened and coarsened by* strong drink, held the boy in a savage grasp by the back of his collar, and with his free hand was laying on lashes with a thick strap. The blows rang almost like pistol-shots.

That was the sight that Bob Cherry had seen from the lane, and that had caused him to rush through the gap into the field.

The struggling boy looked as ragged and unkempt as the man who was beating him—anyone observing them would have supposed that the two were a travelling pedlar and his son, from their looks. But from the savage way in which the pedlar was beating his victim, it could hardly have been supposed that he was the boy's father.

"Don't—don't! Oh, stop—stop!"

The boy seemed a sturdy enough fellow, but he was helpless in the muscular grasp of the tramp. He struggled in vain as the blows fell hard and heavy on his ragged back.

Bob Cherry did not stop to ask questions. The sight of the hapless lad struggling in the grasp of a ruffian, who was plainly the worse for drink, was enough for Bob.

He came scrambling through the hedge into the field, and pitched himself fairly at the ruffian.

Bob's grasp fastened on the lashing arm as it was falling again, and he wrenched at the man and fairly dragged him away from his victim.

The boy staggered and fell in the grass.

"Why—what—— 'Oo the dickens—— 'Ands off!" yelled the pedlar furiously, turning on Bob Cherry like a tiger.

"You cowardly rotter!" shouted Bob, his honest face blazing with anger. "How dare you pitch into a kid like that!"

The sight of the hapless lad struggling in the grasp of the ruffian was enough for Bob Cherry. He did not ask any questions, but scrambled through the hedge, *and pitched himself fairly at the tramp. Bob's grasp fastened on the lashing arm,* as it was falling again, and he wrenched at the man, and fairly dragged him away from his victim. (*See Chapter* 3.)

"Pitch into him!" gasped the ruffian. "I'll pitch into you first, and 'im arter! I'll——"

He dropped the strap, and gasped Bob Cherry in both savage hands.

Sturdy and strong as Bob was, it would have fared badly with him had not his comrades been close at hand.

But the Co. were already there. As Bob reeled in the strong grasp of the pedlar, they rushed into the fray, and grasped the ruffian on all sides.

Bump!

The man came down on his back, his sprawling legs kicking away the smouldering camp-fire, and oversetting the iron pot that swung from the upright sticks.

"Oh!" he roared. "Ow!"

"Sit on him!" gasped Bob.

Johnny Bull dropped heavily on the pedlar's chest. Bob Cherry secured his wrists and held on to them. And as the ruffian kicked and struggled, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh trod heavily on his legs.

The man gasped and spluttered, and a torrent of savage abuse poured from his mouth.

"Chuck that!" said Bob Cherry. "Shove a turf into his mouth if he doesn't chuck it!"

And as the ruffian continued to splutter out curses, Frank Nugent jerked a muddy turf from the ground and jammed it fairly into his mouth, after which the ruffian spluttered and gasped incoherently.

"That's better!" said Harry Wharton.

"The betterfulness is terrific!"

"Groogh! Hooch! Oooooogh!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Stop, you young shaver!" shouted Bob Cherry.

The boy who had been rescued had picked himself up, and was darting away through the hedge.

"Stop!" called out Harry Wharton.

The boy did not heed.

Whether he supposed that hostility was intended towards him as well as towards his persecutor, or whether he was simply making the most of his opportunity to escape, the juniors could not know or guess. He vanished through the hedge with an active spring, and they heard the patter of his feet on the road as he fled.

"Young ass!" said Nugent.

"He's gone!"

"Well, I dare say he knows his own business best," said Harry Wharton. "If he wants to get away from this brute, we'll see that he has a good start."

"Yes, rather!"

The pedlar spluttered the mud from his mouth.

"You let a man go, young gents!" he panted. Finding himself helpless in the hands of five fellows, the ruffian had changed his tone very considerably. "Don't you let that boy get away!"

"Why not?" demanded Bob.

"He'll come to some 'arm," said the pedlar. "He's a bad lot, he is, and I was thrashing 'im for his good, I was."

"Well, if he's a worse lot than you are he must be a real corker!" said Bob Cherry. "You're more than half-drunk, you rotter, and I fancy that's why you were pitching into him."

"P'r'aps I've 'ad a drop," said the pedlar. "It's 'ot and dry work tramping the roads, an' I've 'ad 'ard luck. And that there Dick wouldn't fetch my dinner for me, so 'elp me!"

Wharton looked at him sharply.

"Where was he to fetch your dinner from?" he asked. "There isn't a shop within three or four miles of this."

The man scowled at him sulkily without answering. Wharton's brow darkened.

"You rotter! Do you mean that you wanted him to beg for you, or to steal something from the farm over yonder? You look like it!"

"You mind your own business!" snarled the pedlar. "It ain't any affair of yourn! Let me go!"

Johnny Bull settled himself more comfortably on the ruffian's broad chest.

"You're not going just yet," he said coolly. "If that kid wants to get clear of you, he's going to have a chance!"

"What-ho!" said Bob Cherry emphatically.

The juniors had had only a glimpse of the boy whom the ruffian spoke of as "Dick"; they had noticed only a dirty, dusty face and a suit of rags. What he might be like they did not know, but they could see what his persecutor was like. He was a dirty, brutal, hard-drinking ruffian, and it was pretty clear that his pedlar's pack was more or less of a pretence—an excuse for loafing about the roads and lanes, looking for chances of petty larceny. Whatsoever claim the man might have on the boy, it was pretty clear that the boy was better off without the companionship of such a character. It was clear, too, that Dick thought so himself, for he had disappeared promptly, and his footsteps had already died out of hearing.

"Who are you?" asked the captain of the Remove, eyeing the man as he wriggled in the grasp of the Greyfriars fellows.

"I'm Pedlar Parker," grunted the ruffian, "and that there boy belongs to me, he does!"

"Do you mean that you're his father?"

Pedlar Parker did not answer that question.

"Ten to one he isn't," said Bob. "The poor kid's a tramp, I should say. I wish he'd stayed and let us speak to him. Whatever he is, he's better off away from this brute."

"Yes, rather!"

"Will you let a bloke go?" muttered Parker, in tones of concentrated ferocity. "You'll only make it worse for Ragged Dick. I'll give him all the more to make up for this when I find him!"

"Ragged Dick!" repeated Wharton. "What is his name?"

"Name! That whelp hasn't got any name!" said Parker, with a savage jeer. "I picked him up under a hedge, and he's tramped with me for a few months, that's all. Saved him from starving, I did!"

"Yes; you look like a Good Samaritan—I don't think!" said Bob Cherry, in disgust. "Well, if you picked him up under a hedge, as you say, he has a right to clear off if he chooses."

"I'll make him suffer for it!"

"You won't have a chance," said Harry Wharton. "We'll jolly well see that you don't, you rotter!"

The man made a sudden savage effort, and almost threw off the juniors who were holding him. He rose to his knees, but the next moment he went down again with a crash.

"No, you don't!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"You young 'ound——"

"Give me that strap," said Bob. "I'll fix him."

"Here you are."

With the strap that had been used to beat the hapless Dick the pedlar's wrists were strapped together behind his back and the buckle secured. Then the juniors rose and left him sprawling in the grass.

"That'll keep you safe for a bit," said Bob Cherry, with a chuckle. "Now, if you swear any more you'll get some more mud in your mouth, so you'd better chuck it, see?"

Pedlar Parker scowled at him, and wrenched savagely at the strap. But it was a good strap, and it held him fast.

"We'll keep an eye on this johnnie for a bit," said Bob. "What about having the picnic here instead of going on to the woods? It would be only decent to give that kid a chance to get right away from that brute."

"Good!" said Harry. "Call Bunter. He's got the stuff."

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Bunter!" roared Bob Cherry.

Bob's powerful voice rang far across the lane. Echo answered from a dozen directions, but answer of any other kind there came none.

"Bunter! Bunty! Bunter!" roared Bob.

"Is the silly ass deaf as well as silly?" growled Johnny Bull. "Better go and fetch him. I shouldn't wonder if he's started on the tuck."

Bob Cherry jumped back through the hedge into the road.

There he stared round for Bunter.

But there was no sign of the Owl of the Remove. Billy Bunter had long vanished.

"Bunter!" bawled Bob Cherry.

"Can't you see him, Bob?"

"He's gone!"

"Gone! My hat!"

The juniors rushed into the road.

Bunter was gone, and the bundle was gone! There was no picnic, after all—or, rather, there was a picnic in some secluded and unknown spot, and William George Bunter was enjoying it all on his lonesome own. Harry Wharton & Co. stared up and down the solitary lane, with feelings almost too deep for words.

"The—the—the awful villain!" gasped Bob at last. "He's bolted with the tuck!"

"My hat! I—I——" stuttered Wharton.

"After him!"

"Which way?" asked Nugent.

"Goodness knows!"

"Nothing doing," said Harry Wharton, after a pause. "I dare say he hasn't got far, but he will be pretty well hidden out of sight. We'll burst him for this!"

"The burstfulness will be terrific!" said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "But the grubfulness is off!"

"Oh dear!"

"I'm jolly hungry!" said Bob.

"Same here!"

"Oh, the villain!"

"The toad!"

"The sweep!"

"The—the horrid burglar!"

In dismal mood, the Famous Five went back into the field. After their walk they were ready for the picnic, but it was clear that there would be no tea till they got back to Greyfriars. Billy Bunter had been one too many for them.

Pedlar Parker scowled at them as they returned.

"Are you going to let me loose, blight you?" he said, between his discoloured teeth.

"Oh, you shut up!" growled Bob Cherry. "It's all your fault that we've lost our tuck, you rotter! Shut up, or you'll get my boot!"

And the tramp snarled and shut up.

The juniors sat down to rest and to discuss what was to be done. There was no picnic, and it was useless to keep on as far as Compton Woods; they would be famished by the time they arrived there, and there would be six miles to walk back to tea. They decided to rest a while—meantime keeping Pedlar Parker a prisoner—and then walk home; and they agreed that when they saw Bunter again they would make him feel that his fat life was not worth living.

Nugent, fortunately, had a packet of toffee in his pocket, and Bob had a bag of chocolates, and these extremely light refreshments were handed round as they sat by the hedge and disposed of, to an accompaniment of savage mutterings from Pedlar Parker. It was not till an hour had elapsed that the pedlar was released from his own strap, and the juniors turned their backs on him and started to Greyfriars.

By that time they had no doubt that Ragged Dick had placed a sufficient distance between himself and his enemy; and Pedlar seemed to be of the same opinion, for instead of taking up a hopeless pursuit, he proceeded to rebuild his fire, and set up his pot again, muttering curses the while.

Harry Wharton & Co. walked on towards Greyfriars, giving little more thought to the ruffian or to the lad whom they had rescued from his brutality—at the cost of losing their picnic. They never expected to see either of them again, and little dreamed, just then, how and in what strange circumstances they were to meet once more the tattered lad who bore the odd name of "Ragged Dick."

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Bunter's Generosity!

"JUST the place!"

Billy Bunter blinked round cautiously.

Once within the walls of Compton Park, Bunter had remembered that old Sir Henry was "down" on trespassers, poachers, vagrants, and, indeed, all doubtful characters who should presume to come between the wind and his nobility. Any baronet ought to have been pleased to meet a public-school chap—a Greyfriars man, especially such a fascinating fellow as Bunter—taking a stroll in his park. But from what Bunter had heard of Sir Henry Compton he did not expect that savage old gentleman to be pleased by such a meeting, if it occurred. And a keeper was only too likely to take Bunter by the scruff of his neck and run him out of the park—perhaps with a boot to help him out.

For which reasons Bunter realised it behoved him to be cautious. The park had offered a safe refuge from five "beasts" who would be certain to recapture that picnic if they could. But Bunter had no desire to fall out of the frying-pan into the fire. So his very spectacles gleamed with watchfulness as he stole through the park, dodging among the ancient trees which belonged to Sir Henry Compton, and which Sir Henry liked to keep wholly and solely to himself.

Now Bunter was at a good distance from the road, and considered that he was safe from pursuit, even if the Famous Five guessed that he was in the park, and followed.

He halted by a little summer-house which stood among the trees. It had been a summer-house long ago, but was fallen into decay, overgrown with creepers, and almost crushed by drooping branches of oaks and elms. It was a secluded spot, and there was a rustic bench inside, and Bunter very much wanted to sit down.

So he pushed his way in through the tangle of creepers, and sat on the old bench with a gasp of relief.

The place looked as if it was never visited, so wildly was it overgrown. But Bunter noticed several cigarette-ends in the grass, which looked as if someone sat there sometimes and smoked. However, there was no sign of anyone in the vicinity now, and Bunter felt safe.

Rapidly he unfastened the bundle.

His fat face glowed with satisfaction.

There were hard-boiled eggs and bread-and-butter and ham sandwiches and a bottle of lemonade and a cake—quite a large and fruity cake, and several other items.

That little feed had been intended for five, and there would have been enough for Harry Wharton & Co. And so there was very nearly enough for Bunter on his own.

Bunter, taken as a whole, was not an active fellow. But there was one part of Bunter accustomed to activity, inured to it by incessant exercise. That was his jaw. Eating was his favourite pastime, but talking came a good second. In one way or another Bunter's jaws were generally busy. Now they plunged into activity at an amazing rate. Probably, had Harry Wharton & Co. started all together on that spread the good things would not have disappeared as fast as they did now.

Item after item vanished, till only the cake remained. By that time even Bunter was slackening a little.

But he started cheerfully on the cake. With so large a cargo already disposed of, it was slow work; but he did not mean to leave a crumb of it.

"This is good!" murmured Bunter.

Undoubtedly it was good. After the feast, doubtless there was the reckoning to come—when he had to face five enraged fellows at Greyfriars. But that was still in the future, and Bunter was not a fellow to meet troubles half-way. He dismissed Harry Wharton & Co. from his mind, and gave all his happy attention to the cake.

A footfall interrupted him.

He started, almost choking over the cake. He gave a startled blink at the over-grown entrance of the little shelter.

A strange figure appeared there.

It was that of a lad of about Bunter's own age, but of a very different build, and in very different attire. The face was dirty and dusty, to such an extent that it was a little difficult to see what the youth really looked like. But a close inspection would have shown that the features were good, the mouth well shaped, the eyes bright and clear and steadfast. The boy's clothing was simply rags and tatters—an old pair of trousers gaping with rents, a man's coat cut down and patched, a rag of a cap on the back of his untidy hair, a pair of worn-out boots, too large for his feet, through holes in which his grubby toes peeped.

Billy Bunter's startled glance changed to a stare of contempt.

He had dreaded to see a gaitered keeper, or the tall, formidable figure of Sir Henry Compton. This scarecrow had no terrors for him.

He resumed munching his cake while he stared with blighting disdain at the "scarecrow."

The ragged youth had been about to enter the summer-house, but he stopped half-way in at the sight of Bunter.

His glance went to the cake that Bunter was devouring, with an expression which showed that he was hungry.

Bunter gave a sniff.

"Who the thump are you?" he demanded.

The boy stared at him without answering. He seemed alarmed at having come on anyone in that secluded and solitary spot.

"Can't you speak?" sneered Bunter.

The boy nodded.

"Well, speak, then, you scarecrow! Who are you?"

"Ragged Dick."

"Great pip! Is that your name?" ejaculated Bunter.

The young vagrant nodded again.

"What a name!" said Bunter. "Well, Ragged Dick—he, he, he!—take yourself off! You don't look quite clean enough for a fellow to want your company. Don't you know you're trespassing here?"

This was rather cool of Bunter, as he was a trespasser himself. But he could see that the ragged youth did not know that.

"I—I suppose so," muttered Ragged Dick. "I—I dodged into the park to get away from somebody, sir."

Bunter raised a fat forefinger.

"You can have your cake back, sir!" said Ragged Dick. "Likely to—after your dirty fingers have touched it," said Bunter disdainfully. Whiz! "Yarooop!" roared Bunter. The chunk of cake came whizzing at Bunter, and it landed fairly on his fat little nose. "Take it!" said Ragged Dick. "And keep a civil tongue in your head." (*See Chapter* 4.)

"A bobby, I suppose?" he said. "You've been stealing!"

Ragged Dick flushed crimson.

"I haven't! I—I've been beaten because I wouldn't steal chickens. That's why I've cleared off."

"Gammon!" said Bunter.

Ragged Dick backed away; but the cake seemed to draw him, and he stepped in again.

"Hungry?" asked Bunter. The Owl of the Remove was not much given to considering others; but even Bunter could feel for a fellow who was hungry. It was such an awful thing, as he knew by experience of occasions when he had had nothing between dinner and tea.

Dick nodded.

"You keep your distance," said Bunter warningly. "You look quite capable of stealing this cake."

This again was rather cool of Bunter, considering how the cake had come into his possession.

"I wouldn't steal a crumb," said Dick. "But I'm hungry. I haven't eaten since yesterday morning."

"My hat!"

Bunter was really touched.

He broke off a chunk of cake and held it out to the ragged youth.

"There you are!" he said.

Ragged Dick hesitated to take it, hungry as he was. But his grimy fingers finally closed on it.

"Take it!" snapped Bunter. "I don't mind giving you charity if you're only a beggar and not a pickpocket."

Bunter meant this delicate speech to be kind. His kindness seemed rather unappreciated by its recipient, however. Ragged Dick's eyes gleamed at him.

"I'm not a beggar!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, rats!" sneered Bunter. "What else are you, I'd like to know? Trespassing here and nosing after a fellow's grub."

"I'm hungry," said Ragged Dick. "But I wouldn't take anything as a beggar. I'd almost as soon steal. You can take your cake back, sir."

"Likely to, after your dirty fingers have touched it," said Bunter disdainfully. "Take it and clear off, you cheeky young cad!"

Whiz!

"Yaroooh!" roared Bunter.

The chunk of cake came whizzing at Bunter, and it landed fairly on his fat little nose.

"There's your cake!" said Ragged Dick. "Take it, and keep a civil tongue in your head!"

"Yow-ow!" gasped Bunter.

He rubbed his fat little nose furiously and jumped up. Bunter was not exactly a fighting-man, but his nose was not to be asaulted by a ragged fellow who looked as if he had picked himself up from a scrap-heap. The Owl of the Remove clenched his fat fists and advanced on the vagrant.

"You cheeky rotter——"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Ragged Dick.

"I'll jolly well——"

The vagrant backed away.

"Better keep off," he said. "I don't want to hurt you. But——"

But a retreat was all that Bunter needed to encourage him to the point of heroism. He rushed at the ragged youth, hitting out.

Crash!

Bunter's blow was knocked up, and a hard fist was planted on his chest, knocking him back into the summer-house. He sat down there, with a heavy bump.

"Ow!" gasped Bunter.

Ragged Dick grinned at him.

"I told you it would be better to keep off!" he said.

"Ow! Wow!"

"Keep a civil tongue in your head when you're talking to a bloke down on his luck!" said Dick.

"I—I—I'll have you run in!" gasped Bunter. "You're a trespasser, and a pickpocket, and a ruffian—— Ow! Beast! You come back, and I'll jolly well give you a licking."

But Ragged Dick was gone.

Billy Bunter picked himself up, gasping for breath. He sat down on the old bench again, and it was some little time before he resumed munching the cake. His fat face glowed with indignation. He, William George Bunter, a Greyfriars fellow, had actually been punched—actually knocked down—by a ragged scarecrow—a tramp thick with the dirt and dust of the country lanes. Really, it was almost time for the skies to fall!

But the Owl of the Remove recovered his equanimity at last, and gave his attention to the cake once more.

It disappeared at last.

The last crumb and the last plum vanished, and Bunter leaned back in his seat, to rest after his exertions. His eyes closed behind his glasses, and he began to snore.

He dreamed pleasantly of unlimited feeds at the school shop. But from his pleasant dreams he had a rude awakening.

He came out of the land of dreams with a sudden shake, and started up, with a vague impression that the ragged youth had returned.

"Leggo, you beast!" he howled. "I'll jolly well lick you—I'll have you run in, you scoundrel——"

"What—what?"

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bunter.

A tall gentleman in shooting clothes stood before him, with a cigarette in his mouth. The dark, angry, wrinkled face stared down at Bunter; a sinewy hand was shaking him by a fat shoulder. With a quake of terror, Bunter realised that this was Sir Henry Compton, and that the crusty old gentleman had caught him trespassing.

"What? What? What are you doing here?" snorted the old gentleman, shaking Bunter.

"I—I—I'm not here——"

"What?"

"I—I mean—— Leggo—— Ow!"

"You are a trespasser, sir!" thundered Sir Henry.

"I—I—I——"

Shake! Shake!

"Leave my grounds at once! If you are not outside my park gates in five minutes I will give you in charge, by gad!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "I—I—I'm going."

"Go!"

The Owl of the Remove fairly jumped out of the summer-house. He ran into the arms of a man in gaiters, who caught him by the collar.

"Jenks!"

"Yes, Sir Henry."

"See that trespassing young rascal off the estate! Then go up to the house and wait for a telegram. If it comes, bring it to me at once."

"Yes, Sir Henry."

The baronet sat down on the bench vacated by Bunter, and lighted a fresh cigarette. William George Bunter, with Jenks' heavy hand on his collar, was marched away. Jenks opened a gate in the park wall, and, without a word, but with a hefty drive of his boot, helped Bunter into the road.

Bunter sat down there and roared.

The gate closed on him.

"Ow!" gasped the hapless Owl of the Remove.

He picked himself up dismally, and started on a five-mile tramp back to Greyfriars. Long before a mile had elapsed under his lagging feet, William George Bunter felt that his happy picnic in Compton Park had been hardly-earned.

— — —

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

A Strange Meeting!

RAGGED DICK stirred in a bed of bracken, and shook himself and rose

The sun was down. In the east, silvery moonlight stole over the sky. Night dews were falling in Compton Park; the youthful vagrant shivered as he picked himself up.

Round him were great trees and deep shadows. In the gloom of the thickly-wooded park many fellows might have been perplexed to find their way. But Ragged Dick was at no loss. For as long as he could remember he had had no home; the fields and woods and lanes had been his home, in the summer days; streets and railway-arches in the winter-time. He moved away through the gloomy wood unerringly.

He was heading for the solitary summer-house where he had encountered Bunter. By that time, he was assured, the fellow would have gone, and it was unlikely that the lonely little shelter would have another visitor after dark. Slight shelter as it was, it was better than the open park, with the dew falling, and Ragged Dick intended to pass the night there, stretched on the bench. He had no better refuge; and he was reluctant to venture upon the open roads again, for fear of falling in with Pedlar Parker. He was hungry, but often and often the outcast had been hungry before—it was no new hardship for him.

With silent footsteps, almost like some slinking animal of the night, Ragged Dick drew nearer to the little shelter under the oaks and beeches. As he drew close to it, a faint scent came to his keen nostrils. The scent of tobacco. He halted.

Dark as it was, someone was in the summer-house, smoking. As he peered through the tangled creepers, he could see a tiny red glow—the tip of a cigarette. The waif stood, hesitating.

It was not Bunter who was here—he was sure of that. He had seen that Bunter was a schoolboy, and a schoolboy was not likely to linger in the lonely old park after nightfall. But someone was there, and it was no refuge for the outcast after all.

But he was tired—tired and hungry, and in a mood of deep gloom. Used as he was to wandering at all hours of day and night, he was weary of wandering now. He did not move back—he leaned on the thick trunk of an oak, only a few yards from the man, unseen, sitting on the bench in the summer-house—unseen, save for the glowing tip of the cigarette.

He hardly cared if the man found him there—if the man were a keeper or the master of the estate He was too gloomy and reckless to care. But the man did not move. The scent of tobacco came through the leaves and twigs as the cigarette was smoked away, and the red tip died to a mere spark, and then into blackness.

He heard the unseen man stir then, and quivered back a little farther into the thick greenery round him. If the man was leaving, his refuge would be open to him; he did not want to be seen. But the man did not step out.

Ragged Dick heard a sound from him — a deep, prolonged sigh, that

seemed to come from a troubled, laboured heart.

He started slightly at the sound. He wondered who it was, hidden in the darkness of the interior, whose heart was so heavy.

A match flared.

Through the interstices of the thick creepers Dick could see into the summer-house, now that there was a light.

The man was lighting a fresh cigarette.

Dick saw him in the light of the match—a tall, somewhat gaunt man, of advanced age, with a grim, imperious face and heavy brows—a man handsome, in despite of his many years, well dressed in shooting clothes—a man who looked wealthy and masterful. The face was brown and wrinkled. The hand that held the cigarette was well kept, but gnarled with age; it trembled slightly.

The match went out.

Again there was a red glow of the cigarette-end, the only spot of light in the dense gloom.

Dick stood silent against the oak.

This was no keeper. Evidently it was the master of the great estate upon which the waif had trespassed. A man who had been in great authority all his long life, from his looks, and had never brooked dispute or contradiction—a man whose own iron will was his law—a man who was little likely to show mercy or ruth to a homeless waif trespassing in his park—little likely to sympathise with, or even to understand, the feelings of men less fortunately placed in the world. And yet this man, evidently wealthy, lord of a great domain, was heavy of heart. Life was bitter to him, too, as that heavy sigh had shown. In his different sphere, probably his troubles were as great as those of the homeless waif—perhaps greater.

The waif remained where he was, silent; while, in the summer-house, the master of Compton Hall smoked one cigarette after another—a reckless self-indulgence which probably accounted for the trembling of his hands, for in other respects his years did not seem to have told on him.

Suddenly there was a footstep and a brushing of twigs. Someone was coming to the summer-house.

Dick shrunk a little deeper into the dark greenery.

A voice, deep and resonant, was heard.

"Is that you, Jenks?"

"Yes, Sir Henry."

"Is there a telegram?"

"I have brought it, Sir Henry."

A shadow passed into the summer-house.

"Give me a light."

An electric torch gleamed out in the gloom of the little interior. Through the screen of twigs and leaves Dick saw the brown old hand take the telegram. A half-smoked cigarette was flung on the ground.

But the old baronet was in no hurry to open the envelope.

"Leave the torch here, Jenks. You may go."

"Yes, Sir Henry."

The keeper went the way he had come.

There was deep silence as his footsteps died away in the distance.

The little beam of electric light glowed in the gloom. It was several minutes before Ragged Dick heard the sound of an envelope torn open. Then the old man's voice came to his ears.

"Dead!"

The waif's heart throbbed.

A retreat was all that Bunter needed to encourage him to the point of heroism. He rushed at the ragged youth, hitting out. Crash! Bunter's blow was knocked up, and a hard fist was planted on his chest, knocking him back into the summer-house. He sat down there with a heavy bump! (*See Chapter* 4.)

The beam of the electric torch, lying on the seat, fell partly on the bowed figure of Sir Henry Compton.

The telegram fluttered to the ground.

"Dead!"

Then, after a long pause:

"Poor boy!"

Ragged Dick — ragged, homeless, hungry—felt a throb of compassion for the wealthy baronet, the master of Compton Hall. It was some terrible news that had been brought by the telegram.

The waif moved silently away.

He was no longer thinking of the summer-house as a shelter for the night. Waif and tramp and vagrant as he was, Ragged Dick had a delicacy of feeling that would not allow him to intrude on a stricken man's grief.

But as he moved away in the darkness there came a strange sound behind him—a strange, gurgling, choking sound. He halted.

There was a fall.

In an instant Dick was springing back. The old man had fallen to the ground, and choking sounds came from his throat. The blow he had received had been too much for him.

Dick was kneeling beside him in a moment, the electric torch in his hand. He was startled and scared, but his only thought was to help the man in the grip of a sudden seizure.

The old baronet was writhing on the ground, his hands clutching and grappling as if at an unseen enemy; his face crimson and suffocated. His eyes were still intelligent, however, and they gleamed at the boy bending over him. He could not speak, but he made a struggling gesture towards his throat, and Dick understood. He tore at the old man's collar, and freed his throat, and then lifted his head and rested it on his ragged knee.

It was all that he could do. There was no help at hand. A terrible fear was in his heart that the old man might die there as he lay—that he was only easing the last moments of an old man in the grip of the King of Terrors.

But the struggling breath of the baronet grew more even and calm. Minutes that seemed like hours crawled by, and then the old man spoke in faint, gasping tones.

"There is a flask in my coat. Get it."

"Yes, sir!" breathed Dick.

He groped in the pockets and found the flask.

"Open it."

Dick unscrewed the stopper.

"Give it me."

Sir Henry Compton sipped from the flask; and then, at a gesture from the old man, Dick drew it away.

He waited, still supporting the heavy head on his knee. The baronet was recovering now.

"Help me to the bench," he said at last.

Dick helped him up silently. The master of Compton Hall was a heavy weight, but the waif was strong and sturdy. Sir Henry was seated on the bench at last.

He sat there, leaning back, breathing hard and deep.

Dick hesitated.

"Shall I go for help, sir?"

"No."

"But you need——"

"I know best what I need."

Dick was silent. The old man was recovering; his masterful will was as strong as ever. Sir Henry Compton was almost himself again now.

"Do you want me any more, sir?" asked Dick at last, timidly.

"No."

Dick backed out of the summer-house. But the deep voice of the old baronet followed him.

"Stop!"

Dick turned back.

"Who are you?" asked Sir Henry Compton, peering at him in the gloom from under his grey, wrinkled brows. "You have helped me when I needed it. But who are you, and how did you come here?"

"I am a tramp."

"You are young for tramping the roads," said Sir Henry. "Have you no home?"

"No."

"Your name?"

"Dick."

"What else?" snapped the old man impatiently.

"Nothing else," said the waif quietly. "I've been called Ragged Dick. That's all."

"Have you no parents?"

"No."

"Or relations?"

"No."

"How do you live?"

"Tramping, picking up jobs—all sorts of things."

"Begging and stealing among them, I have no doubt."

"No," said Dick quietly.

He waited; but, as the only man did not speak again, he made a move to go. But the deep voice called him back.

"Stay, I tell you."

Ragged Dick stayed.

"You have given me aid when I needed it," said Sir Harry. "You look as if you need aid yourself. I shall see that you are cared for before you leave my land."

"I am not a beggar, sir," said Dick quietly. "If you could give me any work to do on your land I should be grateful. But I have never taken anything in charity, and I never will. You had better let me go, sir."

"The times are changed," said the old man sardonically. "Even the vagrants of the roads are insolent to their betters."

"I did not mean to be insolent, sir," said Dick, colouring. "But I have never been a beggar."

"And you are homeless, ragged, tattered, doubtless hungry!" The old man seemed to be speaking to himself. "Yet you live—and my grandson, with all that wealth could provide for him, has died. He is dead—and this starving vagrant lives!" He broke into a bitter laugh. "Dead—and the Compton lands must pass to an idle, dissolute waster, a shame and disgrace to his name—and this homeless wretch lives to haunt the roads and starve and steal!"

There was a long silence after the muttered words, and Ragged Dick stood uneasily, longing to go, yet held by the authority of the old man's command. Sir Henry rose at last from the bench. The torch flickered out. A match was struck, and Sir Henry lighted a cigarette.

"May I go now, sir?" muttered Dick.

"No!" The voice was hard and grim. "You have assisted me, and I do not choose to be under an obligation. It shall be for your benefit that you trespassed on my land."

"But——"

"Silence! Come with me!"

There was command in the old autocrat's voice that was not to be gainsaid. He strode away, a tall, grim figure in the gloom, and the little waif obediently followed him.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Good Samaritan!

"I SAY, you fellows——"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he is!"

"You fat villain——"

"Collar him!"

Billy Bunter jumped back.

He met the Famous Five as they came up the Remove passage, and he met them with his most ingratiating and propitiatory smile. But the chums of the Remove did not seem to be in a mood to be propitiated.

"I—I say, you fellows, hold on!" exclaimed Bunter.

"That's what we're going to do!" grinned Bob Cherry.

And he held on to Bunter's collar.

"Bring him into the study," said Harry Wharton.

"Yarooh! I say, Toddy, rescue!" roared Bunter, as he was propelled towards the doorway of Study No. 1.

Peter Todd, looking out of Study No. 7, grinned.

"What's the row?" he asked.

"The fat bounder burgled our picnic!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's not a laughing matter," roared Johnny Bull indignantly. "We're famished."

"The famishfulness is terrific!"

"It's a misunderstanding," gasped Bunter. "I—I never bagged the tuck, you know. I wouldn't! You see——"

"Roll him in. I've got a fives bat for him," said Wharton.

"Yarooh! Help an old pal, Peter——"

Peter Todd chuckled.

"Keep your fat paws from picking and stealing, old fat man," he answered. "Don't I keep on giving you that advice?"

"Beast!"

Peter went back into his study, apparently not keen to distinguish himself in the role of rescuer. Vernon-Smith and Tom Redwing came up the stairs together, and stopped to look on as Bunter was propelled into Study No. 1.

"Smithy, old chap, lend a fellow a hand!" yelled Bunter.

The Bounder grinned.

"Will a foot do?" he asked.

"Whooop!"

Smithy lent a foot, and Bunter rolled into the study and sprawled on the carpet.

Nugent closed the door.

Bunter sat up, with five wrathful faces looking down on him. The captain of the Remove picked up a fives bat.

"Shove him across a chair," he said.

"I say, Harry, old chap——"

"If you call me Harry, old chap, you fat worm, I'll give you one extra."

"Bob, old man——"

"Cheese it!"

"I—I say, you fellows——"

Four pairs of hands grasped the Owl of the Remove, and he was extended, wriggling, across a chair, in a favourable position for the application of a fives bat.

"Yow-ow-ow! Let a fellow speak!" howled Bunter. "Can't you let a chap explain, you beasts?"

"What is there to explain?" demanded Bob Cherry. "You bolted with our tuck, and we had to walk home all the way from Compton Park without our tea."

"While you were scoffing the grub, you fat cannibal!" exclaimed Johnny Bull ferociously.

"I—I say, I was awfully hungry when I got in, you know," gasped Bunter. "I don't believe I should have got in at all, only I got a lift in the carrier's cart. And I was too late for tea, and that beast Toddy wouldn't lend me a bob, and my postal-order hasn't come, and now——"

"And now you're going to have a dozen with this bat to complete the tale of woe!" chuckled Bob. "Lay it on!"

"Hold on!" yelled Bunter. "Let a fellow explain. I—I didn't scoff the tuck, you know—I wouldn't!"

"Where is it, then?" demanded Wharton.

"I—I say, you fellows, I—I—— Let a fellow speak! I—I can explain the whole thing," gasped Bunter.

"Rot!"

"Bosh!"

"Give him a dozen, and let him explain afterwards," said Johnny Bull. "It will only be gammon, anyhow."

"Honest Injun!" yelled Bunter. "Look here, this isn't the way to treat a chap who's been helping the poor, and feeding the hungry, and all that!"

"What?"

In their astonishment, the juniors released Bunter. He squirmed off the chair and set his big spectacles straight on his fat little nose, and blinked at them indignantly.

Owing to the windfall of a lift in the carrier's cart, Bunter had reached Greyfriars well ahead of the Famous Five; and he had had time to think out his defence. Bunter and the truth had never been well acquainted; and the greater

the scrape in which the Owl found himself, the farther and farther he departed from veracity.

But Bunter had the gift—very valuable to an habitual deceiver—of taking his own tremendous "whoppers" seriously. Having thought out what he considered to be a good yarn, he considered that fellows ought to believe it, and almost believed it himself by this time. So he was feeling quite genuinely indignant as he blinked at the five Removites.

"I say, you fellows, I expected you to take it a bit more decently," he said. "Of course, a fellow doesn't like to lose a spread. I shouldn't myself. But when a poor chap's starving, what's a really kind-hearted and generous fellow to do?"

"Eh?"

"What?"

"Do you want us to believe that you gave that feed away?" asked Bob Cherry, almost dazedly.

"Exactly!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Great pip! That's the limit, even for Bunter!" exclaimed Harry Wharton, staring at the Owl of the Remove. "You don't really expect us to get that down, Bunter"

"I suppose you can take my word!" said Bunter, with dignity.

"Your word! Oh, crumbs!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Let's hear the yarn," said Bob, with a chuckle. "We'll give him six extra for telling lies if he doesn't prove his case. Now, then, go ahead, Bunter!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Cut it short!" growled Johnny Bull.

"You—you see——" gasped Bunter.

"We don't see," said Nugent. "We are waiting to see."

"If you'd seen that ragged kid, you'd have been sorry for him," said Bunter impressively. "A poor kid, you know—chap about our own age—homeless and hungry and starving and famished, and—and in want of food."

"Must have been in want of food if he was hungry as well as starving and famished," agreed Bob Cherry. "Get on with it, without piling on the agony too thick!"

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Buck up!" roared Johnny Bull. "We've got to wallop you before tea, and I want my tea!"

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"Give him the bat——"

"I say, I'm explaining as fast as I can, ain't I?" yelled Bunter. "I tell you you'd have felt sorry for that chap!"

"What chap?"

"Ragged Dick!" said Bunter.

"What?"

"That's what he called himself—a poor tramp, you know, homeless and nameless and hungry, and——"

"Have you come across that kid Ragged Dick?" asked Harry Wharton, in astonishment.

For once Bunter found believers. The Famous Five knew that Ragged Dick had a real existence, and was not a mere figment of Bunter's fertile imagination. Bunter's task was easier than he had anticipated, as he had known nothing of the affair with Ragged Dick and Pedlar Parker. He had not even taken the trouble to wonder what had called the juniors away when they had so fortunately left him alone with the tuck. All he knew was that some person unknown had been yelling in a field, and that they had run to the scene.

"That's what he called himself," said Bunter—"Ragged Dick. What a name, you know! Ragged and hungry and starving and famished——"

"We've had that before!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Look here, we'd have handed over that feed to that poor kid without waiting to be asked if we'd had the chance. If you did——"

"Just what I did," said Bunter. "I—I was going to take a snack, and then he came up, and—and I—you know my generous nature——"

"Phew!"

"I gave him the lot," said Bunter. "I said: 'Here you are, kid!' and handed it over to him. He thanked me with tears rolling down his cheeks."

"Rats!" from Johnny Bull.

"If you don't believe me, Bull, you can ask the fellow himself."

"Where is he, then?"

"How should I know?"

"You silly ass! How can I ask him when I sha'n't ever see him again?" demanded Johnny Bull.

"Look here! If this is true, all serene!" said Harry Wharton. "We're jolly hungry; but we wouldn't mind handing over our feed to a chap who was hungrier. But you're not built that way, Bunter, and it's too jolly steep!"

"Oh, really, Wharton——"

"Good Samaritan—I don't think!" grunted Johnny Bull. "Looks like it, doesn't he? Good Samaritans don't grow as fat as Bunter!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now, as it happens, we saw that kid Ragged Dick," went on Wharton. "We collared a pedlar chap who was whacking him and gave him a chance to get away."

"Oh!" ejaculated Bunter.

"He cleared off before we could get a look at him," said Harry. "You had cleared off with the grub, too——"

"I—I——"

"You'd cleared off when I looked for you," said Bob. "And that ragged kid was out of sight, too. Where did you meet him if you met him at all?"

"In Compton Park," said Bunter.

"You trespassed in the park?"

"I—I told you Sir Henry was an old friend of my pater's," said Bunter. "I just dropped in——"

"Oh, can it!" growled Johnny Bull.

"It's likely enough that that kid dodged over the palings into the park to get clear," said Harry, "and that's where Bunter went, of course, to get away with the grub. So you came on Ragged Dick in the park. I dare say that much is true, as you were both there at the same time. But you didn't hand him the feed, you fat fabricator!"

"If you'd seen him——"

"We did see him, ass, before he cleared off."

"Well, then, you ought to be able to understand how I—I pitied him," said Bunter. "It—it would have done you good to see him eat! It would, really! Fairly bolted it, you know, and I—I

The last crumb and the last plum vanished, and Bunter leaned back in his seat, to rest after his exertions. His eyes closed behind his glasses, and he began to snore. He was in the pleasant land of dreams, and was unaware of the arrival of a tall gentleman, who came up to the summer-house and stood looking down at him in surprise. *(See Chapter 4.)*

stood by, you know, helping him and not touching a morsel myself. I thought that you fellows wouldn't really mind letting the grub go to feed the hungry——"

"We wouldn't," said Frank Nugent.

"So it's all right, then," said Bunter brightly. "You say yourselves you'd have given him the grub. So what have you got to complain about?"

The Famous Five eyed Bunter.

But for the fact that they had met Ragged Dick themselves, certainly they would not have believed a word of the story from beginning to end. But there was, at least, a nucleus of truth in Bunter's yarn. It was clear that he had met the waif—whether he had played the Good Samaritan or not.

"After all, if he whacked the grub out with that hungry kid, that's something for Bunter!" said Bob Cherry.

"Yes. But——"

"You should have seen him eat!" said Bunter impressively. "It would really have done you good!"

"Pity we didn't see it!" agreed Johnny Bull. "We might have believed you then."

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"Shall we give the fat villain the benefit of the doubt?" asked Bob Cherry, looking round at his comrades.

"I don't think you ought to doubt my word, Cherry. As for the grub, of course, I shall pay for it when my postal-order comes. I'm expecting it by the first post to-morrow morning. And I tell you what—I'll use my influence with Sir Henry to get you fellows asked to Compton Hall, I will, really!"

"You silly owl!"

"And I must say I'm a little shocked at you!"

"What?"

"It seems to me that you grudge that feed to a hungry, starving, and famished chap," said Bunter severely. "I call that shocking!"

"Why, you cheeky fat villain——"

"As for the value of it, I'll settle that out of my postal-order. I certainly do not want you mean fellows to pay for my—my charitable actions!" said Bunter loftily. "Mean—that's what you are! One of the eggs was whiffy, too! I sha'n't pay for that one; I couldn't eat it."

"You couldn't eat it?" said Bob, staring at him.

"No, I couldn't!"

"But the others were all right, were they?"

"Well, I've tasted better," said Bunter. "As a matter of fact, it wasn't much of a feed, though you fellows make such a song about it. The cake was gritty."

"Was it?"

"Yes, it was. And the lemonade was thin stuff, and didn't have enough sugar in it. Muck, in fact!"

"Have you ever heard the proverb that liars should have good memories, Bunter?" inquired Bob.

"Eh?"

"Did Ragged Dick tell you that the egg was whiffy, and that the cake was gritty, and that there wasn't enough sugar in the lemonade?"

"While he was thanking you with tears rolling down his cheeks?" roared Johnny Bull.

"Eh! I—I mean——"

"Up-end him!"

"Yarooooh!"

Bunter went across the chair again. As usually happened with the hapless Ananias of Greyfriars, he had given himself away after an elaborate series of inventions. The chums of the Remove had been prepared to give him the benefit of the doubt. But there was no longer any doubt; so they gave him the benefit of the fives-bat.

Whack, whack, whack!

"Wooop! I say, you fellows——"

Whack!

"Yaroooh! I say, I really did give him some cake, and it wasn't my fault he chucked it at me——"

Whack!

"Yow-ow-ow! You beast, stoppit! I've been kicked—you-ow!—in the same place—you-ow-ow! That beast of a keeper, you know!"

Whack!

"Yaroooooooop!"

"Does Sir Henry Compton let his keepers kick his distinguished guests?" chuckled Johnny Bull.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow-ow-ow-ow-wooooooop!"

Bunter rolled off the chair. He backed into the doorway, and shook a fat fist at the Famous Five.

"Ow! Beasts! I won't pay for the grub now, when my postal order comes! I was going to, and now I won't! Beasts!"

And Billy Bunter rolled wrathfully away, after delivering that Parthian shot, leaving the chums of the Remove chuckling, and not at all dismayed by the prospect of losing their just share in Bunter's celebrated postal-order—when it came!

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Spendthrift!

"MR. ROGER COMPTON!"

Sir Henry turned his wrinkled face, with something like a snarl upon it, towards the gentleman who was shown into the library at Compton Hall.

He did not rise from the deep-backed chair in which he sat by the crackling log fire. There was no welcome in his looks—no courtesy in his manner.

He fixed his eyes on the man who came towards him, with a glint of animosity in them, under his grizzled, wrinkled brows.

The visitor was a man of perhaps forty, though at the first glance he looked younger. He was dressed well, almost fastidiously—a contrast to the baronet, who, late as the hour was in the evening, had not changed out of his shooting-clothes. The man had been handsome, but there were very visible signs in his face of a loose and reckless life. He came towards the grim old baronet, and held out a well-manicured hand, which Sir Henry Compton did not touch.

"Come, come, cousin Henry!" said Mr. Roger Compton. "You will not shake hands with your kinsman?"

"Kinsman or no, I will not touch your hand!" said Sir Henry. "It was in my mind to refuse even to open my door to you, Roger Compton. Why are you here?"

Roger Compton smiled—a smile that was not pleasant.

"How long is it since we have met?" he answered. "Finding myself at Courtfield——"

"For the races?" interposed Sir Henry, with a curl of the lip.

"Precisely—for the races, precisely! Finding myself there, as I said, I decided to see my nearest relative before I left, and to ask——"

"To ask—what?"

"After your grandson, Sir Henry—little Richard, whose delicate health has caused me more concern than you may have supposed."

The baronet's face set hard.

"I quite understand your interest in my grandson's health," he assented—"quite!" His hand pressed his breast for a moment, where, in an inner pocket, reposed a crumpled telegram—the telegram that had announced the death of his grandson. "A delicate boy's life is all that stands between you and Compton Hall—when once an obstinate old man is laid with his fathers."

Roger Compton made a deprecating gesture.

"I should scarcely look on the matter in that light, Sir Henry," he murmured.

"You would scarcely look on it in any other," retorted the baronet. "I know you, Roger! I have known you from your youth upwards, and never known any good of you. Is there a disreputable night club in London, a racecourse in the country, where you are not known for what you are—gambler, blackguard, adventurer, a disgrace to the name you bear?"

"As bitter as ever, Sir Henry!" said Roger.

He sank into a chair; the grim, old master of Compton Hall had not even asked him to be seated.

"Quite! Again I ask, why are you here? Have you any reason to suppose that my grandson is worse, and that you are nearer to your inheritance?" said Sir Henry sardonically.

And again his hand crushed the crumpled telegram which had shattered all his hopes of keeping the Compton estate out of the hands of the man he despised and detested.

"I know that Richard is delicate—that his life for years has been spent with doctors and nurses," said Roger. "I am naturally anxious to know whether he shows signs of being restored to health. And—little as you may believe me—I feel for your deep anxiety concerning him!"

There was a sneer with the last words.

"I have had time to become used to my anxiety," said the old man composedly. "I have seen little of my grandson—and I am not of an affectionate nature, as you know. You know, too, that I should think little of him, if it were not that he alone stood between you and Compton Hall when I am gone."

"I am aware that you would disinherit me, if the entail were not too strict!" sneered Roger.

"And I am aware," said the old man, "that you, the last of the line, will have power to break the entail, and break up the property that has been in our family since the time of Edward the First. I am aware that your countless creditors would drive you to do so, even if you had the decency to respect your name—which you have not. I am aware that but for my grandson, when I go, everything goes, and the Comptons will disappear for ever. I am aware of all that, Roger—a stranger will rule here when I am gone, while you waste the proceeds of your baseness in drink and gaming. If there were any means——"

He broke off, biting his lip.

Roger Compton smiled again.

"If there were any means to get rid of your cousin and heir, you would not hesitate," he said.

"No."

"Fortunately for me, there are no means," smiled Roger. "If Richard dies——"

"You are taken by surprise," said Sir Henry, as Ragged Dick did not answer him. "Listen to me. I choose to adopt you as my grandson, and make you heir to these lands. Heir to twenty thousand pounds a year. You will go to a public school —Greyfriars School—you will go there as the grandson of Sir Henry Compton. Does that prospect please you, boy?"
(*See Chapter* 8.)

"If!" muttered Sir Henry.

"And I have a right to know how he stands," said Roger. "I learn that for the past year he has been in a foreign country—in the hands of medical specialists. I am entitled to know more. He is now of an age to be placed at school—more than of an age for that. It may be taken as a matter of course that he will be sent to Greyfriars, as his father was before him. Is he going to Greyfriars?"

"That is my business!"

"Mine, too, if you will excuse me, Sir Henry!"

"What rights have you over my grandson?" demanded the old baronet, with a fierce bending of the brows.

"None! But I have a right to know how the matter stands, and"—Roger Compton paused a moment—"where he is, and whether he still lives. I do not know that for a fact; you have told me nothing. If my young cousin Richard no longer lives——"

"The moneylenders would grant you better terms in that case," said Sir Henry sardonically.

"Exactly. For that reason, if for no other, I require to know more of the boy Richard," said Roger coolly.

Sir Harry Compton rose to his feet.

"You will know nothing from me," he said. "We have never been friends, Roger, and now we are enemies. If you come here again I shall give orders that you are not to be admitted."

"You will tell me nothing of Richard?"

"Nothing!"

The spendthrift's eyes gleamed.

"I shall make inquiries, then——"

"Make them!"

"You lead me to suspect——"

"Suspect what you please! But go!" said Sir Henry grimly. "After my death you may disgrace Compton Hall with your presence; while I live I am master here!" He touched a bell. "Walton, show this gentleman out. And if he should call again I am not at home."

Roger Compton rose, his eyes glittering, his cheeks pale with rage and mortification.

Without a word he walked out of the library.

The door closed.

Sir Henry sank back into the deep chair. His brows were knitted, black, and gloomy.

He had refused to give the heir of Compton Hall the information he sought. But he must learn it ere long; the announcement of Richard Compton's death would enlighten him. He would know that only an old man stood between him and the estate; his creditors would know, his moneylenders would know. It would mean a fresh accession of borrowed wealth for the spendthrift—a fresh orgy of waste and reckless extravagance, to be paid for when the Compton estate came into his hands, when the entail could be broken, and the lands sold, the ancient house given to a stranger. Some newly-rich profiteer would dwell where generations of Comptons had lived and died—while the last of the race was drinking himself to death.

Was there no way?

If the boy had lived—and he had lived only to nearly fifteen years, and then all that medical skill could do, all that a soft Southern clime could do to save him had failed.

The hard old man had seen little of the hapless boy, had cared little for him; cared only for him as a Compton, to carry on the name and save the estate. All that there was of softness or affection in his nature was buried with his only son in a nameless grave in Flanders.

To save the old estate from the clutches of Roger Compton and a ravenous crew of usurers—that was almost an obsession in the old man's mind now. Had he been able to will it away he would have willed it to the veriest stranger rather than to the dissolute blackguard who was his natural heir. But he had not the power. Comptons dead and gone long ago had tied up the estate too carefully, to keep the lands in the family, to preserve the family name, never foreseeing or dreaming that a Compton might be the one to bring ruin and oblivion upon the old name.

Was there no way?

Long the old man sat there, thinking, thinking, with wrinkled brows, his hands clenched on the dark oak arms of the chair. Was there no way? No way to keep up the old house, to keep the wide estate together, to save it from the gambler and his hungry crew? If his grandson had lived, if he had had another grandson, if he had had the power to make an heir of an adopted son; if he had been able, by any stratagem or trickery, to cheat the law laid down by dead men long ago, by a secret adoption—— But Roger Compton was not the man to be deceived. And yet——

In the dark recesses of the old man's troubled brain the scheme was born at last. His grandson had died in a foreign land. No one in England knew of the death—could know until he chose to tell. What if he did not tell? What if the lad appeared at Compton Hall in the name of Richard Compton; went to Greyfriars School as Richard Compton—Richard, restored to health—Richard, grandson of Sir Henry and heir of Compton Hall?

His eyes glittered fiercely under his knitted, grey brows.

Better that than the breaking-up of the old estate to satisfy a hungry crew of moneylenders, to provide Roger with a last wild orgy to wind up his career of riotous blackguardism.

But how?

And then into the baronet's mind came the remembrance of a boy's face that had bent over him in his seizure in the old summer-house in the park—the boy whom he had placed for lodgings in his keeper's house.

A boy unknown, nameless, friendless, forlorn; all that he needed for his purpose!

(*Continued on page* 16.)

THE GREYFRIARS HERALD

Supplement No. 227.

HARRY WHARTON
EDITOR

Week Ending June 20th, 1925.

DAME MIMBLE'S little tuckshop—frequently mistaken by Billy Bunter for a tick-shop!—is not so ancient as many parts of the school. It is all rot to say that it was founded by Friar Tuck, and that the old monks used to perch their plump forms on stools at the counter, and say, "Od's-bodikins! These jam-tarts are right tasty withal!" or "Prithee help thyself, if thou art peckish, to plenty of prime provender!" The monks used to feed down in the crypt, and they did themselves jolly well, too, by all accounts. Many a sizzling sausage and fried herring went "out of the frying-pan into the friar!" But that was in the early dawn of civilisation, long before the foundations of the tuckshop were laid.

AS a matter of historical fact, the tuckshop was founded in the reign of Queen Anne, the lady who sat on the throne a mighty long time before she chucked in her mit, and said, "I ain't a-gonna reign no mo'!" In those days the grub sold at the tuckshop was renowned for its quantity rather than its quality. Instead of light refreshments, hefty meals used to be supplied, and it was nothing for a Greyfriars fellow to go straight from the dining-hall to the tuckshop, and order a joint of venison or a pigeon-pie! They were giants in those days, and valiant trenchermen into the bargain.

IN 1815 the tuckshop was closed for a year by order of the Head. This was because a number of daring spirits had carried out midnight raids on the establishment. Naturally, there was weeping and gnashing of teeth at Greyfriars, and when a fellow wanted a feed he had to tramp over to Courtfield, for there was no bunshop in Friardale in those days. Moreover, there was no means of getting to Courtfield save by Shanks' ponies. Motor-charabancs had not even entered the minds of the futurists of that day, and even the bicycle—the boneshaker and the penny-farthing—had not then been invented. So it will be seen that the closing of the tuckshop hit the Greyfriars fellows very hard.

TWICE in its history the tuckshop has been raided by burglars from outside the school. On the first occasion the marauders got away with a rich haul of food and drink, but on the second occasion they were not so lucky. A number of shelves collapsed, and the raiders were literally buried beneath an avalanche of biscuit-tins, sweet-bottles, and bags of flour! Before they could extricate themselves the alarm was given, and the marauders were arrested and handed over to the police.

DAME MIMBLE has presided at the tuckshop for many moons. Her silver hair advertises this. She is a good and generous soul, and long may she reign to fill our inner Whartons and Nugents and Browns!

ODE TO THE ESTEEMED TUCKSHOP!

(In the choice English language.)

By HURREE SINGH.

I NOW proceed to pen the praise
Of good Dame Mimble's shopfulness,
Where we adjourn on summer days
To quaff the ginger-popfulness.
The jamful tarts, the nuts of dough,
We eat with great avidity;
And make them vanishfully go
With rapidful rapidity!

Our "Queen of Hearts," she makes some tarts
Upon a summer dayfulness,
To gladden all the fellows' hearts
When they come in from playfulness.
The charming cakes that Mimble makes
Are fine; we eat our fillfulness;
The good dame seldom makes mistakes,
But cooks and bakes with skilfulness.

She greets us with a smiling face,
And beams upon us merrily;
She loves the lads to fill her place—
It means "good biz"—yea, verily!
But when the Bunter-bird draws nigh,
Demanding tuck on tickfulness,
She fixes him with baleful eye,
And he departs with quickfulness!

The tuckful shop is nice and cool,
A gentle draught blows breezily;
I love to perch upon a stool,
And feed, and take life easily.
A haven for the hungry soul
The tuckshop is indeedfully;
It is the Mecca and the goal
Of those who gobble feedfully!

To good Dame Mimble I salaam,
And wish her fame and wealthfulness;
Long life, without a breath of harm,
And happiness and healthfulness.
Her pleasant shop beneath the trees
We mean to visit dayfully;
Upon her stools we'll take our ease,
And tuck her tuck awayfully!

EDITORIAL!

By DAME MIMBLE.

LAWKS-A-MUSSY! Who ever would have thought that I should ever be called upon to do anything but bake cakes and sell sweets?

When Master Wharton trotted into my little shop the other day, and asked me to edit the "Greyfriars Herald" for one week I gaped and gasped!

"Surely you must be joking, Master Wharton?" said I. "Why, I haven't the faintest notion how to edit a schoolboy paper! Who's going to write all the retributions?"

"Contributions!" said Master Wharton, laughing. "Oh, that's all right, ma'am! The fellows will rally round, and help you to produce a topping number. All you've got to do personally is to scribble an editorial."

"But I'm not a littery person," I protested.

"No, I know that. You're always neat and tidy," said Master Wharton.

"What I mean is, I haven't had a proper edification for such a task," I told him.

But Master Wharton wouldn't take "No," and, as he is one of my best customers, I simply had to fall in with his wishes. I promised to do my best; but I said, "I haven't got the talons for journalism, and you mustn't blame me if I make a mess of things. I know how to turn out a perfect pie; but I'm not familiar with printer's pie!"

"I insure you, ma'am," said Master Wharton, "that you've nothing to worry about. You've simply to write the Editorial, and the member of the staff will do the rest."

And he gave me a menial nod, and strolled out of the shop.

No sooner had Master Wharton gone than a crowd of young gents came flocking in to offer me their confabulations on having been appointed Editress of the "Greyfriars Herald." Master Bunter was among them. He said:

"I've brought you a distribution, ma'am, which I hope you'll accept. I don't want any payment for it; a free feed will meet the case. Let me loose among those tarts and things, and I shall be happy!"

I accepted Master Bunter's article, but failed to find space for it, and there was no free feed for him. If I had let him loose among my supplies, as he suggested, I should have been eaten out of house and home! Master Bunter has the appetite of a boa-restrictor!

Well, my task is finished now, and I hope you will find this number as palatable as my jam-tarts, and that you will devour it just as keenly. And if I happen to have made mistakes with some of the big words, you must make allowances for a woman who, not having any journalistic talons, has failed to come up to scratch!

JESSIE MIMBLE.

Extracts from a Glutton's Diary!

(Published without Billy Bunter's permission, by Peter Todd.)

MONDAY.

When I rose this morning I was sinking. Strange that a fellow should rise and sink at the same time; but what I mean is, I had an aching void in my inferior. You see, Sunday night's supper is always a wash-out—just a couple of biskits and a cup of cocoa. Might as well offer a current-bun to a hipperpotamus! I expected a hamper this morning from my Uncle Claude, but the beastly thing didn't turn up, so I was obliged to do some study-raiding. Very little luck. Found a tin of stale sardeens in Coker's cubberd, and the remains of a plum-cake in Temple's—as hard as a bullet! Thinking I heard footsteps approaching, I happened to drop the cake, and it crashed on my toes with a terrifick concussion. Shouldn't be serprized if I got toe-maine poysoning!

TEWSDAY.

A dredful day! No hamper, no funds, no free feeds, no invitashuns to study spreads. I had to put up with the offishul school fare. It's not fare! I was only aloud four rashers of bacon for breakfast, and when I got to my sixth helping of plum-pooding at dinner-time, Quelchy thought it was time to put the brake on. Tea was an awful sell, and so was supper. I'm beginning to waste away to a mere skellington, and all I've got to go to bed with is food for reflection!

WEDNESDAY.

I happened to hear Peter and Alonzo Todd say they were going out grub-hunting this afternoon. I begged permishun to join them, but they gave me the icy mit. However, I was not to be shaken off. When they went out after dinner I followed them for miles and miles through the woods. I really thought they had a hamper of tuck hidden away somewhere. Every now and again they stopped and picked something off the leaves of trees. At last, when I was feeling too fagged to walk any farther, I called to them, and asked them what the game was. "You said you were going grub-hunting!" I yelled reproachfully. "So we are," replied Peter; and he showed me a tin box full of caterpillows. "Here are the various kiuds of grub. They are for Lonzy's collection!" I could have wept. In fact, I did weep—hot, scalding tears that ought to have melted the hart of a Faro. But Peter and Lonzy merely grinned at me. Hartless beasts!

THURSDAY.

To-day I heard old Quelchy komplaining to old Prout that he had a very bad bout of Indiagestion; so I went up to Quelchy and very kindly offered to eat his dinner for him. Instead of jumping at my offer, he hurled it back in my teeth with skorn, and gave me a hundred lines for what he called "studded insolense." However, I was in luck when dinner-time came. Russel and Rake were both suffering from toothake, and while they sat nursing their faces I pollished off their dinners for them. I'm feeling quite my old self again now—fat and fit and forty-fied!

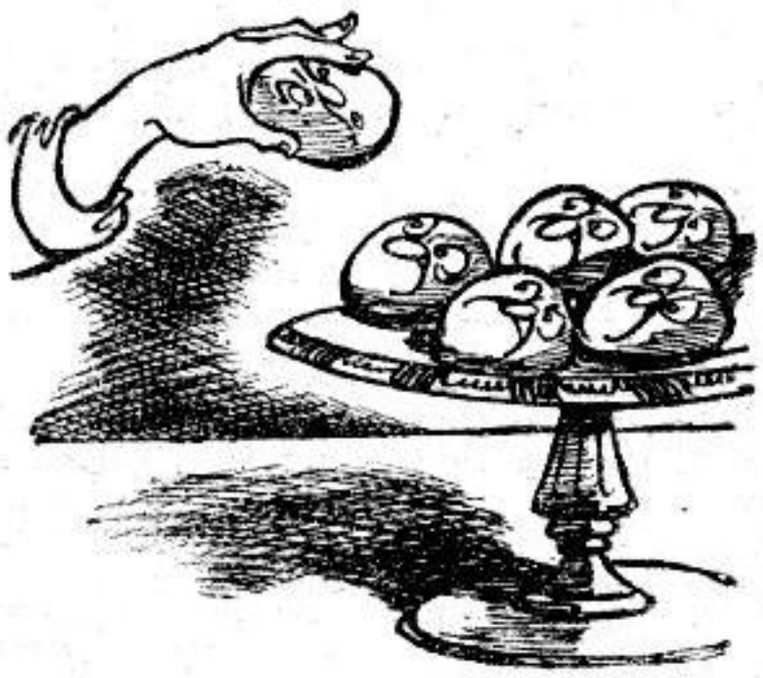
FRIDAY.

My hamper came this morning! At least, I took it to be mine. The address on the label wasn't very clear, and I'm rather short-sighted. So how could I tell that it was addressed to Master J. Bull instead of Master W. G. Bunter? I carted the hamper down into the cript, and was just getting busy on the kontents, when suddenly a roar of thunder boomed through the vaults. In quaking dread I looked round, to see Johnny Bull bearing down upon me. "You fat villen!" he roared. "You pilfering pirate! That's my hamper!" And he pitched into me with the same gusto that I had pitched into the hamper. Oh dear! I'm feeling stiff and sore in every limb, thanks to that beastly bullying bounder Bull!

SATTERDAY.

There was a kricket-match this afternoon, and I prevailed upon Harry Wharton to let me do the catering, and prepare a tip-top tea for the home and visiting teams. In a moment of weakness, Wharton konsented; and in a moment of strength I not only prepared the feed, but scoffed half of it. I've been in hiding for the rest of the day in one of the box-rooms; but I antissipate trubble when I go up to the Remove dorm at bed-time. It will mean a bumping or a blanket-tossing, I eggspect. After the feast comes the reckoning. But it was a stunning spread, and I feel so comfortably full inside that I don't think I shall be able to roll up to the dorm, after all. I'll curl up in the corner, like a dormouse, and go to sleep. My last waking thought is this: Blessings on the fellow who invented tuck!

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A DOUGHNUT!



Having been made in a great hurry by Dame Mimble, I'm not a very good-looking chap like my fellow doughnuts. Instead of being nice and round, I'm shaped like a Rugby football or a torpedo-boat. There is no jam inside me, and my coat is not so sugary as it should be. Consequently, my brother-doughnuts openly sneered at me when I was first placed on the dish.

I hung about in the tuckshop for days before anybody would buy me. And it wasn't until I was the only doughnut left on the dish that I found a purchaser.

"How much is that doughnut, ma'am?" asked Tom Brown, viewing me with a certain amount of disfavour.

"Twopence, Master Brown," said Dame Mimble.

"Then it can jolly well stay on the dish!" said Tom Brown. "I'm not paying tuppence for an undersized, deformed-looking doughnut like that!"

"It's got a bit stale by now," murmured Dame Mimble. "You can have it for a penny!"

Tom Brown clinched with this offer, and I was tossed into a bag and passed over the counter. The bag was stowed away in my purchaser's coat-pocket, and he forgot all about me until midway through morning lessons. Then, feeling peckish, Browney decided to devour me by stealth. He fished the paper bag from his pocket, and the keen ear of Mr. Quelch caught the rustle of paper.

"Brown," exclaimed the Remove-master, "what have you got there?"

"Oh, crumbs!"

"Do not tell me a falsehood, Brown! You have not got crumbs there. You have a complete doughnut. How many times have I told you that I will not permit the consumption of sticky and indigestible comestibles in the Form-room? Bring that doughnut to me at once!"

I was handed over to Mr. Quelch, who lifted the lid of his desk and hurled me inside and then shut the lid with a slam.

For hours I lay in the darkness, having as companions a couple of rulers, a piece of indiarubber, a penknife, and a chunk of toffee which had been confiscated from Billy Bunter.

But I was not destined to remain there for ever. When lessons were over and the class dismissed, Mr. Quelch forgot to lock his desk, with the result that Billy Bunter purloined me and bore me away to his study.

Quaking inwardly, I was laid on the table and operated on with a knife. Bunter made a dreadful incision, which nearly cut me in half. Then he gave a snort of disgust.

"Why, there's no jam inside the beastly thing!" he growled. "And it's as hard as a bullet! What a sell!"

I was hurled out of the window with great violence. In mid-air I came clean in half, one half hitting Loder of the Sixth on the head and the other half thudding on to the flagstones like a spent bullet. And here I remain, in two separate chunks, awaiting the broom of Gosling the porter. Doughnuts are made to be eaten; but I have escaped the common fate of my kind. That's one of the advantages of being made in a hurry.

(*Continued from page* 13.)

Long into the night the baronet sat, staring into the dying fire.

When he rose at last his plan was formed and fixed, irrevocable—the plan that was to save Compton Hall from the spendthrift, and to bring about an amazing change in the fortunes of Ragged Dick.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Dazzling Prospect!

"SEND the boy in!"

"Yes, Sir Henry!"

Jenks retired respectfully from his little parlour, into the window of which the morning sunlight gleamed.

Sir Henry Compton sat down.

He had given instructions that the tattered lad was to be well cared for, and on the Compton estate Sir Henry's instructions were always carried out to the very letter.

Probably Jenks had been surprised by the baronet's concern for this wretched, ragged lad, whom he had brought to the lodge the evening before. It was not like Sir Henry Compton to trouble his lofty head about the poor and needy and friendless; it was more like him to drive them off his land without pity or ruth. Of the baronet's seizure, and of the aid the boy had given him, Jenks knew nothing. He did not know that the old man, hard as he was, did not choose to remain under an obligation; that his pride impelled him to pay richly for a service received. So far as Jenks was concerned, he only knew that it was Sir Henry's lordly will and pleasure that the homeless boy should be cared for—and cared for Ragged Dick had been, under the keeper's roof.

He entered the little room a few minutes later rather timidly.

Sir Henry looked at him.

There was a change in the boy—a change so startling that he was scarcely recognisable. He was washed clean, his hair had been trimmed and combed, and he was dressed in a suit of clothes, plain but neat and good, that had belonged to the keeper's own boy, and had been given over to the waif.

Clean and neat clothes and boots in the place of his tattered rags made a wonderful difference; but still greater was the difference made by scrubbing and rubbing off the dirt and dust of the roads, trimming and combing the unkempt hair; still greater the difference brought about by plentiful food and a quiet and peaceful night's rest in a comfortable bed.

The baronet looked at the lad who stood before him as if scarcely able to believe his eyes.

Ragged Dick—no longer ragged—looked a handsome lad, well-set-up, sturdy, active; his face good-looking and pleasant in its expression, a little sunburnt, but so clean that it was clear that cleanliness was the boy's own taste, his previous griminess forced upon him by his wretched circumstances.

A smile of satisfaction came over the old man's face.

He had resolved upon his scheme—a scheme in which Ragged Dick was to play his part as an unconscious tool in his hands—a pawn in a game he did not understand. But doubts had troubled him. It was not easy, he realised, to change a slinking tramp into a fellow who could pass as a Compton, brought up in the lap of luxury. But he was reassured upon that point now. This boy was no slinking tramp; circumstances had been against him, but he had the power of rising above his circumstances. The pride he had shown in his talk with the baronet the previous evening had offended the stiff old gentleman at the time; now it pleased him to remember it.

Pride that was, in his estimation, out of place in a ragged vagrant was an asset when that vagrant was to play the part of heir of Compton Hall.

For a good five minutes the baronet scanned the lad before him without speaking, but thinking deeply, more and more satisfied with the trend of his own thoughts.

Dick stood waiting uneasily.

The stern old brown face scared him a little; there was something awe-inspiring in this grim old man, though Dick was not easily scared.

What was wanted of him he could not guess.

So much kindness had been bestowed upon him, in return for the little service he had rendered the old gentleman, that he was deeply grateful; and he had a hope that the old man was going to offer him employment on his estate.

A regular "job" on the land would have been enough to make the waif happy—he was not afraid of work, and he would have earned, and more than earned, whatever the master of Compton Hall chose to pay him. To get off the roads, to keep himself clean and fit, to avoid such company as that of Pedlar Parker—the bare idea of it made Dick feel elated. To keep himself by his labour amid green woods and fields in the summer—Ragged Dick asked no more than that.

The baronet's long silence puzzled him.

It did not need this long reflection for the old gentleman to make up his mind whether he was going to offer the vagrant a "job." Yet with what other intention could he have come to the keeper's lodge to see him?

Sir Henry spoke at last.

"Good—good boy!" he said, apparently commenting on Dick's improved appearance. "Now, my boy, I have something to say to you—something very serious."

"Yes, sir," said Dick.

"You have told me that you have no relations, no parents, no name?"

Dick coloured a little.

"That is so, sir."

"Is there no one with a claim on you?"

"No one, sir." The boy hesitated a moment. "For the last few weeks, sir, I've been tramping with a pedlar. But he has no claim on me."

"Where is he now?"

"I don't know, sir—gone, I hope. I ran away from him yesterday."

"Why?"

"He was a brute." Dick flushed. "He—he wanted me to steal chickens for him from the farm, and—and beat me because I wouldn't. Some schoolboys interfered, sir, and I got away from him and cleared off. That was why I came into your park, sir—to keep clear till the man was gone on his way."

Sir Henry gave him a searching look.

"Is that the truth?"

Dick's lip quivered.

"If you don't believe me, sir, it's no use my saying anything," he answered. "It's the truth, but if you don't believe me, I suppose you won't give me a job. I can't give you any character."

"A—a what?" ejaculated Sir Henry. "Oh, you mean employment! I am not thinking of giving you employment."

Dick's face fell.

"Very well, sir," he said quietly. "I know I've no right to expect it. But after what you've done for me already I shall find it much easier to get work—looks mean a lot to a fellow like me, and I look respectable now. I hope you'll believe that I'm grateful, sir—and—and I'll go now."

"You will not go," said Sir Henry coldly. "Tell me once more—you are absolutely certain that no one who lives has a right to claim you?"

"I don't know of anyone, sir," answered Dick, surprised by the old man's inexplicable interest in such a detail.

"But you had a father once, I presume?"

"I suppose so, sir. I never knew him," said Dick.

"It's an odd story," said the baronet, eyeing him.

"There are plenty of fellows in the same boat, sir, if you look for them along the roads and hedges," said Dick.

"It is possible, I suppose. But you must have had some care in infancy. Have you had no education? Cannot you read or write?" exclaimed Sir Henry, struck by a new difficulty.

Dick smiled.

"Oh, yes, sir! I've never been to school, but I've picked up a good deal—fellows can if they like. I once tramped on the road with a man who had been a Master of Arts at Oxford."

"A Master of Arts—tramping the roads!" exclaimed Sir Henry.

"There are all sorts on the roads, sir," said Dick. "A gentleman like you wouldn't know, sir. The man I'm speaking of was a drunkard—he had been to prison, too—he was a good man in his way, and I was with him for two or three years. He used to teach me when he was sober, and I used to take care of him when he was drunk."

"Good heavens!" muttered the old baronet. It was a glimpse of a life new and strange to the master of Compton Hall—as strange as the life of a different continent.

"He taught me a lot of things," said Dick. "You see, sir, I was keen to learn—I didn't want to be a tramp all my days. When he was drunk he used to spout Latin and Greek, and I asked him one day to teach me some Latin. He laughed and said he would—and he did, too. We hadn't any books, but I used to pick up old pieces of paper, and keep them for my exercises, and I learned Latin verses by heart from him—and he taught me some French, too. And I learned some more from a Frenchman I tramped with afterwards. I—I could do accounts, sir, if—if you wanted——"

"Where is he now?"

"I don't know, sir. He was run in."

"He was what?"

"I mean, taken up by the police, sir, when he was drunk, and sent to chokey—I mean, prison."

"What was his name?"

"Poynings, sir; but the tramps always called him Spouting Billy."

"How long since you have seen him?"

"More than a year, sir."

"He would scarcely know you again," said the baronet musingly. "Anyhow, a meeting would be very unlikely. Boy,

what were you thinking of doing when you left here?"

"Looking for work, sir."

"What kind of work?"

"With the farmers in the summer, sir. A fellow can often pick up a job on the farms in the summer."

"Would you like to stay here?"

Dick's face brightened.

"I would, sir! If you would give me a job—I mean, employment, you'll find that I am honest, sir, and——"

"Tut, tut! Listen to me, my boy. See that that door is closed."

Dick looked to the door.

"Very good!" The baronet sank his voice a little. "I have reasons, my boy, which I do not choose to explain to you, for taking you under my care. You have no name—I shall give you my own name. You have no father—you will call me your grandfather. I shall adopt you as my grandson. But that will be a strict secret. All others will suppose that you are really my grandson, Richard Compton. Do you understand?"

Dick's eyes opened wide.

The baronet had asked him, did he understand, but assuredly he did not. His impression was that the old gentleman was wandering in his mind.

He stared blankly at the gnarled old face.

"Answer me, boy!" snapped Sir Henry. "You are not a fool, I hope. Do you understand what I say?"

"I—I——" stammered Dick helplessly.

"You are taken by surprise, of course," said Sir Henry. "Listen to me carefully. I choose to adopt you as my grandson, and to make you, subject to good conduct, my heir—heir to these lands and to the house yonder. Heir to twenty thousand pounds a year if you please me, and if you prove yourself worthy of the position in which I think of placing you. You will go to a public school—Greyfriars School—you will go there as the grandson of Sir Henry Compton. Does that prospect please you?"

Dick almost tottered.

"You can't mean it, sir!" he panted.

"Do I look like a man who says what he does not mean?" almost snarled the old man.

"N-n-no, sir. But—but——"

"You are surprised—it is natural enough. You may take time to think over it, if you choose. But you will scarcely refuse such an offer, I presume?"

"Hardly, sir!" gasped Dick, in utter bewilderment. "But—but why should you do this for me, sir?"

"That is my own business, and you are not to ask questions. It is my will, and that is enough."

Ragged Dick gasped for breath. He was inclined to pinch himself to make sure that he was awake.

"But one caution, boy," said the baronet. "You are not to utter a word on this subject, or on the subject of your past. You are to be my grandson Richard—in name and in fact. That you are only my grandson by adoption is a secret. You understand?"

"Yes, sir," gasped Dick.

"I shall take you away from here immediately—to London. There you will be fitted out for school. I shall arrange with the headmaster of Greyfriars to admit you there as soon as practicable. By the time the holidays come round you will have shaken down into your new position. You will come here for the holidays as my grandson. You understand?"

Dick gasped.

"I will do anything you tell me, sir, of course. It seems like a dream to me what you are saying."

"No doubt—no doubt," said the baronet, more kindly. "But you will grow accustomed to it."

"But this keeper man, sir—Jenks, he knows——"

"Jenks will keep his own counsel," said Sir Henry. "You will say nothing to Jenks of what I have told you, and by the time you appear here as my grandson, Jenks will be gone."

Dick winced.

The old baronet, watching his face, read the thought that was passing in the boy's mind.

"So you have learned to think of others, tramping the roads," he said ironically. "But you need not trouble your head about Jenks. I am not the man to discharge a faithful servant to suit my own convenience. Jenks will be sent to my estate in Scotland, and he will not suffer."

"Yes, sir," gasped Dick.

"No one else here has seen you, and no one else will see you," said Sir Henry—"not till you come as if you were my grandson Richard, returning from school for the holidays." Sir Henry rose. "Not a word, mind. I rely upon your discretion. Make ready for a journey. In an hour I shall come to take you to London. Stay. I will not come for you here. Leave as if you were leaving for good, and wait for me at the railway-station."

"Yes, sir."

With a curt nod the baronet left the room and the house.

Ragged Dick sank into a chair, his brain in a whirl.

Was it real, or was he dreaming? The adopted grandson of Sir Henry Compton. Heir to the lands upon which the previous day he had crept as a vagrant and a trespasser! It was a dream. It must be a dream!

The boy was still dazed when he left Compton Park and tramped to the railway-station. It was a dream. It must be a dream! But the tall, gaunt figure of Sir Henry Compton was there. He beckoned to Dick, and spoke a sharp word.

"Take your ticket to London. Here is the money. Join me at the London terminus."

That was all. And the baronet entered a first-class carriage. Ragged Dick travelled third, his brain still in a whirl.

It was not till the express disgorged its passengers at Charing Cross that he saw the baronet again. In the crowd on the platform Sir Henry beckoned to him, and they left the station together—Sir Henry to the task of completing his scheme, Ragged Dick to the new life that had opened so strangely and amazingly before him.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Rallying Round!

"I SAY, you fellows!"

"Oh, blow away, Bunter!"

"I—I say, it's serious," said Billy Bunter.

"Hasn't your postal-order come?" asked Bob Cherry, with deep sarcasm.

"Oh, really, Cherry——"

"Another delay in the post?" asked Harry Wharton sympathetically. "These things will happen, Bunter, especially to your postal-orders."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"'Tain't that!" howled Bunter. "Look here, I want you fellows as witnesses."

"Witnesses!"

"That's it."

"What on earth's the game now?" asked Harry Wharton, in astonishment.

Classes were over at Greyfriars, and the Famous Five were sauntering in the old quad, when Bunter came up breathless. Bunter had strolled out of gates, but he had returned as suddenly and swiftly as if he had discovered a mad bull on the Friardale road.

"I—I've seen him!" gasped Bunter.

"Whom?" demanded Frank Nugent.

"Old Compton."

"Old Compton!" repeated Wharton. "Do you mean the giddy baronet of Compton Hall?"

"Yes, that awful beast——"

"That old pal of your pater's, you mean," grinned Bob Cherry. "The jolly old merchant who was your father's schoolfellow—what?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, don't rot!" exclaimed Bunter. "He's coming here."

"Well, let him come," said Johnny Bull. "Why shouldn't he come here if he likes?"

"He's after me."

"I see. He wants to see his oid pal's bonnie boy," said Bob Cherry, chuckling. "Well, why shouldn't he?"

"Look here!" howled Bunter. "It's jolly serious. He caught me on his land the other day."

"The day you dropped in to see him?"

"I—I didn't drop in to see him," confessed Bunter. "The—the fact is, it was a—a—a misunderstanding. He isn't really my pater's old schoolfellow, you know."

"Not really?" grinned Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Nunno. My—my pater doesn't really know him," said Bunter. "I—I—in fact, he was quite wild when he caught me on his land that day you fellows went to Compton Woods, you know. He told his keeper to turn me off, and the beast kicked me."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Famous Five.

"'Tain't a laughing matter!" exclaimed Bunter. "I tell you he's coming here. He came here one day last term, you remember, complaining about a fellow trespassing on his land. It was Skinner, and Skinner knocked over a rabbit; and when the old villain—I mean old Compton—found out that he was a Greyfriars chap, he came along and saw the Head about it, and Skinner was licked."

"Serve him right!" said Johnny Bull.

"Yes, that's all very well. It doesn't matter about Skinner. But it does matter about me, I can tell you."

"Depends on the point of view," grinned Bob Cherry. "I dare say Skinner would think that it doesn't matter this time."

"I say, you fellows, you might stand by a chap," pleaded Bunter. "I don't want a Head's licking."

"It isn't nice," agreed Wharton. "But what can we do? How do you know Sir Henry is coming here about you at all?"

"What could he be coming for? He's never been here, except to complain about some chap going on his land."

"That's so," agreed Harry.

"Looks a clear case," chuckled Johnny Bull. "Serve you jolly well right, Bunter. This is what comes of bolting with a fellow's tuck."

"The awful rotter has found out that I'm a Greyfriars chap, just as it happened with Skinner!" groaned Bunter. "He's going to jaw the Head about it, and I'm going to be called on the carpet.

I—I say, you fellows, you're bound to stand by me."

The Famous Five chuckled. If Sir Henry Compton was visiting Greyfriars, they did not feel at all certain that it was on account of Billy's trespass of a week or more ago. Still, it was likely enough. Sir Henry was almost savagely severe on such matters, and they remembered that he had brought Skinner of the Remove to book on a similar occasion.. But if it was trouble for Bunter, Bunter had asked for it, there was no doubt about that. He had bolted with the picnic, and taken refuge on Sir Henry's land. The fives bat had rewarded him for his raid on the tuck, and now, apparently, he was to receive his reward for trespassing. And it did not matter at all, so far as the chums of the Remove could see.

But evidently it mattered very much to William George Bunter. From his personal point of view it was the most serious matter then happening within the wide limits of the universe.

"At a time like this, fellows are bound to rally round a pal," urged Bunter. "Mind, I am relying on you."

"But what can we do?" asked Bob Cherry. "Do you want us to collar the giddy baronet, when he comes in, and bump him?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The bumpfulness is not the proper caper, my esteemed Bunter," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Oh, don't talk rot!" urged Bunter. "There's no time to waste. I want you fellows as witnesses. You see, you were on the spot."

"Blessed if I see how that will help you," said Harry Wharton, staring at the Owl of the Remove. "If Sir Henry recognises you, and reports you to the Head, we sha'n't be wanted to prove what he says. The head will take his word. Besides, how would it help you if we proved the case against you, you silly owl?"

"I don't mean that, you dummy. I want you as witnesses to prove that I wasn't there."

"Eh?"

"But you were there!" howled Johnny Bull. "You told us so."

"I wish you wouldn't waste time with irrelevant rot, Bull. You fellows are well known to be truthful chaps," said Bunter. "Mr. Quelch always takes your word. So would the Head. If you all stand up and swear that I wasn't there at all——"

"Great pip!"

"You see, it will be five against one, and five words are better than one," said Bunter eagerly. "Old Compton thinks I was there, but the Head will see that he must have made a mistake. You fellows will tell him how I went out with you in a boat that afternoon——"

"But you didn't!" shrieked Nugent.

"What difference does that make?"

"Oh, my hat!"

"We all went out in a boat at Pegg Bay, so I couldn't have been anywhere near Compton Park that afternoon—see?" said Bunter. "You tell the Head so, and stick to it, and he simply can't turn me down on old Compton's word alone. He will know that the old ass must have made a mistake—see?"

The Famous Five blinked at Bunter. Evidently moral considerations were quite lost sight of by the Owl of the Remove at this crisis. He wanted witnesses—not to the facts, which would not have helped him at all. Harry Wharton & Co. were to bear witness to what had never happened in order to save William George Bunter from a well-deserved licking.

"You see, it's quite simple," said Bunter. "Rally round, you know. And I'll tell you what—you get me out of this, and I'll stand a ripping spread all round when—when my postal-order comes. There!"

"My only hat!" said Harry Wharton, with a deep breath. "We're to go to the Head, and tell him a pack of lies, and stick to it, to save you from being licked for scoffing our picnic. Well, we're not going to be witnesses for you, Bunter; but we'll do what we can for you."

"What's that?" demanded Bunter.

"Bump you, you fat worm!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I say, you fellows—— Yaroooooh!" roared Bunter, as the indignant Removites collared him.

Bump!

"Oooooooooooop!"

"Give him another!"

Bump!

"Yooooooop!"

Harry Wharton & Co. walked away, leaving William George Bunter sitting on the gravel path, roaring.

It was clear that Bunter would have to look a little further for the necessary witnesses to prove what had never happened.

A tall, rather angular figure swung in at the gates, and old Gosling touched his ancient hat very respectfully to Sir Henry Compton.

The baronet, as he strode on, glanced at the fat figure sprawling in the path. Billy Bunter scrambled up just as the old gentleman was within a couple of yards of him.

Sir Henry's brows contracted.

He recognised Bunter at once. Billy Bunter flattered himself that he was rather a distinguished-looking chap, not easily forgotten. Certainly his circumference, at least, made him rather remarkable. On the present occasion he would have been glad to be less easily remembered.

"Oh, you young rascal!" said Sir Henry.

Bunter gasped.

"I—I say, sir, I didn't—I wasn't—I never——"

"Huh!"

With that expressive snort Sir Henry Compton strode past Bunter, and went on to the House.

Billy Bunter blinked after him in dismay.

The fat was in the fire now with a vengeance! If Sir Henry had not known before that the fat trespasser on his land was a Greyfriars fellow, he knew now beyond the shadow of a doubt. The hapless Owl of the Remove felt that he was "for it."

He rolled dolorously to the House, and spotted Trotter, the page, in the hall.

"Where's that old blighter?" he asked.

Trotter stared.

"Old Compton!" said Bunter impatiently. "Has he gone in to the Head?"

"Sir 'Enry Compton 'ave been shown in to see Dr. Locke," answered Trotter.

"Oh dear!"

It was all up now, unless Bunter could gather witnesses to prove that he had not been where he had been on that eventful Wednesday afternoon a week ago. The Famous Five had refused to rally round, and Bunter had a feeling that other fellows would refuse also—fellows were such beasts! The fellows were all beasts! The Head was a beast—Sir Henry was a beast; in fact, it was a beastly world all round, and Bunter felt that it was hard upon the only really decent fellow at Greyfriars—William George Bunter.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

A Little Too Previous!

BILLY BUNTER quaked.

The door of the Head's study opened, and Sir Henry Compton came out.

Bunter backed into the window recess in the corridor. The tall figure of the baronet passed him. Bunter hoped to escape his eye, but the baronet's frowning glance turned on the fat figure in the window as he passed.

Then he was gone.

"Oh dear!" murmured Bunter.

Bunter had expected to be called into the Head's study while Sir Henry was there. But the interview was over; the baronet was gone. Apparently Bunter's punishment was reserved till after the departure of the distinguished gentleman.

Trotter came along the corridor, apparently in answer to the Head's bell. As he came back Bunter dodged out of the window and clutched his arm. Trotter stared at him.

"Is he waxy?" he breathed.

"Who?" asked the astonished Trotter.

"The Head, you silly ass!" snarled Bunter.

"Better ask 'im, sir," answered Trotter, not at all pleased by being addressed as a silly ass.

"Has he sent you for Gosling?" demanded Bunter.

"No, he ain't!" said Trotter. "The 'Ead's told me to call Mr. Quelch, Master Bunter, if you want to know."

"Oh! Then it isn't a flogging!" said Bunter. "It's a caning!"

"Eh?"

"Go and eat coke!" grunted Bunter; which was perhaps his way of thanking Trotter for information received.

Trotter went on his way; and a few minutes later the figure of Mr. Quelch, master of the Remove, whisked along, and entered the Head's study.

Bunter blinked dismally after his Form master. Obviously—to Bunter—the Head had sent for Mr. Quelch to acquaint him with the delinquency of a member of his Form. That looked as if the punishment was to be a caning, and left in the hands of the Remove master.

That was all very well; a caning was better than a flogging, certainly. But a caning from Mr. Quelch was

much more severe than a caning from the Head. Mr. Quelch was a believer in the rod as a cure for cases like Bunter's; he did not spare the rod and run the risk of spoiling a fellow thereby. While the Head was rather given to laying it on lightly, to the accompaniment of a moral lecture. Bunter had no special taste for lectures, but he naturally preferred them to lickings.

The fat brain of the Owl of the Remove was busy now. It appeared to be a certain caning—and the question was, from the Head or from Mr. Quelch, and the former was preferable. Moreover, if a fellow owned up in a frank and manly way before he was accused, he was likely to get off still more lightly. Bunter came to the conclusion that he could not do better than own up in a frank and manly way before he was sent for. Frankness and manliness did not really appertain very much to the character of the Owl of the Remove, as a matter of fact; but Bunter knew on which side his bread was buttered; if truth served his turn, he could tell it almost as easily as untruth.

So he rolled down the corridor towards the Head's study with his fat mind made up.

He paused at the door. He desired very much to know whether the Head was in a wax—an important point for a fellow who was just going in for a licking. He glanced up and down the passage, and drooped his head to the keyhole.

Dr. Locke was speaking to Mr. Quelch inside the study.

"It seems that the boy has been in delicate health for some time, Mr. Quelch."

Bunter started.

All Bunter's thoughts and considerations being centred upon his important self, it did not even occur to him that the headmaster might be speaking of some other boy.

What had put the idea into Dr. Locke's mind that he had been in delicate health, he did not know or care; but he felt that it was a card to play now. The Head would not lay it on so hard, in the case of a fellow who was in delicate health.

He tapped at the door and opened it.

Dr. Locke glanced at him, and Mr. Quelch frowned. Neither of the masters seemed pleased to see Bunter.

"Dear me!" said the Head. "You should not interrupt me now, Bunter—another time——"

"I—I—I——" gasped Bunter.

Mr. Quelch gave him an expressive glance, which conveyed, as plainly as a glance could, that Bunter was to take himself off at once. But the fat junior stood his ground. If he was going to be licked for trespassing in Compton Park, he was going to be licked by the light hand of the Head, not by the heavy hand of his Form master, if he could contrive it.

"You—you see, sir," he gasped, blinking at the Head, "I—I—I think I—I ought to own up, sir."

"What?"

"It's on my conscience, sir," gasped Bunter. As he was going to own up, anyhow, he felt it as well to let the headmaster know that he had a conscience.

"What do you mean, Bunter?" demanded Dr. Locke. "Excuse me a moment, Mr. Quelch. Bunter, if you have anything to confess to me——"

"Yes, sir!" gasped the Owl of the Remove. "I—I've been going to tell you for some time, sir, but—but——"

"What is it? Be brief."

"About old Compton, sir——"

"My hat!" said Harry Wharton. "We're to go to the Head, and tell him a pack of lies to save you from being licked for scoffing our picnic. Well, we're not going to be witnesses for you, you fat worm, we are going to bump you. Collar him, you fellows!" Bunter let out a roar as the indignant Removites collared him, and bumped him down hard upon the ground. "Yarooop! Wow!"

(See Chapter 9.)

"What—who?"

"Sir Henry Compton, sir," stammered Bunter. "You—you see, sir, I—I went into his park last week quite by accident."

"What?"

"I—I really didn't notice where I was walking, sir," stuttered Bunter. "The actual fact is, sir, that I was studying. I—I had taken my Latin grammar out with me, sir, to—to look up deponent verbs, and—and being deeply interested in deponent verbs, sir, I—I walked into the park without—without noticing where I was going."

"Bless my soul!" said the Head, blinking at William George Bunter over his glasses.

Mr. Quelch gave the fat junior a grim look. Possibly he knew just how likely Bunter was to take out a Latin grammar on a half-holiday, to spend his leisure hours on deponent verbs.

"That—that's how it was, sir," went on Bunter. "It—it was quite by chance that old—that Sir Henry Compton found me in his park, sir—sheer chance. I was so deep in studying Virgil, sir——"

"Bless my soul!"

"I mean deponent verbs——"

"Have you been trespassing in Compton Park Bunter?" demanded Mr. Quelch.

"It—it was quite by accident, sir. And—and being in delicate health, sir, I—I sat down to rest in a summer-house. You know I'm in delicate health, sir."

"I was not aware of it, Bunter," said the Head. "Is there anything the matter with Bunter's health, Mr. Quelch?"

"I know of nothing except the natural result of greediness," answered the Remove master. "Bunter, I am afraid, eats too much, and I have often spoken to him severely on this subject."

"What is the matter with your health, Bunter?"

Bunter blinked at him in astonishment.

"It—it's delicate, sir! I—I don't think I'm really strong enough to be caned, sir. But I—I thought I—I ought to come and own up, sir, in a—a—a frank and manly way."

"I think I understand, Dr. Locke," said Mr. Quelch, grimly. "Bunter must have seen Sir Henry Compton call here, and he fancies that Sir Henry came to lay a complaint."

"Fancies!" stuttered Bunter.

"You absurd boy!" said the Head. "Do you suppose that Sir Henry Compton's visit had any reference to you?"

"Oh, dear! Didn't it?" groaned Bunter. The hapless Owl of the Remove realised that he had been a little too previous, so to speak. Apparently he and his misdeeds did not loom so largely in Sir Henry's eyes as he had taken for granted.

"Certainly not! Sir Henry called with reference to his grandson, who is to enter the form you belong to," said the Head, with a slight smile. "You seem to be under an absurd misapprehension, Bunter."

Even Mr. Quelch smiled at the expression on Bunter's face.

The fat junior's jaw dropped.

Sir Henry had called to see the Head about a beast of a grandson who was coming to Greyfriars—a new beast who was coming into the Remove—merely that and nothing more! Bunter had owned up for nothing! Frankness and manliness, in the way of owning up, really did not seem to pay, after all.

"I—I—I thought!" gasped Bunter. "I—I mean, I didn't think—that is, sir, I—I—I never did really trespass at Compton Park, sir——"

"You have just told me that you had done so, Bunter."

"That—that—that was only—only a——"

"Only what?"

"Only—only a figure of speech, sir!" gasped Bunter.

"Bless my soul!" said the Head, gazing at Bunter.

"I—I say, sir——" groaned the Owl of the Remove.

"As you have made this confession under a misapprehension, Bunter, and as Sir Henry Compton has made no complaint, I shall not punish you for your action," said the Head.

"Oh, thank you, sir!" gasped Bunter, in great relief. "I—I really am not strong enough to be caned, sir, being delicate." The hapless Ananias of Greyfriars never could let well alone.

"Nonsense!" said the Head testily. "I warn you, Bunter, not to prevaricate in dealing with me. I am greatly inclined——"

"Oh, sir!" gasped Bunter, "it—it's so, sir. I—I'm awfully delicate, sir, just as you said."

"I said?" exclaimed Dr. Locke, in amazement.

"Yes, sir, your own words."

"Is the boy in his right senses?" asked Dr. Locke. "Tell me at once, Bunter, on what occasion you suppose me to have made such a remark."

"Why, only a few minutes ago, sir," said Bunter, astonished in his turn. "You—you told Mr. Quelch that the boy—that's me, sir—had been in delicate health for some time."

The Head's face was blank, but Mr. Quelch enlightened him.

"You were making a remark, sir, concerning Sir Henry Compton's grandson, Richard, before Bunter entered the study. This unscrupulous boy was clearly listening at the door, and misunderstood what he heard."

"Upon my word!" exclaimed the Head.

"Oh dear!" groaned Bunter.

Again the hapless Owl had put his foot in it. How was a fellow to guess that the Head had been referring to some new fellow, some beast of whom Bunter had never even heard?

Dr. Locke's brow set grimly.

"Mr. Quelch, kindly hand me that cane!"

"Certainly, sir!"

"Come here, Bunter!"

"Oh lor'!"

"I shall not punish you for having made an inadvertent confession, Bunter, as I have said; but I shall punish you severely for having descended to the meanness of eavesdropping at your headmaster's door. Hold out your hand!"

Whack!

"The other hand!"

Whack!

"Yow-ow-ow-ow-ow-wooop!"

"Leave my study, Bunter!"

Billy Bunter was only too glad to leave the study. He wished from the bottom of his fat heart that he had never entered it. He limped away with his fat hands tucked under his arms, leaving the Head and Mr. Quelch to resume their interrupted talk on the subject of Richard Compton, shortly to become Compton of the Remove.

Bunter limped down the corridor, squeezing his fat hands and groaning.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Caught it!"

"Licked, old fat man?"

Bunter blinked at the Famous Five, and groaned.

"Ow! Yes! And that old blighter hadn't come to complain, after all—never even mentioned me to the Head!"

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Wharton. "Then what are you licked for?"

"Because I owned up in a frank and manly way!" groaned Bunter. "Ow! I needn't have said a word. Ow! Old Compton never came here about me at all! Wow! Only about a beastly grandson he's going to shove into the Remove! Yow-wow-ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the Famous Five.

"You can cackle!" howled Bunter. "Ow! I know I'll jolly well punch that young cad Compton's head as soon as he comes to Greyfriars. I'll jolly well give him the licking of his life his first day here. Wow!"

And Billy Bunter rolled away, grousing and groaning, only comforted by the prospect of "taking it out" of young Compton when he came, and little dreaming that in "young Compton" he was destined to recognise his old acquaintance, "Ragged Dick."

(Many surprising and thrilling incidents are to take place at Greyfriars next week, when Ragged Dick comes to the school. The newcomer is destined to meet with many breathless adventures. See next Monday's special long complete story of Harry Wharton & Co., of Greyfriars, entitled: "Ragged Dick at Greyfriars!" by Frank Richards.)

JIM HAWKINS, OF TREASURE ISLAND!

A Special Interview with the Boy Hero of the WEMBLEY EXHIBITION.

By "Magnetite."

"JIM HAWKINS?" said the cheery sailor on Treasure Island, as he rescued a very small boy, who was endeavouring to knock down the Bridge of Sighs with his paddle-boat. "Jim Hawkins? He's over there, sir, talking to Cinderella."

I thanked him, and crossed to the mainland, where a sunburnt lad was chatting with a young lady in very becoming rags.

"Hallo!" cried Jim Hawkins, shaking hands. "Come on to the ship!"

He waved farewell to his companion, and led the way up a narrow gangway and on to the Golden Hind It was a veritable ship of adventure, with its reefed sails and jolly-looking rigging.

"They're talking of making some improvement," said Jim, perching himself on the gunwale, "putting cabins and all the rest of it, you know. Of course, it's really Drake's ship, but it does very well for us."

"Do you like being here?"

"Rather! It's great fun. All the kids are so interested, and seem to regard me as a great hero. Of course, it's a ripping part to take. I'm off at six, too, so I get a chance to see the rest of the Exhibition."

"Do you just stay about here all day, or is there any acting to be done?" I asked.

Jim rumpled his fair hair.

"Oh, we have the mutiny scene from the book!" he replied. "That takes place from twelve to three, so you're too late to-day. It's rather good."

"No need to ask if you like the acting part, I suppose?" I chuckled.

Jim's eyes answered the question. He comes from a theatrical family, and has one brother and two sisters already on the stage in a famous Shakespearian company.

"I think I am going with them when the show is over," he told me. "Mr. G. is coming down one day this week. I shall have to act all I know."

He stretched out his feet, encased in buckled shoes, the toes of which were surprisingly sandy, regarded them quizzically, and laughed.

"These clothes were far too good when I had them," he confided. "Jim Hawkins ought to be a bit shabby, so I pulled out the ribbons from my buckles and made them ragged, and the day the King came I was fooling about on the ship and fell into the water, so that put the coat right!"

"Did you see their Majesties?"

Jim's eyes sparkled, and he drew himself up.

"I shook hands with them both," he said proudly. "My word! That was something like an experience. I can tell you, I was jolly excited over it!"

I felt that the fall into the water was fully explained.

"Come and have a look round!" he exclaimed, after a moment's silence. "There's heaps to see!"

He slipped off the gunwale—inside the ship this time—and led the way to land.

"Look, there's Robinson Crusoe and man Friday! Poor old Crusoe dressed up in furs to-day—whew!"

We watched Crusoe feed his parrot, and then climbed a bridge between rows of the weirdest animals that ever entered an Ark. Mrs. Noah, beaming with good nature, greeted us, and Jim pointed out some wonderful working models of railway-engines and motor-boats.

"Aren't they ripping?" he exclaimed admiringly. "I'd like that yacht."

After a chat with Mrs. Noah, we went on to the smugglers' caves. Smee, apparently, was not at home, but Peter Pan was chatting to Captain Jefferson, and had a cheery greeting for us.

On the rocky wall was fastened a thin blue ribbon, with the alluring notice "Follow the blue trail." We obeyed instructions, and passed down steps and through winding passages till we reached a cave where magic mirrors successfully banished what few good looks Nature had endowed me with. My one consolation was that my companion did not fare any better than I.

After a word with Fatima, we crossed the Bridge of Sighs, meeting Sister Anne on our way, in her look-out tower, where she sold charming bead necklaces and other trinkets.

"You must go on the railway," said Jim, leading the way to the tiny station.

We waited for the Canadian Pacific train, and examined the diminutive waiting-room, with its chairs and couches, just the size for kiddies to be really comfortable, and yet absolutely correct in detail to the real thing.

Jim did not accompany me on the trip.

"I'd better get back to the Golden Hind," he explained. "Come along when you've been round."

The journey was distinctly thrilling, and one that I can recommend to my readers without fear.

When it was over I got out at the arrival platform, and looked round for the exit.

"It's down there!" said a deep, hearty voice.

And I turned to thank Sir Francis Drake himself.

"Where d'you want to go to?" asked the guard, with a smile—smiles seemed to grow in Treasure Island!

"I want to get to the ship," I replied.

"Oh, you'd better come over here and go through the waiting-room!" said the guard. "Step through the first-class carriage!"

I thanked him, and was soon back with Jim on the sands.

By this time I was beginning to feel like tea, so my companion escorted me out of the Island and through the Amusement Park to his own especial restaurant.

"I shall be off in half an hour," he remarked, as he left me. "We might have a look round together."

We did. But as he was no longer Jim Hawkins, that has nothing to do with this interview. I promised to come and see his performance later on; so, if the Editor will let me, perhaps I'll tell you about it another time.

LOCKED AWAY FROM THE WORLD! Locked in a cell in an asylum, Ferrers Locke has little chance of gaining his liberty. Is he to remain there for ever to live the life of a madman? Can Monty, the sporting detective, help his rival now to escape this terrible fate?

The Sporting Detective!

A full-of-thrills detective story introducing Ferrers Locke, Jack Drake, and Montague Manners, the sporting detective.

A Bid for Freedom!

"NOT a moment too soon, Mostyn!"

Monty heaved a sigh of relief as he made the remark, and looked across at his butler-valet, who was seated in an armchair opposite. On the small table between them was a decanter, two glasses, and two half-smoked cigars, and, what was of more account, a cheque for fifty thousand pounds!

"A splendid piece of work," agreed Mostyn, sipping his glass, his eyes fastening rather greedily upon Lord Thundersleigh's cheque. "As you say, not a moment too soon."

"Ah, my dear fellow," smiled Monty, "the outside world little knows how close to the wind Monty Manners, the Society swell, the cricketer, the detective, runs his banking account. Things were getting desperate, Mostyn. I'm deuced thankful we landed old Thundersleigh's cheque!"

Mostyn nodded.

"After all, he could well afford it," he remarked. "Fifty thousand pounds—poof! A mere bagatelle to his lordship. It ought to have been more."

"There you are, Mostyn," said Monty reprovingly. "You were ever greedy. Do you, like a good fellow, run round to the bank and pay it in."

He flicked the cheque across the table as he spoke, and watched the greedy glint in his butler-valet's eyes as that individual pocketed the cheque and rose to his feet.

"And while you're gone," continued the detective, "I'll put my think cap on, and see what I can do in the matter of finding Ferrers Locke. That fellow Drake is worrying his head off about his 'guv'nor,'" he added. "And I like young Drake——"

"You were ever sentimental." It was Mostyn's turn to be reproving now. "Let that muddler Pyecroft get on with the job."

"No; I've made up my mind to do something," said Manners, and there was a peculiar glint in his eyes. Ferrers Locke has been off the earth long enough. So far, his disappearance has been kept away from the public. But the moment everyone knows that the 'world-famous criminal investigator' has vamoosed the ranch, as some Americans have it, the less chance I shall stand of bringing off a coup."

"You want to find him on your own, is that it?" asked Mostyn.

"Of course I do, idiot!" said Monty shortly. "Look at the publicity! 'Another feather in the cap of Montague Manners. Remarkable discovery! Ferrers Locke found by his rival! Special!'"

"I've got the idea," grinned Mostyn. "You'll find Ferrers Locke all right. You ought to be able to, anyway."

He laughed in a strained manner, and padded out of the room.

And while Mostyn was hurrying to the bank to pay in the cheque, the subject of his recent discussion was pacing up and down his padded cell.

In two days a great change had come over Ferrers Locke. His face was drawn and haggard, his eyes were hollow and sunken, denoting lack of sleep, and he appeared to have aged considerably. It was the most nerve-wracking experience of his life to be cooped up in a padded cell, taken for insane—taken for a violent patient. And he seemed powerless to help himself.

Letters he had written in plenty to people in high authority complaining of his unlawful detention. But in his innermost heart he knew that those letters would never leave the asylum, as indeed they did not. They were kept in a little bundle until such time came round when the patient was considered "entitled" to write such epistles—usually once a month.

"Heavens! This is terrible!"

The great detective paced up and down the room restlessly, his tapering fingers clenching and relaxing spasmodically.

He moved over to the window, and pressed his face against the iron bars, staring down to a freedom he could not embrace, a freedom that tantalised him, that mocked him. His fury had left him now. Twenty-four hours of imprisonment—there was no other term for it—had brought home to him the folly of violence. He must adopt temporarily the proverbial cunning of the madman. He must pit his wits against those sympathetic attendants, the suave-tongued superintendent. It was a question of time now, of that he was certain, before he found his loophole of escape.

PEOPLE IN THE STORY:

DR. FOURSTANTON, a notorious motor-bandit, who has escaped from prison.

MONTAGUE MANNERS, a Society idol and an amateur cricketer of exceptional merit, who has taken up detective work as a living. Owing to his repeated successes in his new profession, "Monty" is deemed by the newspaper scribes to be fast ousting

FERRERS LOCKE, hitherto the most famous criminal investigator in the country, from his pinnacle of popularity.

INSPECTOR PYECROFT, of the C.I.D. at Scotland Yard, a close friend of Ferrers Locke, and of

JACK DRAKE, the detective's clever boy assistant.

MOSTYN, the butler-valet of Montague Manners, an elderly gentleman retaining all the agility of his youth.

Soon after Dr. Fourstanton escapes from prison he commits a robbery at Lord Barling's house in Eaton Square. Monty Manners is called in to investigate, likewise Ferrers Locke. The two differ in their reconstruction of the crime, Ferrers Locke clinging to his theory that two burglars, working independently of each other, rifled the house, whilst Monty sticks to his theory that Dr. Fourstanton, and he only, was responsible for the theft.

The two detectives become friends, and Monty takes Locke down to Hampshire to play for Lord Thundersleigh's cricket team against the village eleven.

But hardly has the match been under way for two hours when Locke receives a telephone message purporting to come from Dr. Fourstanton. The sleuth hastens to London, but on the way he falls into the hands of a scoundrel calling himself "Stanton," who has the audacity to place Locke in Babblebury Asylum. So ingenious are the methods employed by the detective's captor that the superintendent of the asylum has no suspicions that Locke is not mad.

Meantime, Lord Thundersleigh's house is burgled, and a ring that has been in his lordship's family for generations is stolen. Lord Thundersleigh, superstitious enough to have some belief in the legend attached to the ring that, should it leave his possession, the family fortunes would deteriorate, offers Monty Manners the sum of fifty thousand pounds if he will recover it for him.

By a clever piece of work Manners recovers the ring, and gains the cheque from Thundersleigh.

(Now read on.)

He moved to the bed and seated himself upon it, his head in his hands. He did not look up; he did not see the inquiring face of the attendant peering through the grille in the door.

"Ah," muttered the attendant, "he's much better this morning. His brother said he would wear himself out. He looks quite rational now."

The door opened and the attendant came into the cell, taking good care, however, to make fast the door behind him. He brought with him a tray of appetising food, and it was the tempting odour from it that caused Locke to look up from his cupped hands, becoming aware for the first time of the presence of his visitor.

He smiled weakly.

"You are much better this morning," said the attendant genially. "Here's a good breakfast for you. We shall soon have you right, Mr. Stanton."

Locke could have jumped with surprise as he heard that name; but he controlled his feelings, and simply nodded.

The attendant was a trifle garrulous.

"Your brother holds a promise from us that we will send you back to him fully restored to your normal health within the year."

"M-my brother?"

"Come, now, don't frown," said the attendant. "Your brother is your best friend, did you but know it, although he warned us that there existed between you some antagonism. But you will appreciate him one day, Mr. Stanton."

"I'm sure I shall," smiled Ferrers Locke.

Deep down in him he was burning to question the talkative attendant. This constant mention of his "brother" intrigued him. Could it be that Dr. Fourstanton had smuggled him into this asylum? There was such a close resemblance between the two names. It seemed impossible, and yet Dr. Fourstanton had accomplished the seemingly impossible so many times in his chequered career that it was not unlikely.

Ferrers Locke found himself gazing hard at the attendant. Some instinct warned him that a chance of escape was coming his way. The man was obviously unsuspicious, so used to seeing a violent patient wear himself out that he read nothing in the momentary gleam that shone in Locke's eyes. He prattled on cheerfully.

"You won't try any more of your silly tricks," he said, wagging an admonishing finger at the patient. "Do you know, the superintendent was thinking of having you removed from here; you've been too dangerous. Fact is," he added, "the superintendent has gone over to Colney this morning to see if they'll take you in there. So if you want to stay here—and we'll make you comfortable—you had better behave yourself."

"Many thanks!"

A change had come over the patient. The news that the superintendent was away from the building decided Ferrers Locke to make a bold bid for liberty.

It happened in a flash, the unsuspecting attendant being taken completely by surprise.

Smack!

Locke's clenched fist took the man fair upon the point of the jaw. He crumpled up like a pack of cards, swaying sideways upon the bed like the pendulum of a clock.

"I'm sorry I had to do it," muttered Ferrers Locke—and, strangely enough, the attendant heard the words through his semi-consciousness—"but it was the only way."

Swiftly he dragged the man's tunic from him, pitched his cap aside and his keys. Then he proceeded to bind him with a length of sheet which he tore from the bed. The fellow was returning to consciousness as the detective hastily pulled the tunic over his lounge suit; but he could raise no sound beyond a gurgle or two, for a gag was between his teeth.

Locke donned the peaked cap, pocketed the keys, and then stretched his attendant upon the bed and covered him with the eiderdown. He took the precaution of turning the man on his side so that he faced the window. In this position he would be taken by any passing attendant looking through the grille to be fast asleep. With a coolness that was admirable in the circumstances, Locke bound the man to the bed so that he could hardly move.

"I'm sorry," he repeated, "but it's the only way. When I've found my freedom I'll pay you handsomely for that knock-out blow."

The man gurgled some reply as the detective darted to the door and keyed himself out. One look he gave the attendant—this time via the grille in the door—and chuckled. His nerve was returning. He was going to escape.

Assuming as much as he was able the gait of the attendant, Locke walked down the stone corridor, each step bringing him nearer freedom. He encountered no one on the way until he neared the staff's quarters. And there his luck was dead out.

"Walters!"

One of the attendants called to him as he passed the door of the dining-room.

Locke quickened his step.

"Walters!"

There was an air of command in the ejaculation. Little did Locke know that the chief attendant was calling him. He hurried still more.

"Hang it, Walters, didn't you hear me first time?" The chief attendant came out of the dining-room, his brow wrinkled in a frown of annoyance. "WALTERS!"

He fairly bellowed the name as he saw Ferrers Locke continue on his way. There was nothing for it but for Locke to face round and chance it. He came to a halt, pulling his cap down well over his eyes.

"What the thump's the matter with you this morning?" inquired the chief attendant. "I called you——"

His words trailed off, and a look of utter incredulity came over his features as he stared into Ferrers Locke's face.

Thud!

It was a time for action—not words. Locke's imposture had been pierced. He took advantage of his temporary advantage, however, and brought up his fist with lightning speed. It connected with the attendant's solar plexus, and, with a deep groan, he doubled up like a penknife.

Locke stood undecided for a moment, and his indecision proved fatal. That groan had reached the ears of three other attendants in the dining-room, and they hastened out to account for it. When they saw their chief lying prostrate upon the floor they rushed forward. Even then Locke could have slipped off, had not the stricken attendant recovered somewhat.

He pointed a shaking finger at the detective, tried to speak, and then sank back. But his action served its purpose. The attendants looked quickly at Ferrers Locke, and then——

"Mr. Stanton!" The name was uttered in unison.

In a moment Ferrers Locke was fighting for his freedom. Back against the wall, he hit out with all the strength he could muster. One after another the attendants rolled to the stone floor of the corridor, but as quickly as he put them down so they sprang up again, and returned to the attack.

It was a glorious scrap. Never had one man put up such a fight against odds, for three more attendants were hurrying to the scene.

Locke, his face bleeding in several places already, realised, with a pang of despair, that his chance of freedom had come and gone. But he fought on, deriving a grim satisfaction from seeing his assailants sprawl down like a lot of ninepins. Every one of the party bore signs of the fray.

Inch by inch Locke retreated along the passage, keeping within the shelter of the wall. His mouth was streaming with crimson, his knuckles were red and raw, but he fought on with all the savagery of despair.

"Get him, for Heaven's sake!" gasped the chief attendant, who still thought Locke to be mad. "If he runs amok outside the building, he'll do a deuce of a lot of damage, and we shall all get the sack!"

That prospect put more energy and courage into the attendants. They were now seven to one, but the one was still unvanquished.

Smack, smack, smack!

Three swings with but a couple of seconds' interval between them saw three of the attendants grovelling on the floor. Two of their companions who were advancing, sprawled over their recumbent figures, and went to earth uttering wrathful ejaculations.

Smack, smack!

Two more attendants joined their comrades on the stone floor as Locke hit out. It was a respite, and the detective glanced about him swiftly. His eyes caught sight of a wooden form propped

As Ferrers Locke retreated slowly down the corridor, holding the attendants at bay with the form, he trod on the sleeping form of the asylum cat. There was a startled howl of protest from the animal, mingling with a yell of triumph from the attendants, as, seeing their opportunity, they surged forward. *(See this page.)*

against the wall, and, with a cry of triumph, he sprang towards it, and caught it up.

With the form in his hands he felt renewed hope. It would cover the retreat he had determined upon.

"Back, you idiots!" he roared. "If you get a blow from this you'll be done for keeps!"

He swung the form about his head as he spoke, and retreated a pace. Like a pack of wolves the attendants hung back, waiting for the slightest opportunity. Well they knew their fate if they trespassed within the radius of that sweeping weapon.

The escaped man had the upper hand. Back, back he went, and still that sweeping form kept a clear passage in front of him.

The tide had turned in Ferrers Locke's favour. It seemed that fate was favouring his bold bid for freedom. And then there happened one of those extraordinary simple things that are tragic in their consequences.

Ferrers Locke trod on a cat!

The asylum cat was sleeping in the shade of the wall near a hot-water radiator, oblivious of a heavy foot about to disturb its tranquillity. As Locke retreated his left foot came down on the soft body of the cat, and he felt a cold shiver run down his spine.

His first thought was for the cat. He performed some weird evolution in his endeavour to avoid crushing the animal, and, naturally enough, the form banged to the floor.

There was a startled howl of protest from the cat, mingling weirdly enough with the yell of triumph from the attendants, as, seeing their opportunity, they surged forward. Locke grabbed up the form again, but the damage had been done. The attendants were upon him like a pack of wild animals. They dragged him down, falling over themselves in their eagerness to secure him.

Still struggling, the detective was borne to the ground, seven pairs of hands fastened upon him. Fight as he might then, he knew the issue was against him. He was beaten.

His struggles began to grow weaker, for he was sprawled out on his back with the seven atop of him. And in the midst of it all the superintendent returned from his journey. He darted forward, a cry of amazement falling from his lips as he beheld the strange sight of seven of his warders fighting like wild-cats to subdue one man.

"What—what, in the name of thunder——" he began.

The frown that had swiftly congregated on his brow deepened considerably when he saw the identity of the "one man."

"I knew he'd be a handful!" he muttered. "I won't have him in the place a moment longer than I can help. Secure him!"

They secured him all right. What single individual in similar circumstances could do aught but submit. Despite his loudly-voiced protestations that he was not mad, that he was not a Mr. Stanton—that he was Ferrers Locke—the detective was bundled back to his cell.

The attendant they found in the bed was liberated, and his voice was added to the din. Then followed a deadly silence as the attendants made fast the door and retreated, leaving the patient a temporary wreck on the narrow bed of the cell, his hands and face bleeding, his hopes of freedom shattered.

In the superintendent's room the chief attendant was "going through the mill."

"This kind of disturbance will ruin the asylum," said the superintendent, glaring at his subordinate. "They'll think we can't manage our business. This man Stanton must go—and at once. I'll write to his brother immediately."

That letter was written—a letter urging the "brother" to take the patient away within twenty-four hours.

And while the police of Babblebury would have given worlds to have come across Ferrers Locke, the missing detective—for Inspector Pyecroft had scarified them with lashing tongue on their inefficiency—Superintendent Mennfleet, of of the Babblebury Asylum, would have given worlds to have rid himself of his latest patient.

It was a situation that could have been smoothed out with satisfaction to all parties had the local police taken it into their heads to inquire at the asylum. But they didn't.

Another Feather for Monty!

"GET the car out, Mostyn!" said Montague Manners, pulling on his driving-gloves. "I'm going to find Ferrers Locke and earn a little more notoriety."

It was eight hours after Mostyn had paid the cheque for fifty thousand pounds into his master's account, eight hours, roughly, after Locke had made his glorious but ineffectual attempt at escape eight hours after the superintendent's letter had been posted.

Montague Manners was feeling pleased with himself, although Mostyn, his butler-valet, who had obviously just returned from a journey, seemed disgruntled. He hastened out of the room, however, and made tracks for the garage. Inside ten minutes Manners' touring-car, a high-powered Daimler, was in readiness for the journey.

An admiring crowd watched the great detective saunter down the steps of his house and enter the car, and something like a cheer followed him as he drove off.

"Wonderful how the British public idolises a cricketer," said Monty, to his servant, as he turned the corner into Piccadilly Circus.

"The British public always pays homage to a man who plays the game—who plays cricket!" answered Mostyn, and there was an undercurrent of insincerity in his words that always came to the surface when he addressed his master.

Monty shot him a swift glance.

"Cut it out, dear man!" he said briefly, and a cloud settled on his handsome features.

The drive through London was accomplished in comparative silence, and from the suburbs not a single word was uttered by either party until Marsden hove in sight.

"Hallo, there's Pycroft!" suddenly exclaimed Manners, taking one hand from the wheel and pointing to a tall, heavy figure some few yards in front of them. "He's still watching that confounded tower."

Mostyn laughed as he followed the direction his master indicated.

The worthy inspector had clung like a leech to the Tudor tower which, according to the evidence, showed that Dr. Fourstanton was in the habit of using. But his vigilance had met with no reward. Neither had his "waking up" of the local police borne any fruit. Ferrers Locke's whereabouts were still as deep a mystery as before.

Jack Drake was chafing at the delay. In his innermost heart he knew that he was on a wrong track in hoping to surprise Dr. Fourstanton. The rascal would never visit the place so long as he knew it was being watched. And all this time his beloved guv'nor might be suffering agonies, as indeed he was.

It was with a feeling of great relief, therefore, that Drake spotted Monty Manners approaching. He had a great belief in this newcomer to the detective profession. He ran forward to meet him.

"I have come to keep my word," smiled the sleuth, shaking Drake warmly by the hand. "You haven't found Mr. Locke, of course, Pyecroft?" he added.

The C.I.D. man resented the "of course," and blushed furiously.

"No," he grunted. "There's no sign of him—or sign of Dr. Fourstanton."

"Then, perhaps, you'll allow me to butt in on this case," smiled Monty. "After all, you know, two heads are better than one. Suppose you tell me what you discovered from that car wreck of mine."

The inspector shifted uneasily upon his feet, overcame his natural dislike of confiding anything to this foppish individual who styled himself a detective, and forthwith gave Manners a detailed account of the clues that had led him to the old tower.

"Very smart indeed," was Manners' comment as he listened to the C.I.D. man's deduction. "And you say the local police have searched every scrap of the neighbourhood between here and Babblebury?"

"Every likely place!" returned Pyecroft. "I've kept 'em well at it!"

"Ah! The likely places, you say!" muttered Manners thoughtfully. "But what about the unlikely places?"

"Oh, you talk in riddles!" grunted Pyecroft. "We've searched everywhere—likely places and unlikely places."

"Quite, quite!" smiled Monty imperturbably. "Don't get out of temper."

Drake grinned, but he changed it to a frown as the C.I.D. man turned upon him.

"Have you got anything to suggest?" asked the inspector aggressively.

"Only that we'll try the unlikely places," said Manners. "Have you got a map of the district, Pyecroft?"

The C.I.D man grunted and fumbled in his pocket.

"Here's a map of the two localities—Marsden and Babblebury," he said. "And I'm firmly convinced that somewhere hidden amongst them is Ferrers Locke."

"A sort of instinctive feeling, eh?" said Manners, studying the map closely. "Strangely enough I feel the same."

Pyecroft's growing wrath was appeased by that statement.

"Well, we'll adjourn to Babblebury first," said Manners, taking charge, as it were, of operations. "There's a nice little inn there where we can talk the thing out in comfort. Nothing like a pow-wow, you know," he added, turning to Drake.

"Ahem!" The cough came from Mostyn. "Shall I stay with the car, sir?"

"Yes, you'd better," came the reply. "We'll walk. You run along to Babblebury in about an hour's time, Mostyn. We'll meet you at the Three Feathers. You'll find the lunch-basket in the car. Help yourself."

Mostyn saluted and withdrew. Drake and Pyecroft wondered why Manners should decide to walk to Babblebury when he had a car, but the detective answered their thoughts.

"We'll take the short cut," he announced, falling into stride. "Much quicker than the car."

The trio strode off at a brisk pace, and at length came to the main square in Babblebury. Monty Manners led them to the best inn the place contained—the Three Feathers—and entered the saloon.

For some twenty minutes or so Monty discoursed upon likely theories as to where Ferrers Locke had been taken, but they were all rejected. Moodily the trio eyed each other, until Manners, whose ears were of the keenest, overheard a remark that proceeded from a stockily-built man who was talking to a companion not two tables away.

"Deuce of a job to overpower the fellow," the man was saying. "He gave me a clump across the jaw"—the speaker fingered his jaw reminiscently—"and generally gave us all beans! Calls himself a detective, you know. Thinks he's Ferrers Locke——"

Manners sat bolt upright as he heard the name. Pyecroft and Drake looked at him inquiringly.

"What's the stunt?" demanded the inspector.

Manners ignored the C.I.D. man's remark. He beckoned to a waiter, who came over to him at once.

"Do you know who that gentleman is?" he asked the waiter, indicating the stockily-built individual. "The one who's speaking now?"

The waiter looked in the required direction, and then smiled—a smile that broadened still more as Manners pressed half-a-crown into his palm.

"Sure, sir," he answered. "He's an attendant up at the loonytic 'sylum. Comes here regular, he does. Thank you, sir"—pocketing the half-crown—"thank you very much."

The waiter moved away the richer by half-a-crown, while Manners faced his two companions the richer by a piece of information that was decidedly cheap at half-a-crown.

"Well?" Pyecroft jerked out the inquiry aggressively.

"I'm willing to bet you, Pyecroft," said Manners, with an irritating smile,

"that I'll be shaking Ferrers Locke's hands within fifteen minutes——"

"You'll what——" gasped the C.I.D. man in astonishment.

"Wh-a-a-at!" stammered Drake, his heart beating a trifle quicker than usual.

"I repeat that I'll be shaking Mr. Locke's hand within fifteen minutes," said Manners. "I said we should find him in an unlikely place——"

"You surely did!" agreed Pyecroft. "But——"

"And the unlikely place in this instance is a lunatic asylum," continued Manners.

Drake and Pyecroft nearly collapsed in their seats.

"A l-l-l-lunatic asylum?" they gasped incredulously.

Manners nodded and rose to his feet.

"Come," he said; "you leave things to me."

He inquired the way to the local lunatic asylum and well within the fifteen minutes prescribed he was certainly interviewing the superintendent.

Pyecroft and Drake followed like people in a dream.

"I believe you have a patient here who thinks he is a detective," began Manners, watching the superintendent's features closely.

The official raised his hands deploringly.

"Don't talk about him," he said. "The man's worse than a whole cart-load of wild animals."

"May we see him?" went on Manners; and he motioned to Pyecroft to declare his official capacity.

"Why, of course," said the superintendent, at length, satisfying himself that Pyecroft was what he represented himself to be. "But—but, gentlemen——"

"Lead the way," said the inspector

The official led the way—to the padded cell.

Manners was the first to peer through the grille in the door. One glance seemed to satisfy him. Then his place was taken by Pyecroft. The inspector let out a whoop of excitement.

"Locke!"

The figure seated on the tiny bed looked up as his name was called, and rubbed his eyes to make certain that they were not playing him tricks. Then Pyecroft was rudely dragged aside by Drake. His astonishment, his relief was more noticeable. He almost cried the words:

"Dear old guv'nor!"

Ferrers Locke felt his heart beat quickly, felt the colour drain from his face, for the shock of seeing those familiar faces had not yet passed from him. He rose to his feet agitatedly, what time the superintendent opened the door of the cell.

"Thank heavens!"

Locke uttered the words fervently. None of the company knew exactly through what an ordeal he had passed.

Drake dashed forward and seized his chief by the hand, Pyecroft thumped him on the back delightedly, whilst at a distance stood Manners talking to the amazed, and by now thoroughly apprehensive superintendent.

"H-how did you find me?" asked the great detective at length. "I thought I was doomed to live the life of a madman. Tell me—how did you get on my trail?"

Pyecroft and Drake looked across at Monty Manners.

"Mr. Manners found you, guv'nor," said Drake.

The cricketer detective detached himself from the superintendent's side as Locke advanced towards him.

"My hearfelt thanks, Monty," said Locke, gripping him warmly by the hand. "I shall never forget this—never!"

Monty, smiling, immaculate as ever, passed over the whole affair lightly, and the party moved down the stairs to the superintendent's office. There Locke spoke his mind to the frightened superintendent, making that worthy tremble in fear of losing his job.

"But your papers of admission were in order," he protested at length, when Locke had finished.

"Let me see the papers," said Locke sharply.

The papers were produced, and the detectives peered at them closely.

"Forgeries!" grunted Pyecroft at once. "I know James Gregory's signature—one of the Commissioners in Lunacy—and that isn't it, I'll stake my life!"

"I guess I'll take charge of those papers," said Locke, pocketing them. "And now, tell me, superintendent—what did my captor look like——"

The asylum official gave a fairly accurate description of the man who had brought Ferrers Locke to the place, but the description would have fitted thousands of people.

"I don't know whether you could trace him by——" The superintendent let out an ejaculation of excitement. "Why, I wrote him early this morning, asking him to take his brother—I mean you away, Mr. Locke, within twenty-four hours."

"Then if we hang on here he'll run into our arms," said Pyecroft.

"But why hang on here?" said Locke. "You have the address of this scoundrel. Can't we hustle along to the place right now."

"That's the ticket!" exclaimed Drake delightedly. "We'll catch this rotter Fourstanton—it must be Fourstanton—on the hop."

"Fourstanton," muttered Ferrers Locke. "I've been doing a bit of thinking since I tried to escape this morning, and I've come to the conclusion that it can't be Dr. Fourstanton who shut me up in here——"

"But why——"

"Because, if you remember, Dr. Fourstanton—or so he called himself—phoned me up from London, saying that you, Drake, were in imminent danger of going sky-high. And yet the man who outed me while I was driving Monty's car to town apparently called himself Stanton, too—a contraction of the name, I'll admit, and one given obviously to throw the blame on the doctor."

"I get you," said Manners, coming to the rescue. "They both can't be Dr. Fourstanton obviously."

Pyecroft scratched his head in perplexity.

"Talk about mystery!" he muttered. "I'm in a regular maze an' muddle. Come, let's get along to this address of one of the Fourstantons."

They laughed at Pyecroft's confusion: for, undoubtedly, there was a tangle of mystery concerning the name of Fourstanton, and made haste to pick up Manners' car at the Three Feathers. Mostyn himself was just climbing out of the car, having arrived punctual to orders.

"You're almost a magician," said Drake, dragging at Manners' coat-sleeve. "You see, you asked Mostyn to turn up with the car in an hour, and he arrives the very moment we want

"Bobby doin' his return journey," muttered one of the masked men in the room above the shop. "Don't get windy——" But even his composure began to desert him as through the still night air rang out the shrill blast of a policeman's whistle. "You fool—we're too late!" *(See page 28.)*

him most. Wonderful, my dear Jotson!" he added, with a grin.

Manners eyed him sharply, and then laughed. But the look passed unnoticed as Mostyn came forward and seized Ferrers Locke by the hand.

"I'm so pleased to see you again, sir!" he spluttered, apparently very much overcome. "The master has been worrying about you—everyone has been worrying about you."

"I never knew I was a person of such importance," smiled Locke. "But I thank you, Mostyn, for your sentiments."

The party entered the Daimler and drove to the address given the superintendent of the asylum by Locke's captor. It proved to be a tumble-down cottage tenanted by an old man, who was obviously not Dr. Fourstanton. From him Ferrers Locke learned that a tall gentleman used the place as an address, for which he paid the handsome fee of ten shillings a week.

"Indeed!" said Locke. "And when did your tall gentleman last come here?"

"He came here only four hours ago—from London," came the reply. "There was a letter for him, too."

"That would be the letter from the superintendent," said Ferrers Locke. "Hum!"

"Not much change out of that," grumbled Pyecroft. "I'll give instructions to have this place watched, Mr. Locke," he added in a whisper.

"'Fraid it won't serve any purpose," said the sleuth. "This mystery man is apparently well informed; he'll steer clear of here."

"I suppose you don't know where your tenant hangs out in London?" asked Manners of the old cottager.

"No. He don't talk to me, an' I don't ask him queschuns. He be a gentleman, an' pays his way reg'lar."

There was little to be gained by staying at the cottage; and, more mystified than ever, the party stepped back into Manners' car, the nose of which was promptly turned Londonwards.

An hour's journey, and the Daimler was purring up Jermyn Street. Monty Manners pulled up outside his rooms and turned to Ferrers Locke.

"Will you come in and have some dinner with me?" he asked. "All of you," he added.

But Ferrers Locke, who was badly in need of sleep and quiet, shook his head.

"Not this time, Monty," he answered. "I'm going to sleep like a log to-night; some other time, old chap."

Pyecroft and Drake, as was natural, declined the invitation also as soon as Locke had excused himself. In a gay mood the party drove on until they arrived at Locke's chambers in Baker Street. There Monty Manners and Mostyn left their friends.

"You've got a lot to thank Mr. Manners for," said Drake, as he watched the Daimler fast disappear in the maze of traffic. "Isn't he a clever chap, guv'nor?"

Ferrers Locke, who was gazing after the car, too, nodded vigorously.

"He is clever," he returned. "Wonderfully clever!"

But Pyecroft, to whom something of his old dislike of Monty Manners had now returned, sniffed deprecatingly.

"Clever fiddlesticks!" he growled. "Confoundedly lucky, that's all!"

And when one analysed Monty Manners' successes one had to admit that the cricketer detective undoubtedly was lucky. But in that moment of freedom Ferrers Locke did not grudge his benefactor anything.

"And clever!" he muttered, turning to the staircase leading to his chambers. "I will have the last word, Pyecroft."

Snort!—from Inspector Pyecroft.

— —

Unlucky!

AS the deep-toned gong of Big Ben signalled the hour of two a.m. two opera-hatted figures—one of whom carried a suit-case—made their way up Regent Street fifty yards in the rear of a sturdy policeman who was going his beat.

A casual observer noticing these two figures would have said that they were revellers returning from a night club, for they were dressed in evening clothes, their white shirt-fronts standing out in gleaming contrast to the dead-black of the material that encompassed them.

But their next action would have excited no little interest and suspicion had they been observed, for the two men halted outside the door of untenanted premises, having first satisfied themselves that the road was clear. A shaft of light from a nearby street-lamp showed the younger of the two fitting a key into the lock of the door.

"Lucky I took a wax impression of the key when the agent let me inspect the place a month ago," was the whispered comment.

"Cut the cackle and let's get inside!" was the return.

A light laugh echoed out simultaneously with the door opening, and the two men passed inside.

With infinite caution they trod up the staircase, cursing under their breath at every creak of the naked boards until they reached the first floor. Once on the landing, they paused, listening. No sound broke the silence save the heavy thumping of their hearts and the occasional rustling as of a rat moving about the wainscotting.

"Second room on the left," muttered the leader of this nocturnal expedition. "That is at the back of the premises. Once there, we shall be able to put on the light."

His companion grunted and moved off like a cat, keeping within arm's length of the wall. The second room on the left was reached without a hitch, and, once inside it, the leader of the expedition flashed on a burglar's lamp. Its rays were directed against the wall that joined up with the premises next door,

(*Continued on the next page.*)

TO AND FROM YOUR EDITOR!

YOU can see from No. 2 of our simple weekly competitions how easy it is to win one of the topping awards. Five minutes' work, and the whole eight picture-puzzles can be solved. Now, can anything be simpler? The second set of puzzle-pictures deal with objects seen in the country, familiar things which every boy and girl has seen many times over and will recognise directly. Set to work on the competition right now, and see if you can't win a prize. Look at them! Fine sailing-yachts that will be the envy of all your pals if you get one; topping cameras made by Kodak, and penknives of the very best make. There will be no need to urge you all to enter the contest, for the prizes are enough to draw you into it.

Next week there will be another set of pictures of objects seen in the town. Now, this should be even better and easier to solve. So if you keep your weather-eye open for the jolly old MAGNET next week you will find another chance of competing in this competition.

"RAGGED DICK AT GREYFRIARS!"

By Frank Richards.

This is the title of next Monday's magnificent long complete tale of your popular schoolboy characters, Harry Wharton & Co. of Greyfriars. You will get some idea of the story from the title. It deals with Ragged Dick's entry into his first public school. It all seems like a wonderful dream to the poor homeless waif, who but a few days ago was wandering the countryside in a very pitiful condition. Of course, Dick gets a shock of his life when he meets Harry Wharton & Co. and Billy Bunter at the school. But, fortunately, the Famous Five do not recognise him as the waif they had rescued from the bullying tramp. But he is not so fortunate as to escape the inquisitive Owl of the Remove. Bunter sees him at once as the boy to whom he had given a piece of cake in Sir Henry Compton's summer-house that memorable day. Dressed in schoolboy's clothes, Ragged Dick is little like the tramp who wandered through the dusty highways in search of work and food. He looks the part he has been sent to Greyfriars to play, the part of Sir Henry's grandson. But, in spite of this great change, Dick knows that there are breakers ahead for himself where Billy Bunter is concerned.

"THE SPORTING DETECTIVE!"

The next instalment of this wonderful detective story is crammed full of surprises and breathless adventures. It will hold you enthralled from beginning to end. As usual, Monty Manners, that likeable Society leader and sportsman, is well to the fore, with the great detective, Ferrers Locke, by his side, unravelling a mystery so deep that it appears impossible to solve. Though it may seem like this, you can feel every confidence in Ferrers Locke.

CARAVANNING!

What a wonderful lot of pleasure can be got from a caravanning holiday! Harry Wharton and his chums have more than once indulged in this particular kind of holiday, and they have something to say about the matter in their next issue of the "Greyfriars Herald." Other fellows, too, have a lot to speak or write about on the same subject, so you can look forward to a very bright and cheerful number. It will be a "Special Caravanning Number," and the contributions are well up to scratch; Harry Wharton has seen to that.

SURPRISES COMING!

I will not tell you what these wonderful surprises are which will be coming your way very shortly. I am only going to put you wise, so to speak, a little in advance, so that you can be on the look-out. I might mention that the treats will be of an extra special, gilt-edged variety. If you mention this to your pals, they, too, can be on the look-out for them.

OUR CARTOONS.

Our cartoonist surpasses himself next week. He has given us a side-splitting series of pictures dealing with cricket at Greyfriars. I have not the slightest doubt that they will give you a long laugh. Mind you keep the jolly old peepers wide open for this special treat next week.

YOUR EDITOR.

Printed and published every Monday by the Proprietors, The Amalgamated Press (1922), Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Advertisement offices: The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Registered for transmission by Canadian Magazine Post. Subscription rates: Inland and abroad, 11s. per annum; 5s. 6d. for six months. Sole agents for South Africa: The Central News Agency, Ltd. Sole agents for Australia and New Zealand: Messrs. Gordon & Gotch, Ltd.; and for Canada, The Imperial News Co., Ltd. (Canada).— Saturday, June 20th, 1925.

and the lamp was so carefully shuttered that hardly a beam was reflected through the dirty window that backed out on to a narrow yard.

"Here we are. Don't nurse that blessed light; shove it on the floor!"

The light was placed on the bare boards of the floor, and by its help the two evening-clad gentlemen doffed their outer garments of respectability, and took from the suit-case two pairs of overalls.

These were quickly donned, likewise a couple of black silk handkerchiefs that served as masks. Then there came into view a small canvas folder that contained a set of up-to-date burglarious instruments.

These were spread on the floor by the lamp. The evening clothes were folded and placed in a neat pile, and then the two housebreakers set to work.

They worked to a prearranged plan; for, without hesitation, the taller of the two began to bore holes on a two foot square pattern through the plaster of the wall, which was not of a greater thickness than six inches. The brace and bit was oiled at frequent intervals, hardly making a sound as it ground its way through the plaster. And as each hole was made, so the second of the two burglars drew a narrow steel saw along it, cutting through the plaster and joining up the holes, as it were, until the whole square had been pierced.

It only wanted a slight pressure to move it from the wall proper, and with infinite care the leader of the expedition inserted a strip of hardened steel with a hook at the end, and gradually drew the whole square towards him. His companion, on bended knees, waited for the square of plaster to tilt outwards, catching it in his hands the moment it tilted from the perpendicular position, and lowering it without a sound to a pile of matting on the floor.

"Good!"

The two stood upright for a moment to ease their cramped limbs and to wipe the perspiration from their brows. Before them, on a level with the flooring, loomed a dark aperture.

"Bit of a job to get through that!" grunted one of them. "We ought to have made it larger."

His companion did not reply. He fell on his knees and began to worm his way through the opening. It was an uncomfortable job, but he accomplished it cheerfully enough, and then his voice, in a hollow whisper, signalled his companion to pass him the lantern.

The lantern was passed through the opening in the wall, and a few seconds after it went the second burglar.

"A jolly neat job!" chuckled the leader. "No hitch anywhere. We're now in the upper room of Crawley Marchard's premises," he added. "Somewhere below, about ten feet the other side of this floor, is a fortune worth having. Let's get busy. Time's on the wing."

He consulted his watch, and then laughed softly.

"The bobby has just passed this beat," he muttered. "He does the same time every night. That means we've got fifteen minutes in which to pierce this floor and get below before he returns. We must not touch the handle of the door in this room, as it is connected with a blamed burglar alarm. The floor's safe."

"You're a cool card," said his companion, in tones of admiration. "Everything's worked out to plan."

"That's the only way to be a cracksman—with safety," came the light response. "Busy now."

GREYFRIARS CELEBRITIES. No. 10.

BOLSOVER MAJOR—The Fighting Man of the Remove.

They set to work on the floor. The carpet was torn up, the brace and bit once more came into play, and within the fifteen minutes another square had been cut away.

"Splendid!"

The leader peered through the hole in the floor, and then began to unfasten a length of rope from around his middle.

"We've made a bit of a mess with the plaster. It's all over the floor. But that's unavoidable. Catch!"

He threw one end of the rope to his companion, who caught it dexterously, and began to fasten one end around a large safe that stood in the corner of the room. He eyed that safe for some time, until his companion plucked him by the arm.

"Don't waste any thought on that chunk of steel," he whispered. "The blessed thing only contains the ledgers and the petty cash. You see, I've made it my business to know all, or nearly all, Marchard's affairs. The loot we want is downstairs. You've made the rope fast?"

"Sure!"

"Then I'll be off. Don't get the wind up. I know where all the burglar alarms are, and I know the combination of the safe. I haven't been behind old Marchard a dozen times for nothing when he's been closing up for the night. That combination I know backwards. Leave it to me, and get ready to haul up the stuff."

With consummate ease he lowered himself down the rope, which now dangled through the hole in the flooring, until he landed on the broken chunks of plaster below. They crunched and cracked under his feet for a moment or two, until he found a clear portion of the floor. Then, with soft step, he padded across the room, avoiding the numerous burglar alarms like he would the plague, until he arrived at the safe. Meantime, his companion, feeling that the rope was slack, hauled it up until he received instructions to lower it again.

Hardly had this been accomplished, hardly had the cracksman before the safe assumed a kneeling position, than from the street without came the measured tread of the constable doing his beat.

A moment or two later a lantern threw its light across the window of the jeweller's shop. The face of a constable loomed up behind the apex of the rays. But the officer appeared to notice nothing out of the ordinary, for he doused his lantern and continued on his beat.

And the moment his heavy footsteps began to die away again the cracksman crawled out from a sheltered angle of the safe, laughed lightly, and applied the combination to the lock.

He had fifteen minutes in which to do his job before the constable returned. That fifteen minutes' grace was more than he needed. The door of the safe swung open in less than a minute. In

(*Continued on page* 28.)

THE SPORTING DETECTIVE!

(Continued from page 27.)

less than ten minutes it had been emptied of all portable valuables and closed again. The cracksman scooped them up and placed them in a small sack.

A soft whistle and down came the rope, curling like a snake. Another whistle and the loot was being hauled aloft to the next floor. Half a minute passed, and then the rope flashed down for the third and last time that night.

The cracksman on the ground floor swarmed up it like a cat, and, breathing a trifle heavily after his exertions, paused to take breath. His companion, meanwhile, was replacing the carpet and gathering up his burglarious paraphernalia.

"Fit?" he asked, a trifle nervously. "Let's get off."

"Never get flurried on a job like this," came the reply. "I can do with a cigarette.

With admirable coolness the speaker proceeded to smoke a Turkish cigarette, much to his companion's annoyance and alarm, for he was eager to be gone. Hardly had the leader of the twain enjoyed three puffs of fragrant tobacco when through the interstices of the carpet, which was a trifle threadbare, shone the gleam of a lantern.

"Bobby doin' his return journey," muttered the smoker. "Don't get windy. That's only a stray filter of light coming through the hole we made through the carpet."

But his companion was nervous with a cause, for the light moved about a bit, but it remained full on for all that, sufficient indication that the constable was not satisfied with a cursory glance of the interior of the shop that all was well.

"Don't get windy——" began the smoker.

But even his composure began to desert him as through the still night air rang out the shrill blast of a policeman's whistle. And by tracing the sound it was from the constable below them that the whistle blast proceeded.

"You fool! We've left it too late."

"Keep cool," advised the smoker, pitching his cigarette away into the grate. "We've got bags of time."

At a normal pace he moved towards the hole in the dividing wall, and signalled to his comrade to crawl through.

And as that individual clambered through and gathered up his tools the night air was made hideous by a repetition of whistle blowing.

The alarm had been given.

(Who are these two strange midnight prowlers? With the alarm now given, will they make good their escape, or fall into the hands of the law? And will their capture shed light upon many mysteries which have been puzzling both Ferrers Locke and his young rival, Monty Manners? If you wish to learn all this you must read next week's long, thrilling instalment of our powerful detective serial.)