

SIMPLE COMPETITION—BIG PRIZES—HAVE A TRY!

No. 908. Vol. XXVIII.

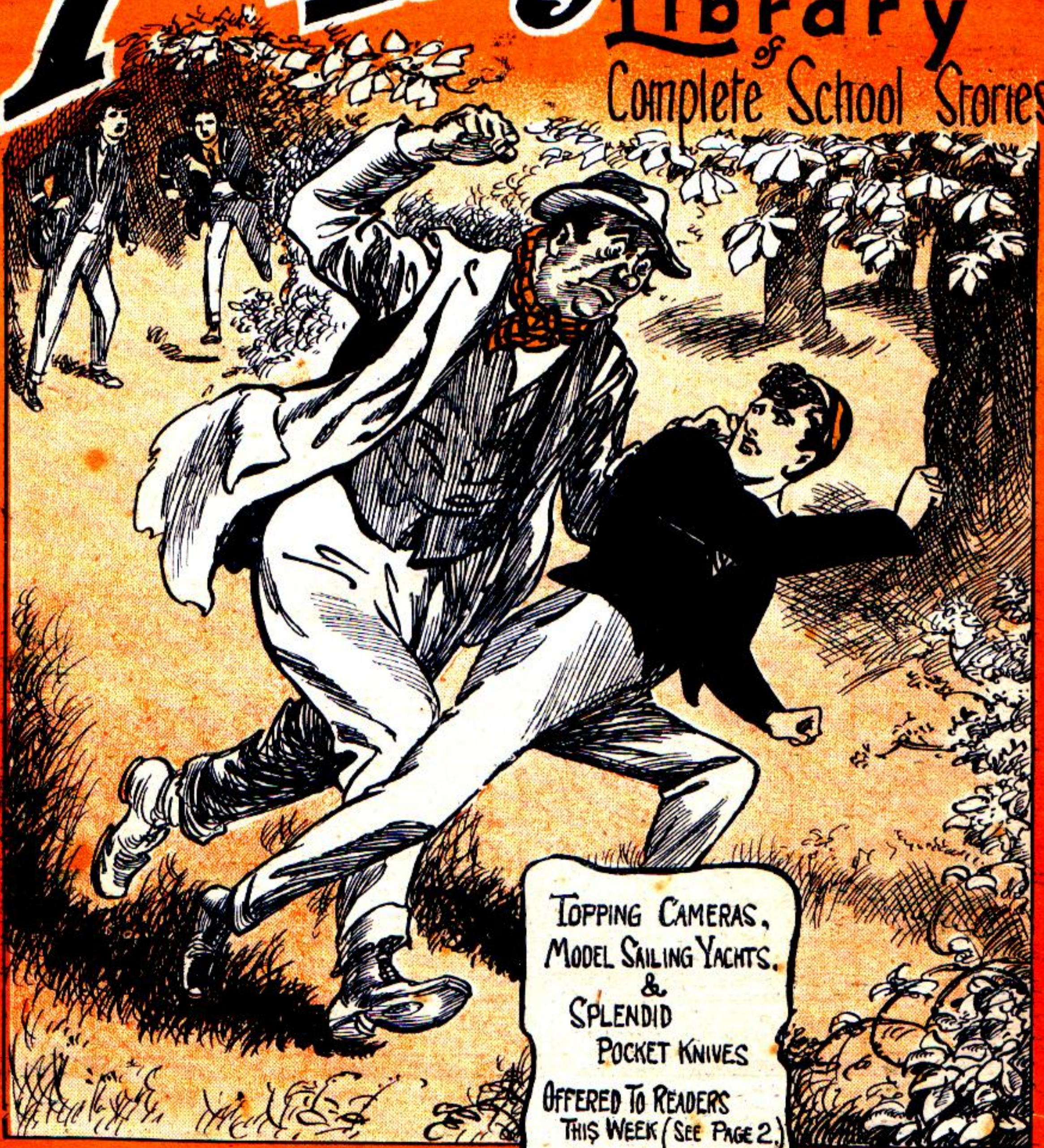
Week Ending July 4th, 1926.

The

EVERY
MONDAY.

Magnet

Library
of
Complete School Stories.



TOPPING CAMERAS,
MODEL SAILING YACHTS,
&
SPLENDID
POCKET KNIVES
OFFERED TO READERS
THIS WEEK (SEE PAGE 2.)

RAGGED DICK'S PERIL! In the clutch of his old companion
of the roads!

(A thrilling and dramatic episode from the long Greyfriars tale in this issue.)

THE LAST OF OUR SIMPLE ONE-WEEK COMPETITIONS.



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

THIS is the last of our new and fascinating WEEKLY competitions the simplicity of which is obvious 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 FEATURES SEEN IN THE AIR, and only ordinary knowledge is required to solve them.

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

to be awarded in order of merit.

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?" No. 4, c/o "Magnet," Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C. 4, so as to reach that address not later than Tuesday, July 14th.


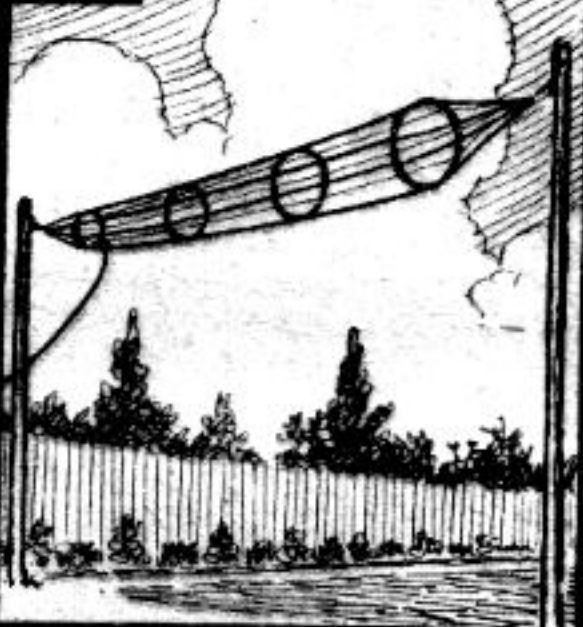


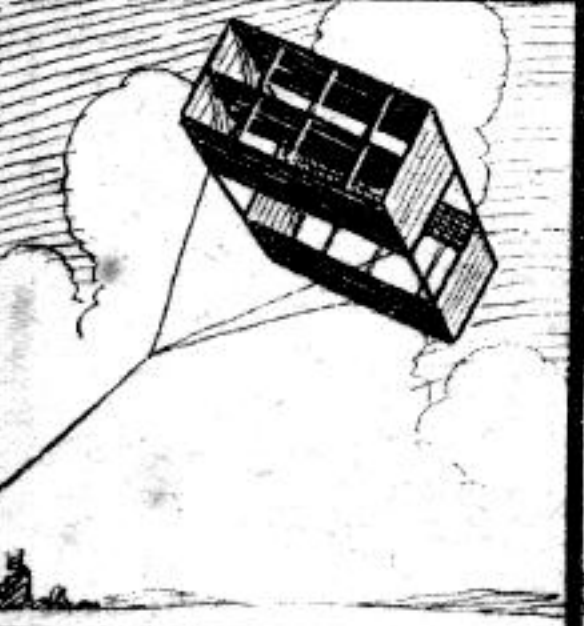
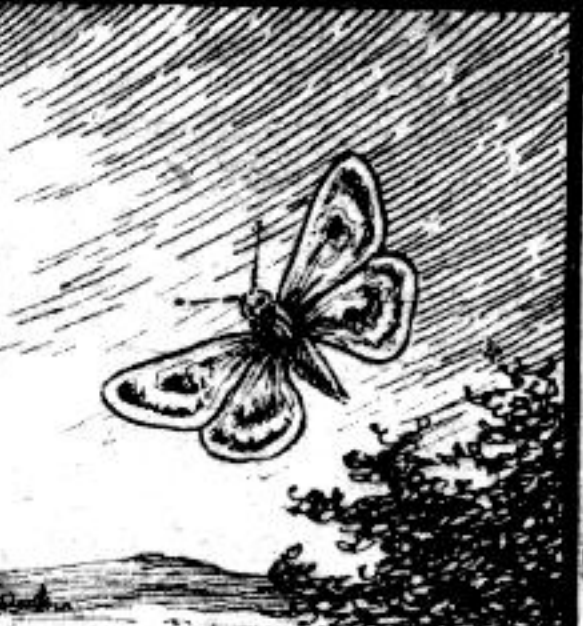

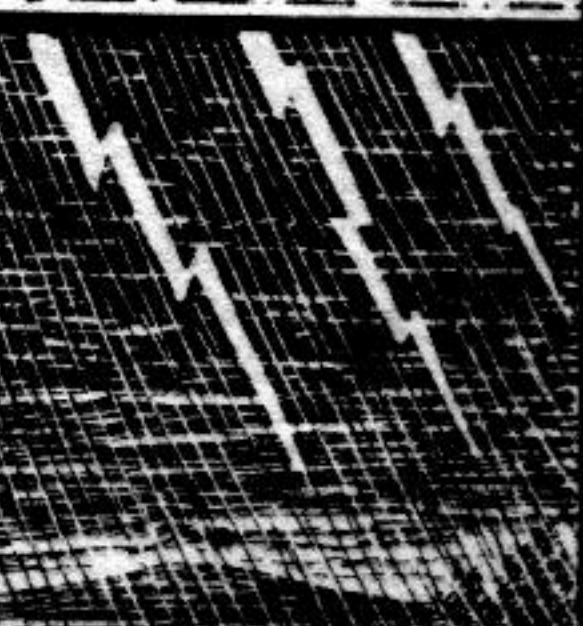
Readers may send in as many attempts as they like, but each effort must be separate and complete in itself and made out on the proper pictures and coupon.

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. 4

			
1 <u>clouds.</u>	2 _____	3 _____	4 _____
			
5 _____	6 _____	7 _____	8 _____

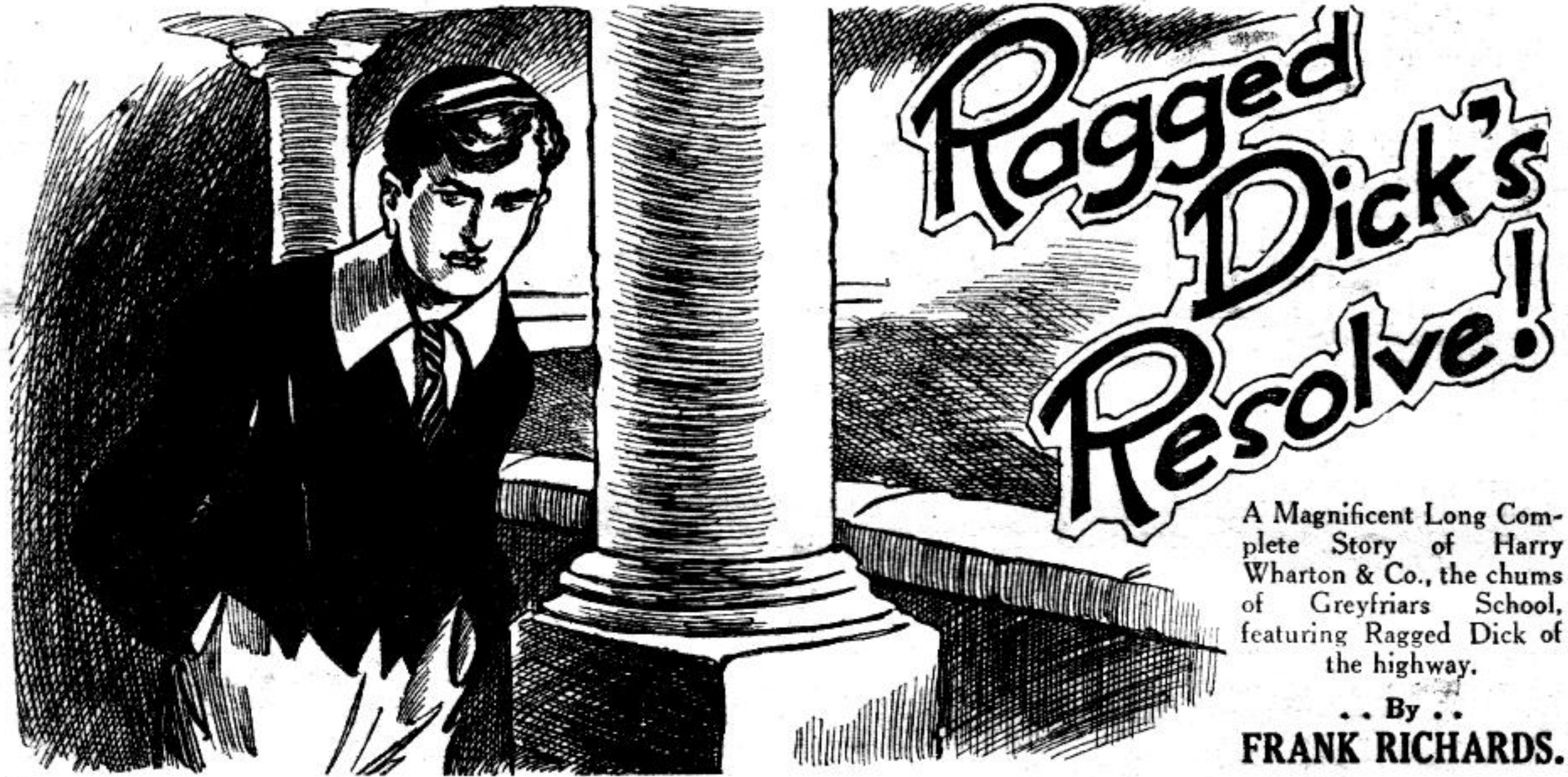
I enter "What is it?" Competition No. 4 and agree to accept the Editor's decision as final.

Name

Address

CLOSING DATE, TUESDAY, JULY 14th, 1925.

THE TOOL IN A SWINDLE! The realisation that he is the tool in a big deception comes to Ragged Dick with stunning force. It shatters all his bright outlook on the future. He cannot go on playing the part as a usurper; but how can he leave Greyfriars and the wonderful times he is having?



A Magnificent Long Complete Story of Harry Wharton & Co., the chums of Greyfriars School, featuring Ragged Dick of the highway.

.. By ..
FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

The Founder of the Feast!

"PETER——"
"No!"
"Look here, Peter——"
"Nothing doing!" said Peter Todd firmly.

"You silly ass!" howled Billy Bunter. "You don't even know what I was going to ask you yet."

Peter Todd of the Remove grinned. "Don't I?" he remarked. "I jolly well do! You're going to ask me to lend you half-a-crown; and the answer is in the giddy negative. Save your breath, old fat man—you haven't much."

"I wasn't going to ask you to lend me half-a-crown."

"Five bob, then," grinned Peter. "The answer is still in the negative, only still more so."

"I don't want you to lend me anything."

"Eh?"

"Nothing at all!" said Bunter.

"My only hat!"

"I'm not a fellow to borrow of a pal, I hope——"

"Great pip!"

"So you can keep your measly half-crowns in your trousers-pocket, Toddy," said Billy Bunter scornfully. "I don't want them."

Peter Todd stared at his study-mate. He was astonished.

He had reason to be astonished. If the time had arrived when William George Bunter did not want to borrow half-a-crown, it marked an epoch in the history of Greyfriars School.

"It's pretty rotten that I can't speak to a chap without the chap thinking that I want to borrow money of him," said Bunter warmly.

"Well, what on earth is a chap to think?" demanded Peter. "A chap who knows you, I mean."

"Oh, really, Peter——"

"Still, if you don't, all the better," said Toddy cordially. "It's about time you reformed, Bunter; all the Remove will be glad to hear it. Are you carrying the reform so far as to settle up the

little sums you've borrowed this term from——"

"Ahem!"

"And last term——"

"Look here, Peter——"

"And the term before——"

"I don't want to begin a sordid discussion about money, Peter Todd," said the Owl of the Remove. Apparently Bunter's reform had not, so far, proceeded to such a length. "Do let a fellow speak, Toddy. You're like a sheep's head, you know—nearly all jaw. You've told me a lot of times that I don't stand my whack in the study."

"I have!" agreed Peter. "You didn't need telling, but I have. You never do stand your whack, and you know it, you fat loafer."

"You make out that I practically sponge on the study," said Bunter, wagging an accusing fat forefinger at Peter Todd. "Don't deny it."

"I'm not going to deny it," said Peter cheerfully. "You do sponge on the study, and every other study that will let you. And I don't make it out—I just state the facts."

"I may have overlooked a few small trifles," said Bunter. "A fellow of my position can't be always occupying his mind about sixpences and shillings, like poorer fellows—you, for instance. It's not to be expected."

"Not from you," agreed Peter.

"But I should hardly care to be under an obligation in these small matters. It would be rather beneath my dignity."

"It hasn't worried you for whole terms."

"Oh, really, Peter——"

"Look here, Bunter," said Peter Todd. "What are you driving at, if you're driving at anything? Has your postal-order come at last—the one you were expecting when I came to Greyfriars?"

"Never mind my postal-order," said Bunter. "I'm not short of money, Peter Todd."

"Not!" ejaculated Peter.

"No!" roared Bunter. "Not!"

"Fan me!" murmured Peter.

"Have I borrowed anything of you for a week or more?" demanded Bunter hotly.

Peter Todd considered.

"Now I come to think of it, you haven't," he agreed. "What's happened, Bunter? Has your postal-order come along, or have you found a bank-note in somebody's pocket——"

"Beast!"

"Or have you happened on a mug who will lend you money?" asked Peter. "Has that new kid, Compton, cashed your postal-order in advance? You generally do pretty well out of new fellows."

"You cheeky ass——"

"Well, come to the point, old fat man, of you've got a point to come to, I've got to get down to the cricket."

"I'm standing a spread in the study," said Billy Bunter with dignity.

"You are!" ejaculated Peter.

"I am!" said Bunter loftily. "That's what I was going to say when you interrupted me with your sordid remarks about money, Peter. I'm standing a study spread—something really decent."

"Time you did," said Peter Todd.

"But seeing is believing. I'll believe in the spread when I see it."

"I want you and Dutton to be present, of course, as my study-mates. I shall ask a few more chaps," said Bunter. "It's going to be a jolly spread, and I want all my friends present. Everything of the best, and lots of it; you know what a generous fellow I am, Peter."

"I do—just!"

"Look here, don't you believe me?" roared Bunter.

Peter raised his eyebrows.

"Of course not! Do you expect anybody to believe you?"

"You silly chump!"

Peter Todd picked up his bat from the corner of the study. He tucked it under his arm, and went to the door.

"I'm coming in at tea-time," he said.

"If there's a spread in the study, I shall be glad to see it."

"I want you to help me do the shopping, Peter."

"And foot the bill?"

"No!" howled Bunter.

"Too good to be true, old chap. Ta-ta!"

"I say, Peter——"

But Peter Todd was gone, grinning.

Billy Bunter blinked after him, wrathfully, through his big spectacles. Really it was hard on Bunter.

For once, the fat junior was not only going to "stand his whack" in Study No. 7; he was going to stand a magnificent spread, which would make up for many little shortcomings during the term. Peter Todd ought to have been glad to hear it; and doubtless would have been glad, had he believed a word of it. But he didn't. There was no doubt that he didn't.

"Cheeky rotter!" growled Bunter.

The Owl of the Remove rolled out of the study. He came on his other study-mate, Tom Dutton, in the passage.

"I say, Dutton——"

"Eh?"

Tom Dutton suffered from the affliction of deafness; though not, perhaps, so much as Study No. 7 suffered from it.

"I'm standing a spread to-day."

"Rubbish!"

"Look here, Dutton——"

"You couldn't," said Dutton, staring at him, "You're no good at gymnastics, Bunter."

"Gymnastics! Who's talking about gymnastics?" shrieked Bunter.

"Well, standing on your head is a kind of gymnastics, I suppose," said Dutton. "Not much sense in it that I can see. And you couldn't do it, anyway. You'd roll over like a barrel."

"Oh, my hat! I didn't say I'm standing on my head, you chump!" yelled Bunter. "I said I was standing a spread!"

"Eh?"

"Spread!" roared Bunter.

"Spread," repeated Dutton. "Yes, I dare say you'd be spread out, Bunter, if you tried standing on your head. Better not try. You're too fat."

"A spread in the study!" howled Bunter.

"It's not muddy here. You'd get muddy if you tried it out in the quad, I dare say. But what do you want to stand on your head for?"

"I don't!" bawled Bunter.

"You said you did."

"Oh, you deaf ass! Look here, do you want to come to the spread?"

"Of course not."

"Not?" howled Bunter.

"No; I'm not tired of life yet."

"T-t-tired of life!" stuttered Bunter.

"I think you must be going off your rocker, Bunter. Fancy asking a fellow if he wants to be dead!"

"Oh dear! Not dead—spread!" raved Bunter. "A spread in the study, see? I'm standing it! I want you to come, and Todd——"

"Who's odd?"

"Oh dear!"

"Nothing odd about a fellow being a little hard of hearing, I suppose," said Dutton, glaring at Bunter. Tom Dutton was a little touchy on the subject of his deafness. "What do you mean?"

"I didn't say odd, you deaf chump! I said Todd! Can't you listen to a fellow?" howled Bunter.

"There's no need at all to bellow. I'm not deaf. I can hear you if you don't mumble. I've told you before that I don't like being chipped about it, Bunter. Sit down!" said Tom indignantly.

Bump!

"Yaroooh!"

Bunter sat down hard under Tom Dutton's heavy hand. Tom Dutton walked away, leaving him sitting in the

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Remove passage, in a state of breathless wrath. Really, William George Bunter was not getting the treatment that ought to have been accorded to a fellow who—for the first time in history—was standing a magnificent spread in the study.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Under Bunter's Thumb!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

Bob Cherry's powerful voice boomed in at the doorway of Study No. 1 in the

Remove.

Compton of the Remove started. Bob's voice, in his energetic moments, was enough to make any fellow start.

The new junior looked round.

He was alone in Study No. 1, Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent being on Little Side at cricket practice.

The new Greyfriars junior was reading a letter when Bob's stentorian tones boomed into the study. It was a letter written in a rather crabbed hand, and the perusal of it did not seem to have afforded much pleasure to the new Removeite.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Swotting?" demanded Bob.

Compton shook his head and smiled.

"Not this time," he said.

"You're rather given to it, you know," said Bob. "I've heard Mr. Quelch say that you're going to be a credit to the Remove. I never could quite revel in hic and haec and hoc myself. But every fellow to his taste. Still, there's a time for all things, and the thing at the present moment is cricket." Then Bob observed the letter in the new junior's hand. "Letter from home?"

"From Compton Hall," said the new junior.

"Well, that's your home, isn't it?"

"Ye-e-s."

"Some home, too!" said Bob Cherry.

"You're a lucky bargee, Compton."

"Think so?"

"Yes, rather! You don't look particularly chippy. Is your jolly old grandfather blowing you up already, when you've been hardly more than a week at school? It's from your grandfather, isn't it?"

"From Sir Henry Compton," said the new Removeite.

"Bit of a crusty old bird, what?" said Bob, sympathetically. "But the old folks at home have to be given their head, you know."

Compton smiled.

"Sir Henry has to be given his head, anyhow," he assented. "I shouldn't like to undertake to argue with him."

"Well, no," said Bob, with a grin.

"He doesn't look exactly the sort of old gent to be argued with. Have I interrupted you?"

"No; I've read the letter."

"Then shove it in your pocket and come down to the cricket," said Bob.

"You don't know much about cricket yet, young 'un, but Wharton thinks you show promise—and Wharton knows, you know. We'll make a cricketer of you before the end of the term."

Compton's rather clouded face had brightened.

It was, indeed, difficult for any fellow to remain in despondent spirits in the exuberant company of Robert Cherry of the Remove.

He rose to his feet.

"I'll come with pleasure!" he said.

"I'm jolly keen on the cricket, of course. I haven't had many chances of playing, before I came here."

"No, I hear you were a giddy invalid,

stuck in some sort of a jolly old sanatorium abroad," said Bob. "Blessed if a fellow would think it to look at you, though! You look as fit as a fiddle!"

"I'm feeling pretty fit here."

"Anybody would think you fit enough, from the way you handled Bolsover major the day you came," said Bob, with a chuckle. "Any trouble with Bolsover since?"

"No; he seems to dislike my company," said Compton, with a smile.

"Wise man! By the way," went on Bob, "I've got a bone to pick with you, Compton."

"Not a row, I hope?"

"Ha, ha! No; it's about Bunter."

Compton's face clouded again.

"Bunter?" he repeated.

"Billy of that ilk," said Bob Cherry.

"What about Bunter?"

"You're an ass, old man, that's all," said Bob, becoming serious. "I suppose you've got tons of money. I suppose Sir Richard Compton makes you a big allowance. He's rich enough, I know. But that's no reason why you should let Bunter screw it out of you."

Compton coloured.

"Chuckling him a half-crown every now and then mayn't matter—Mauly does so, and even Smithy chucks him a bob at times," said Bob Cherry. "He's borrowed money of every fellow in the Form. I've heard that he even owes Fishy a shilling! He generally squeezes something out of a new chap before that chap gets to know him. But there's a limit. You paid a taxi fare for him the day you came——"

"I——"

"You didn't know him then. But you know him now. Bunter borrows money of you every day, doesn't he?"

Compton was silent, his cheeks red.

"Of course, it's no bizney of mine!" said Bob hastily. "But, as an old hand in the Remove, I thought I ought to give you a tip. Bunter never settles a debt. He will never square a red cent of what you've lent him, and it must be some pounds already. If you're being gulled, think twice before you lend him any more. Of course, if you want to give the fellow money it's your own bizney."

"I don't. But——"

"But you don't like saying no. Something like old Mauleverer," said Bob, with a smile. "I understand! But you'll have to say no sooner or later, just like Mauly—and the sooner you do, the more you'll save, see? It's rotten to see a needy worm like Bunter plundering a good-natured chap to such an extent. That's why I've mentioned it. No need to blush, old man! Better to be too free with cash than too close with it! Shall we get down to the cricket? Here endeth the first lesson, you know!" And Bob laughed cheerily.

Compton laughed too, but rather constrainedly.

"You fellows coming?" Johnny Bull put his head in at the study door.

"We're ready."

"The readiffulness is terrific," added Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, his dusky face looking in over Johnny's broad shoulder.

"We're coming," said Bob. "Trust on, Compton."

The two juniors came out of the study, and proceeded towards the stairs with Johnny Bull and Hurree Singh. Billy Bunter was leaning on the balustrade, and he raised a fat hand and beckoned to Richard Compton.

"Hold on a minute—I want to speak to you?" he called out.

"No time to hold on, old fat pippin—going down to cricket," answered Bob Cherry.

"It's Compton I'm speaking to."
"Well, Compton's coming down to the cricket. Go and eat coke, Bunter."
And Bob Cherry started down the stairs, by way of the banisters, and disappeared at a terrific rate.

Compton paused.
"Come on, old man," said Johnny Bull. "No need to waste time on Bunter."

"Oh, really, Bull—"
"I'll follow you," said Compton, his face red and flustered.

"The esteemed Bunter is after the excellent loaves and fishes," said Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "He is expecting a postal-order—"

"Oh, really, Inky—"
"Oh, come on!" said Johnny Bull.

He went down the stairs, and Hurree Janset Ram Singh followed him. Compton of the Remove lingered, his eyes on Bunter's fat face, with no very pleasant expression in them.

"What do you want, Bunter?" he asked, when the other fellows were out of hearing.

Bunter winked.
"Guess!" he said.
"Look here, Bunter—"

Herbert Vernon-Smith came along the passage, with a bat under his arm. He glanced rather curiously at the two as he passed them on his way to the stairs.

"Come into the study, old chap!" smiled Bunter.

And Compton, compressing his lips hard, followed William George Bunter into Study No. 1.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

What Bunter Knew!

"**R**AGGED DICK—"
Bunter grinned as he uttered that name.

Compton of the Remove looked at him. The expression on his face made Bunter back away a little, and place the study table between him and the new Removite.

"Don't get waxy, old man," said the Owl of the Remove soothingly. "We're friends, ain't we?"

"Friends?" said Dick, with a contemptuous curl of the lip.

"I'm no snob," said Bunter cheerily. "I know what you are, and I'm prepared to be friendly, if you do the decent thing, of course."

"You fat rotter!"
"Oh, really, Compton—"

"What do you want?" snapped the new junior. "Look here, Bunter, this has got to stop. Fellows have begun already noticing that I've lent you a good deal of money."

"I may have borrowed a few small sums," said Bunter loftily. "I shall settle, of course, when—when I get my postal-order."

"Oh, cut out that rot!"
"Look here!" roared Bunter.

"I'm fed-up with it, and with you," said Dick savagely. "You don't seem to understand what a disgraceful little fat blackguard you are. But it's got to stop, see?"

Bunter's eyes gleamed behind his spectacles.

The Owl of the Remove was not thick-skinned. But it is said that contempt will pierce the shell of the tortoise; and even Bunter was not quite so thick-skinned as that.

"Why, you cheeky cad!" he exclaimed indignantly. "And what are you, I'd like to know, coming here as the grandson of Sir Henry Compton, and all the time you're a tattered tramp. Think I've forgotten the time when I met you



"I don't want you to foot the bill!" shrieked Billy Bunter. "Don't I keep telling you that I'm going to foot the spread myself?" "You keep on telling us a lot of whoppers," said Bob Cherry. "Ha, ha, ha!" The Removites streamed out of the tuckshop, leaving Billy Bunter glaring after them.
(See Chapter 4.)

in Compton Park—ragged and dirty, and hungry—and you told me your name was Ragged Dick—what a name! He, he, he! Then you turn up here calling yourself Richard Compton! I wonder what the Head would say?"

Dick breathed hard.
He, too, wondered what the Head would say, if he knew.

Sir Henry Compton certainly had not told the facts to the headmaster of Greyfriars when he had placed his adopted grandson in the school. That Dick was the old baronet's grandson only by adoption, was a dead secret between the baronet and the waif—excepting for Bunter. Bunter knew—though he did not understand, and was utterly perplexed by the strange state of affairs.

But though Bunter did not understand what the mysterious affair could mean, he understood that he possessed a secret that Compton desired to keep unknown.

It was difficult for Bunter to keep a secret. His longing to tattle a surprising story in the Rag was almost irresistible.

But so far he had contrived to hold his tattling tongue; a daily loan from the new junior had helped. Billy Bunter had come to look on "Ragged Dick" as a horn of plenty that never would run dry.

Not that Bunter realised the rascality of his proceedings.

His idea was that he was keeping a shady secret for Compton, and that

Compton, being a rich fellow, was making him a few loans, to be repaid when his celebrated postal-order arrived.

One good turn deserves another; that was how Bunter looked at it, or chose to look at it.

So he was quite indignant at the angry scorn in Ragged Dick's handsome face. Who was the fellow to scorn him, he would like to know! A tattered outcast who had somehow or other fallen into good luck! Nice sort of fellow to scorn William George Bunter!

Wrath gathered in the Owl's fat face. His very spectacles gleamed with it as he blinked at the new junior.

"What would the Head say?" he repeated. "Like me to go to the Head, or Mr. Quelch, and tell them all about you, you dashed impostor?"

Dick winced.
Was he an impostor? He hardly knew. But the word had a bitter sound to his ears, deserved or not.

"What were you like when I saw you in Compton Park that day?" pursued Bunter. "Dirty, in rags and tatters! Hungry and dirty—a rank outsider! Yah! Then you turn up here well-dressed, with lots of money in your pockets! There's a swindle somewhere."

And Bunter wagged his bullet head sagaciously.

He was certain that there was a swindle somewhere. What sort of a
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swindle he could not even guess; but there it was! A lot about Dick Compton wanted explaining.

"Sir Henry Compton brought me here!" said Dick quietly. "You know that."

Bunter nodded.

"I know!" he answered. "That's what beats me! You seem to be his grandson, or he thinks you are. But if you are, how was it you were in rags and tatters, sneaking about the woods, only a few weeks before you came to Greyfriars? That's what I want to know."

"Is it any business of yours?" snapped Compton.

"Perhaps it isn't, and perhaps it is!" sneered Bunter. "If you're an impostor, and it looks like it, it's a fellow's duty to show you up."

"Why haven't you done it, then?"

Bunter was a little taken aback.

"Well, I don't want to be hard on a chap," he said. "I suppose old Compton knows his own business, and he's your grandfather, or he says he is. But there's something fishy about it—some sort of a swindle."

Dick crimsoned.

"There's no swindle," he said. "But if you think there is, Bunter, it's your duty to go straight to the headmaster and tell him."

"Do you want me to?" sneered Bunter.

"You can do as you choose," said Compton contemptuously. "You've been getting money out of me to keep your rascally mouth shut. That's got to stop!"

"You cheeky cad!" gasped Bunter, in great indignation. "Nothing of the kind! I'm keeping count of all that you lend me."

"Oh, don't be a silly ass!"

"I'm going to settle every penny when my postal-order comes!" roared Bunter. "Cheese it!"

"You cheeky rotter! One good turn deserves another. Do you think a fellow's going to keep your shady secrets if you don't treat him decently?"

"No fellow has a right to keep a shady secret," said Ragged Dick. "If you think it's shady, don't keep it."

"Isn't it shady?" howled Bunter.

"No."

"All fair and above-board—a tattered tramp turning up here as a baronet's grandson?" sneered Bunter. "It's too thick. If it's not shady, why can't you tell a chap how it came about?"

"I don't choose."

"Oh, come off!" said the Owl of the Remove derisively. "You've practically owned up it's shady by getting me to keep the secret. You were fairly scared out of your wits the day I saw you in this study—the day you came. Ragged Dick in the Greyfriars Remove! You wouldn't be in the Remove long if the Head knew all about you!"

"Tell him, then!" said Dick savagely. "I've done with you!"

He turned to the door.

"I say—"

Compton left the study.

Billy Bunter blinked after him in dismay. Had the horn of plenty suddenly run dry? If so, it had done so in a very inauspicious moment, when Bunter had planned a magnificent spread in Study No. 7.

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Bunter.

He rushed into the Remove passage after the new junior, and caught him by the sleeve.

"I—I say, Compton—"

"Let go, you fat rotter!"

"Don't be waxy, old chap," said Bunter. "Nothing to be waxy about,

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you know. Look here! I happen to be short of money to-day—"

"Oh, cheese it! I've heard that before!"

"I'm expecting a postal-order to-morrow morning—"

Compton laughed impatiently.

"I'll hand it over to you directly, and square up the whole amount," said Bunter. "Honest Injun, you know! Now, let me have a quid to see me over tea-time—"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Compton, old man—"

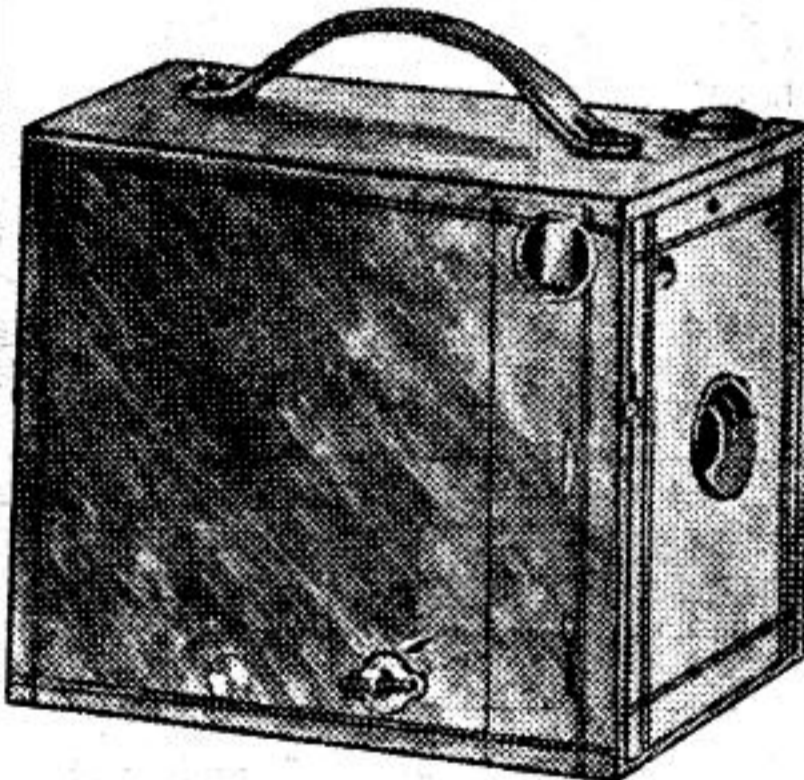
Ragged Dick shook off the Owl's fat, detaining hand, and went down the stairs. His face was angry and determined. He was done with Bunter, whatever might come of it. Better for the facts to become known, whatsoever the result might be, than to live under the Owl's fat thumb.

Bunter blinked down the stairs after Richard Compton's disappearing form in consternation.

The horn of plenty had run dry!

It seemed only too clear. That source

WOULD YOU LIKE THIS SPLENDID CAMERA? (By Kodaks.)



Five Minutes' Work in the Simple Competition on page 2, and you may win it.

of supply, which Bunter had deemed unlimited, had suddenly failed him, and it certainly looked as if the magnificent spread in Study No. 7, which was to have created a record in the Remove, would never come off!

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

No Takers!

HARRY WHARTON nodded cheerily to the new junior as he arrived on Little Side for cricket practice.

The captain of the Remove had not, perhaps, been best pleased when the new fellow was landed in Study No. 1, but he had taken quite a liking to his new study-mate, and he pulled very well with Compton. Frank Nugent liked him, too. In fact, Compton was pretty generally liked in the Remove. With the exception of a fight with Bolsover major, he had had no trouble with any Removite, and his licking Bolsover had rather added to his popularity—the general opinion in

the Remove being that the more Bolsover major was licked, the better it was for himself and everybody else.

Indeed, but for the Owl of the Remove, and his knowledge of Dick's former life, the new junior would have been quite happy and at ease in the Greyfriars Remove. It was better fortune than he had ever dared to dream of in his shadowed earlier days, and he was prepared to enjoy it to the full. Bunter was a thorn in his side; not so much from his unscrupulous exactions, as from the fear that the Owl's reckless tongue might begin to tattle.

What would be the result if Bunter told what he knew Dick could hardly imagine. What would the Greyfriars fellows think of a chap who had been called "Ragged Dick," who had been a tattered tramp on the roads, and who came to the school under what might be regarded as false colours? It was difficult for Dick to picture it in his mind, conscious as he was of no wrong-doing on his own part. But it would make some difference—it was bound to make a difference.

And, as he came up to Wharton on the cricket-ground he was thinking of it, and wondering how the captain of the Remove would take it if he knew. Dick had made good friends with both his study-mates; but they believed him to be the grandson of Sir Henry Compton, heir to the title and the estate. And so he was—by adoption! If only the obstinate old gentleman would have allowed him to make that adoption known he need not then have feared Bunter's tattling tongue, and the burden of a secret to keep would have been off his mind.

"Here you are, kid!" said Harry Wharton cheerily. "I began to think you were cutting cricket to-day!"

"No fear!" said Dick, with a smile.

"How much did Bunter stick you for, you ass?" asked Johnny Bull.

Dick coloured.

"Nothing!" he said.

"Oh, you're learning some sense, then!" grunted Johnny. "Blessed if a fellow didn't begin to think that Bunter had made you his banker!"

Dick was glad to get on with the cricket, and get away from that topic. As a matter of fact, he was a generous fellow, and Sir Henry gave him a large allowance, and probably in any case he would have been plundered to some extent by a skilled borrower like William George Bunter. But the extent to which he had been plundered had attracted notice in the Remove, causing some of the fellows to think him "soft," and others to wonder a good deal. That, at least, was at an end now.

Dick was keen on cricket, and a fellow who was keen on the great summer game was certain of hearty support from the Famous Five. It was sheer enjoyment to him to join in the Form practice—which fellows like Skinner and Snoop dodged with great assiduity, as a thing that made life hardly worth living. There was nothing of the slacker about Ragged Dick. Bob Cherry gave him valuable instruction on batting, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh bestowed upon him tips in bowling, and both of them found him an apt pupil. Even Wingate of the Sixth, when he looked in on Little Side, noted the new junior, and had a word of commendation for his keenness and the improvement he already showed.

By the time he left the cricket-ground Dick was feeling very happy and bright, and he had forgotten Billy Bunter, and also the baronet's letter—both of them troublesome enough.

"Who says ginger-pop?" asked Bob

Cherry, as the juniors came out of the Remove dormitory, having changed from flannels into Etons.

And a crowd of the Remove fellows adjourned to Mrs. Mimble's little shop in the corner behind the elms, and proceeded to give orders for that agreeable beverage.

"I say, you fellows—"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Bound to find Bunter here!" grinned Bob Cherry, giving the fat junior a slap on his shoulder.

"Yaroooh!"

"What on earth's the matter?"

"Yow-ow! You silly ass, you've dislocated my shoulder!" howled Bunter.

"Never mind, have a ginger-pop, old fat pippin?" said Bob.

"I don't mind if I do," agreed Bunter. "I'm rather glad to meet you fellows. I want you to come to my spread."

"Still dreaming about that?" asked Peter Todd.

"Oh, really Toddy—"

"Who's standing a spread?" asked Frank Nugent.

"I am!"

"Oh, my hat! Then who's standing the tin?"

"Oh, really, Nugent—"

"Borrowed it of Compton?" asked Vernon-Smith. "Has Compton cashed your postal-order in advance, Bunt?"

"Oh, really, Smithy—"

Dick slipped out of the crowd, and walked away from the tuckshop, his handsome face clouded again.

He did not want to meet Bunter, or to speak to him, especially under the eyes of a crowd of Remove fellows.

Indeed, if Bunter was going to betray him, in retaliation for the horn of plenty running dry, this was a favourable opportunity, and Dick did not want to be present when the startling story was told.

"The fact is, you fellows," said Bunter, blinking at the grinning Removeites over his glass of ginger-pop—"the fact is, I'm standing a rather ripping spread in my study. Everything of the best, and lots of it. I've just given Mrs. Mimble the list of things I want. You've got the list, ma'am?"

Mrs. Mimble gave Bunter a rather grim look.

"I've got the list, Master Bunter," she answered.

"Send the things up to my study."

"Certainly, Master Bunter—when they're paid for."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors.

"Oh, really, Mrs. Mimble—"

"You know that I never give you credit, Master Bunter," said the good dame, with asperity. "You owe me an account from last term—"

"That's an old account, Mrs. Mimble."

Mrs. Mimble sniffed, and went on serving her customers. Apparently she did not see why the age of the account should be a bar to the settlement thereof. Bunter apparently did.

"Look here, Mrs. Mimble," said Bunter, wagging a fat forefinger at the good lady, "I'll ask a fellow to drop in for that parcel of tuck—see? I'll send the money by him."

"Very well, Master Bunter; the parcel will be ready when the money is ready," said Mrs. Mimble.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows—there's nothing to cackle at. The spread is genuine, and I want you to come."

"Chance of a lifetime!" grinned the Bunder.

"I sha'n't ask you, Smithy."

"Not poor little me?" pleaded Vernon-Smith.

"No!" said Bunter firmly. "You refused to lend me a pound to pay for my

taxi last week. You're mean, Smithy. I sha'n't ask you to the spread in my study."

"I shall lose a lot—I don't think!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I want you to come, Wharton, and Cherry and Nugent and Bull and Inky. You've stood me tea sometimes. Toddy will be there. I think I'll let you come, too, Squiff."

"Thanks!" said Squiff, laughing.

"But I'm rather hard-up, Bunter."

"What's that got to do with it, fat-head?"

"Lots, I think," chuckled Squiff. "I suppose you will want somebody to pay for the tuck—if any."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You cheeky rotter!" roared Bunter. "I won't ask you now!"

"Poor little me!" sighed Squiff.

"I sha'n't ask you, Redwing. Sorry, and all that, but I draw the line somewhere, you know."

"You silly owl!" was Redwing's answer.

"Let's see, that will be seven fellows—you five and Toddy and Dutton," said Bunter. "Eight counting me."

"Seventeen, counting you," said Bob.

"You count as ten at least when it comes to a feed!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you give me any cheek, Bob Cherry, I sha'n't ask you to my spread!"

"I fancy it would be a giddy feast of the Balmecides, anyway," chuckled Bob.

"Lots of hospitality and nothing to eat—what?"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

Billy Bunter finished his ginger-pop.

"Get that parcel ready, Mrs. Mimble; I shall be sending for it soon," he said.

"You fellows that I've asked will turn up in Study No. 7 at half-past five."

"Fathead!" said Harry Wharton.

"Don't you want to come?" howled Bunter.

"My dear ass, a joke's a joke, but don't keep it on for ever," urged the captain of the Remove. "Chuck it!"

"You silly ass!" howled Bunter.

"Don't you believe there's going to be a spread?"

"Of course not!"

"You jolly well sha'n't come now! I suppose you other fellows are coming?" demanded Bunter, blinking at the rest of the Co.

"I don't think we'll trouble," chuckled Bob Cherry. "You see, money's tight, and we couldn't foot the bill."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't want you to foot the bill!" shrieked Bunter. "Don't I keep on telling you that I'm standing the spread myself?"

"You keep on telling us, certainly. But you tell us so many whoppers, old fat man. You see, we know you!"

"The knowfulness is terrific, my esteemed fat Bunter."

"You jolly well sha'n't come now!" roared Bunter. "I'll ask some other fellows."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Removeites streamed out of the tuckshop, leaving Billy Bunter glaring



With all the force of his sinewy arm Dick hit Parker. Crash! The tramp caught the clenched fist on the side of the jaw, and he went with a crash into the grass. Dick leaped into the lane to run for it. But the pedlar, sprawling in the grass, clutched at him as he leaped and caught his ankle. Dick came down in the road heavily. (See Chapter 6.)

after them with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles.

It had long been a reproach against Bunter that, while he annexed the lion's share at other fellows' spreads, he never stood one himself. Now Bunter was going to set that right; and there were no takers! Actually no takers for a record-breaking study spread! Nobody believed in the spread. Every fellow who was honoured with a kind invitation, believed, on the other hand, that the idea was to "touch" him for a loan when he arrived for the feed. Bunter's methods were rather too well known in the Remove.

Really, it was hard lines—and extraordinarily unusual—for a fellow standing a magnificent spread to find it impossible to assemble a company to partake thereof.

Bunter caught Peter Todd by the sleeve as Peter was following the Famous Five out of the tuckshop.

"I suppose you'll be there, Peter?"

"Ass!" was Peter's rejoinder.

"Will you be there?" yelled Bunter.

"Squiff's asked Dutton and me to tea in No. 14. We're going."

"You silly ass! My spread will be ever so much better than Squiff's measly tea in No. 14!"

"I don't think!" grinned Peter.

And he walked away, leaving Bunter glaring. Really, it looked as if William George Bunter himself would be the only fellow present when that great spread came off—if it came off at all.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

In Dark Doubt!

"IT'S 'im!"

The dirty, shabby, ill-favoured man lounging in the shade of the leafy trees in Friardale Lane muttered the words, with a glint in his bleary eyes.

Pedlar Parker had spotted his prey at last.

Day after day Pedlar Parker had hung about the precincts of Greyfriars School; a good many of the Greyfriars fellows had noticed him at different times. Indeed, Coker of the Fifth had helped him on his way with a boot, finding him loafing about the school gates. But there was some attraction for the ruffian in the precincts of the old school, and day after day he might have been seen lurking about the roads and lanes or sprawling under the hedges, dirty, tattered, surly, and determined. And now he had found what he sought.

A junior was coming down the lane, and Pedlar Parker's glinting eyes fixed on him as he lounged under the trees.

It was Compton of the Remove—Ragged Dick of former days.

The new junior certainly looked very handsome and fit. A very startling change from the Ragged Dick Mr. Parker had known. But he was the same fellow—Pedlar Parker was quite convinced of that.

Dick's brow was slightly clouded, and his eyes were on the ground, in deep thought. He was not looking about him, and he did not see the pedlar in the shade of the old beeches and oaks.

"It's 'im!" repeated Pedlar Parker, with an oath.

There was hatred in the stare he fixed on the unconscious junior of Greyfriars.

Dick's evident prosperity, his rise in fortune, embittered the tattered ruffian who had once been his tyrant. Idleness and loafing and petty thieving had not enriched Mr. Parker; there were, indeed, more kicks than halfpence to be

gathered up in his career as a snatcher-up of unconsidered trifles. That the boy whom he had known ragged and forlorn was now well dressed, healthy, and happy, did not please Mr. Parker—the milk of human kindness had been left out of his composition. He was thinking of sharing, somehow, in Ragged Dick's fortune; but he would almost rather have destroyed it than shared in it.

Ragged Dick stopped, only a dozen yards from the lurking tramp, and drew a letter from his pocket. He leaned against a tree by the side of the lane and reread the letter, with a clouded brow, unconscious of the savage eyes watching him.

The letter was from Sir Henry Compton of Compton Hall. It was a letter that Bob Cherry had found the new junior reading in Study No. 1 that afternoon. It was brief:

"Compton Hall, Kent.

"Dear Richard,—I received your letter. Kindly do not write on the same topic again. I expect unquestioning obedience from my grandson.

"HENRY COMPTON."

Dick knew the letter by heart now. It troubled him.

He had written to the old baronet from Greyfriars. What he had not dared to ask the stern old man by word of mouth he had ventured to put into writing.

Sir Henry had taken him from rags and tatters, adopted him as his grandson, given him his name, made him his heir. The more Dick thought about it the more miraculous it seemed. He was getting used to his new position, but it still seemed miraculous, incredible. That he would be, some day, master of Compton Hall, lord of innumerable broad acres in the county of Kent, seemed beyond belief.

Grim and unbending as the old man was, Dick was timidly grateful. He felt that Sir Henry was entitled to his obedience and respect—to the same obedience that he would have expected of a genuine grandson. But—there was a but—

So much kindness, so immense a benefit, perplexed and mystified him. In his ragged days on the road he had never had a secret to keep, and a secret was irksome.

Sometimes, when the fellows in his study were speaking in their frank schoolboy way, Dick had felt a sense of shame, almost of guilt. There were topics that he had to avoid, such as his supposed residence in a foreign sanatorium before he came to Greyfriars—his supposed childhood at Compton Hall. He had told no lies; he would not and could not. But it was borne in painfully upon his mind that he was, to some extent, living a lie.

He had not thought of it at first. He had taken it for granted that a gentleman in Sir Henry's position knew best. He could scarcely have set up his judgment against that of the old baronet, had it occurred to him to do so, and it had not.

But it seemed to him now, after a week at Greyfriars, that there were many things that had escaped Sir Henry's attention. He could not want the boy to lie; yet without lying, or at least giving unspoken assent to misapprehensions, it was scarcely possible for him to keep on. He was believed to be the grandson by blood of the master of Compton Hall, and he was nothing of the sort. Indeed, Wharton had told him one day that he detected a resemblance between him and the old baronet, in spite of the difference in age. He had

the Compton mouth; a well-cut, handsome, but very firm mouth. Dick smiled at the idea, and then coloured with conscious humiliation. He felt that it was practically deceit to let Wharton continue in his belief. Wharton was a decent fellow. He would not have thought any the worse of a chap for having had hard luck in his early days, but he would have thought very badly indeed of any fellow guilty of deceit. And was it not deceit to leave him in such an error?

It troubled Dick, troubled him deeply, and so he had taken his courage in both hands, as it were, and written to the old baronet at the Hall. Timidly, respectfully, he pointed out the position, and asked, since Sir Henry had been so kind and generous as to adopt him, whether he could not add to his kindness by letting the adoption be known.

It seemed to Dick that there was no objection to be urged against such a step. It was impossible—for Dick, at least—to suppose that Sir Henry had any questionable motive for what he had done.

He did not seem a kind man, yet what motive could he have had but kindness?

Once the facts were known at Greyfriars the burden would be off the boy's mind. He did not care much if the fellows knew his origin. He had already learned that most of the Greyfriars fellows—all the best of them, at least—valued a chap for what he was, and what he could do, rather than for what his ancestors had been or had done. Snobbish fellows like Skinner and Snoop, or Angel of the Fourth, might turn up their noses at Ragged Dick. He would not care for that, so long as Harry Wharton & Co. liked Ragged Dick as much as they liked Richard Compton. Indeed, he did not want to gain any fellow's friendship on false pretences.

And this was the baronet's reply!

Evidently he would not hear of it. Unquestioning obedience; he was entitled to that. He was entitled to the loyal devotion, unremitting and lifelong, of the boy he had saved from rags and want. But—if only he would have let him tell the truth!

Dick sighed.

There was nothing to be hoped for from the old baronet, that was clear. For reasons Dick could not even guess at he was determined to keep on as he had begun. He must have some reasons. Little did poor Dick dream of suspecting what the reasons were—that the entailed estates and the title of Compton could only descend to an heir by blood, and not to an heir by adoption. The baronet's reasons were powerful ones, but Ragged Dick did not dream of suspecting them. He was not likely to suspect that he was an unconscious party to a fraud practiced on the heir-in-entail to the Compton title and estates.

But would not Sir Henry's hand be forced if Bunter told what he knew?

Bunter's story, true as it was, seemed a wild one, and might very likely be laughed at at Greyfriars. It would probably be taken as another of Bunter's yarns. But Dick would have to deny it. And he could not deny it without steeping himself in falsehood.

Would Sir Henry expect that of him? Could he render unquestioning obedience to that extent?

It came into Dick's mind that, in some respects at least, he had been more care-free in his old days tramping the roads.

He crushed the letter in his hand at last. It was time to get back to the school for tea, and yet he hesitated to go back. If Bunter had betrayed him, and told the story of Ragged Dick, he

would have a curious crowd to face—fellows who probably would not believe a word that Bunter had said, yet would probably ask him about it. Deny the story—piling lie on lie in the manner of Bunter himself—he revolted at the thought. Admit it—breaking his promise to Sir Henry—disobeying his strict commands! The only alternative was silence, and how would the silence be construed?

Plunged in grim and gloomy reflections, Ragged Dick did not observe the ill-favoured, slinking figure that was creeping towards him till Pedlar Parker's shadow fell across his face.

He started and looked up. His hands clenched convulsively, his eyes dilated, the colour fled from his cheeks, as he stared blankly at the evil face before him.

"You!" he breathed.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Ragged Dick's Defiance!

PEDLAR PARKER chuckled. His eyes gleamed evilly as they were fixed on the startled, dismayed face of the schoolboy of Greyfriars.

He had been assured, convinced, that this well-dressed fellow was in reality Ragged Dick, the tattered companion of his tramping. Yet at the back of his evil mind a doubt lingered. The change in the boy's fortune was so amazing, so astounding, that Parker had been haunted by a doubt that it might turn out to be only some case of a strange resemblance.

Had Compton of the Remove given him an indifferent glance, the glance of a fellow who had never seen him before, Pedlar Parker would have been baffled he would have been driven to the conclusion that this well-dressed schoolboy was, after all, only a fellow who by some strange chance closely resembled the boy who had escaped from him.

But Dick was not on his guard; the sudden sight of the ruffian had taken him quite by surprise, and it did not even occur to his mind to play a part.

His dismayed stare, his startled ejaculation, were the proof that the ruffian wanted. It was Ragged Dick who stood before him.

"You!" repeated Dick blankly.

"Me!" chuckled the pedlar hoarsely. "Your old pal, Parker. Glad to see me, ain't you, Dick?"

Dick shrank back from the ruffian face, the foul breath, tainted with spirits.

"Let me alone!" he muttered.

"Ardly believed it was you, though I knowed it was all the time," chuckled Parker. "We're-a toff these 'ere days, ain't we—a blooming toff! Ain't got 'ardly a word for an old pal?"

Dick pulled himself together. "You never were a pal of mine, you rotter! You were a thieving rascal, and I never wanted to tramp with you, and you know it. I got away from you as soon as I could. Now I don't want anything to say to you. Clear off!"

Pedlar Parker grinned evilly.

"You don't want nothing to say to me now you're up in the stirrups?" he jeered. "How did you come by your fine clothes? What are you doing in the big school, eh?"

"No business of yours."

"Couldn't believe me eyes when I saw you last week, with the old gent in the taxi going into Greyfriars School!" said Parker. "I knowed there was some game on. How did you get round the old gent?"

Dick did not answer.

AN EVENTFUL DAY AT GREYFRIARS!

Many exciting and humorous things happen on Sports Day, but one can always be certain of seeing an extremely thrilling race, a neck and neck struggle, or a sporting finish to any of the events of the day.

THE SPORTS AT GREYFRIARS



ARE PERHAPS ENJOYED AS MUCH BY THE SPECTATORS AS BY THE BOYS

AND OF COURSE THERE

IS THE USUAL ARRAY OF MATERS AND PATERS AND SISTERS AND COUSINS AND AUNTS

THE HIGH JUMP & THE LONG



—AND— THAT RACE FOR THE TEA TENTS



THE MILE!

— STILL IS A POPULAR ANNUAL EVENT!

He was startled and dismayed by the meeting, but he quickly recovered his nerve. He was not afraid of Pedlar Parker; the days were over when he had been a forlorn waif, and the ruffian had forced him to tramp in his company. He understood how amazed the ruffian must be at having seen him in company with Sir Henry Compton; in seeing him a well-dressed Greyfriars fellow, and it was natural that Parker should suspect that the change had come about by some trickery or other. But certainly he had no intention of explaining to the ruffian.

He stood silent, his hands clenching hard. He was no match for the ruffian physically, but he was prepared to give as good an account of himself as possible if Parker proceeded to violence.

"How did you work it?" asked Parker, with evident curiosity. "You fooled that old gent somehow. What?"

No answer.

"I've found out the name of that there school. It's Greyfriars. Do you belong to Greyfriars School?"

"Yes."

"And you ain't got even a name? What do they call you there?"

"Find out!"

"I'm goin' to," said Pedlar Parker, with bitter emphasis. "I'm going to 'ave a 'and in this game, young Dick. I'm going to 'ave a share. You've got money in your pockets these days.

You've got good clothes on your back. You was pretty ragged and dirty when you was with me, and I used to lay into you with my stick."

"Yes, you brute!" said Dick between his teeth. "I've got good clothes, and money in my pockets; and not a sixpence to give you. Get on your way, you hound, and leave me to get on mine!"

The pedlar's eyes glinted.

"That's the language, is it, now?" he sneered. "High and mighty in our noo clothes! I want to know the name you're goin' by at Greyfriars School."

"Find out, you rotter!"

"Who was that old gent I saw you with in the taxi?"

"Find out that, too!"

"I s'pose he's the bloke what sent you to the school, eh?"

"You can keep on asking questions, but I sha'n't answer any," replied Ragged Dick, with cool contempt.

"Well, it's pretty clear," said Pedlar Parker. "That's 'ow I've worked it out. Somehow you got round that old feller, and he's fixed you up like this and sent you to school. You always was one for learning, I remember. P'r'aps some sort of a yarn about that did the trick—what? Though that old bloke didn't look soft, either."

Dick smiled involuntarily.

Pedlar Parker, in his surmises as to how Ragged Dick had "worked" that change in his fortunes, was never likely to hit on anything near the truth. Certainly his surmise that Sir Henry Compton had been imposed upon by a beggar's tale was wide of the mark. The grim old baronet, as Parker himself recognised, was an extremely unlikely man to be imposed upon. Yet there it was; it was fairly clear that the man he had seen Dick with in the taxi had taken up the waif and sent him to school. Why?

"You won't let a bloke into the game—what?" asked Parker, eyeing the Greyfriars junior savagely.

"There isn't any game on, as you call it."

"Mean to say that that old ramrod of a cove took you up out of pure kindness of 'eart?" jeered the pedlar.

"I mean to say nothing to you!" answered Dick coolly.

"You've pulled his leg somehow," said Parker. "You've spun him some yarn that he's taken in. He don't look that sort, but that must be it, 'cause why, there ain't any other reason why he should spend money on you like this. Well, if you're taking him in, and pulling his leg on your own account, Ragged Dick, you can put on an extra turn of the screw for me. See?"

Dick shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm in this," said Parker. "You catch on—right in it! Halves, my covey."

"Are you finished?" said Dick.

"Halves, I tell you. How much 'ave you got about you now?"

"Three or four pounds."

"Two for me, then; and more to foller," said Pedlar Parker, holding out a dirty hand.

"I will not give you a sixpence."

"P'raps you'd rather I came into the school and told the young gents about you?" sneered Parker.

"Come into the school—if you dare!" retorted Dick. "I fancy you wouldn't get past the porter. You'd be kicked out if you did."

The pedlar gritted his teeth. As a matter of fact, he knew that Ragged Dick was right on that point. He had not forgotten his painful experiences at the hands of Coker of the Fifth.

"Mean to say the 'eadmaster of that big school knows about you?" he asked, after a savage pause. "Knows you was a tramp on the road afore that old covey put you to school?"

Dick did not answer.

Parker was perplexed and puzzled; and Dick had no intention whatever of helping him out of his perplexity.

"You ain't telling me anything?" asked Parker.

"Nothing."

"You won't tell me 'ow you got round the old covey?"

"Nothing at all."

"And you won't share out with an old pal?"

"I will give you nothing—nothing at all! Threaten me as much as you like, you'll get nothing out of me," answered Dick steadily.

"And s'pose," hissed the enraged ruffian, "suppose I take you by the neck and hide you, like I used to when we was tramping together."

"I'll give you back all I can," said Dick quietly, "and you'll find me a bit tougher than you found me then. Parker. I'm not half starved now, nor tired with tramping in all weathers. I fancy I could give you a tussle, Pedlar Parker. I'll try, anyhow, and if you lay a finger on me I'll put the police after you, too."

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just like any other Greyfriars chap would."

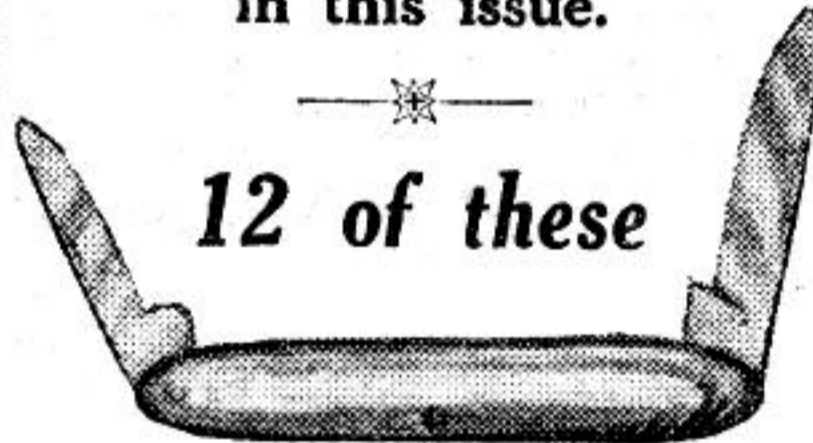
Parker trembled with rage.

"You, a Greyfriars chap! You put the police on me!" he said, in a choking voice.

"Certainly! Any decent fellow attacked by a tramp would inform the police, and have the rotter put in prison," said Dick. "And that's exactly what I shall do, Pedlar Parker; and you know best whether you want trouble with the police or not. You generally had stolen goods about you, or in your pack, when I knew you, and I've no doubt it's the same now. Better let me alone."

Pedlar Parker eyed him, shaking with fury. He realised the truth that was in the Greyfriars junior's words; the power was in Dick's hands now to obtain adequate protection against any ruffianly tramp on the road. He was no longer the forlorn and friendless waif whom the brutal outcast had ill-used. And Parker most assuredly did not want to come into personal contact with the police. His feud with the gentlemen in blue was an ancient one; the mere sight of the uniform of a guardian of the law was generally enough to make Mr. Parker slink out of his road.

Have a cut at the
SIMPLE COMPETITION
in this issue.



12 of these
**POCKET-KNIVES
OFFERED!**

But in his rage at the defiance of this boy, whom he had once beaten without mercy, Pedlar Parker forgot all prudence. That the boy, whether by trickery or not, had a powerful protector in the stern old gentleman Parker had seen him with—that, by trickery or not, he was now a member of a big school whose headmaster would certainly take the matter up if he were assaulted by a tramp. Parker realised all this, but, in his fury, he threw aside all considerations of his own safety. He was not to share in the new fortunes of Ragged Dick. It was doubtful whether he could even injure him by betraying him, and his hatred swelled almost to madness. With glinting eyes, snarling almost like a wild animal, the ruffian fairly hurled himself at the Greyfriars junior.

Dick was watching him keenly, ready for the attack. He leaped back as it came, actively, and then sprang aside. Before the enraged ruffian could turn upon him he struck out with all the force of his sinewy young arm.

Crash!

There was a hoarse grunt of pain from Pedlar Parker as he caught the clenched fist on the side of his jaw.

He went with a crash into the grass.

Dick leaped out into the lane to run for it. But the pedlar, sprawling in the grass, clutched at him as he leaped and caught his ankle. Dick came down in the road heavily.

"My turn now!" panted the ruffian.

He scrambled into the road after the fallen junior, still gripping him. Dick turned on him, and they struggled, the junior hitting out fiercely; while the ruffian, scarcely conscious in his rage of the blows he received, rained savage blows on Ragged Dick.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

Handling a Hooligan!

"STOP that!"

"Great Scott!"

Two seniors of Greyfriars were strolling up the lane from Friardale towards the school when they came in sight of that startling scene. Wingate, the captain of Greyfriars, and Gwynne, of the Sixth, were chatting cricket as they sauntered along in the pleasant summer afternoon, at peace with themselves and all the world.

But the sight of a junior in Etons struggling frantically in the grasp of a hulking tramp, who was raining blows on him, startled the two Sixth-Formers out of their cheery equanimity. Wingate broke into a rapid run, shouting as he ran up, and Gwynne was hardly a moment behind him.

"Help!" panted Dick as he heard Wingate's voice.

"Stop that!" roared Wingate.

His grasp was on the pedlar the next moment.

Pedlar Parker was a burly ruffian, but the athletic captain of Greyfriars whirled him off his victim with ease. The pedlar went crashing into the grass by the road.

He sprawled there, breathless, panting out curses. Ragged Dick sat up rather dazedly in the dust.

"It's a Greyfriars kid," said Gwynne, staring down at Dick. "That new kid in the Remove, I think—"

"Compton!" said Wingate. "Are you hurt, Compton?" He gave the gasping junior a hand up.

Dick panted for breath.

"Only a little. It's all right."

"Was that brute trying to rob you?" asked Wingate. "My hat! Almost within sight of the school gates!"

He turned towards Pedlar Parker who had sat up in the grass and was eyeing him savagely.

"Get up, you hound!" said Wingate.

"Burn you!" hissed Parker. "I—"

"Get up! Has he taken anything from you, Compton?"

"No!" gasped Dick.

"That was his game, of course," said Gwynne. "And he would have scored if we hadn't come up."

Wingate nodded.

"The brute's going to have a lesson," he said.

He fixed his eyes on the tramp.

"Get up! I won't take the trouble to kick you as far as the village and hand you over to the police! I'm going to thrash you! Get up!"

Pedlar Parker scrambled savagely to his feet.

"I ain't done any 'arm!" he panted.

"I've a right to wallop that there kid if I choose. He belongs to me!"

Wingate, who was taking off his coat, paused to stare at the man, amazed.

"Are you mad or drunk?" he asked.

"I ain't neither!" hissed Parker savagely. "If you belong to that school yonder, and I s'pose you do, you know who that kid is."

"Certainly I know," answered Wingate. "He is a Greyfriars boy, and I am going to thrash you for interfering with him!"

"And what's he called at Greyfriars?"

"No business of yours!"

"I tell you that kid belongs to me!" said Pedlar Parker, with husky fury. "He was my mate, tramping the roads till he run away one day."

"The fellow's mad!" said Gwynne, in wonder.

"I can tell you his name!" hissed the pedlar. "He's Dick, he is—Ragged Dick. He ain't got any other name!"

Ragged Dick, leaning against a tree, panting for breath, felt his heart almost stop beating. It was coming out now.

But the pedlar's statement only caused Gwynne of the Sixth to stare at him with amused surprise, while Wingate gave a grunt of contempt.

The Greyfriars captain threw his coat to Gwynne, and pushed back his cuffs. He was in deadly earnest. Wingate was a good-natured fellow, but the sight of the ruffian raining blows on a struggling boy had stirred his deepest ire. He was going to give Pedlar Parker some of his own medicine; which, in his opinion, was exactly what the scoundrel wanted.

"I tell you it's the truth!" hissed Parker. "That kid was a tramp on the road only a few weeks ago, and he was called Ragged Dick, and he never had a name. If you belong to his school you know it's so."

"Drunk, I suppose," said Gwynne, in wonder, "or else potty! Do you think you will make anyone believe that a baronet's grandson was tramping the road with you at any time, you silly ruffian?"

Parker started.

"A—a baronet's grandson!" he stammered. "Him! Oh, that's too rich! Ragged Dick a baronet's grandson! Oh, my eye!"

"Are you ready, you scoundrel?" asked Wingate grimly.

"You keep your hands off a bloke!" said Pedlar Parker. "I ain't got any quarrel with you. That kid's Ragged Dick, and he owned up to it jest afore you came up. I swear—"

"Oh, don't be a fool!" snapped Wingate. "The kid's name is Compton, and his grandfather's is Sir Henry Compton, of Compton Hall. If you've mistaken him for somebody else, that's your lookout. I'm going to thrash you for attacking him, so put up your hands!"

"I tell you—" hissed Parker.

But the ruffian had no time to tell more, if he had more to tell. Wingate was advancing on him, hitting out, and Pedlar Parker had to put up his grimy hands in self-defence.

"Go it, old bean!" grinned Gwynne.

Wingate was "going it." Parker defended himself with savage fury; but the champion athlete of Greyfriars was rather too much for him. There was a crash as the pedlar went down on his back in the dust.

"Man down!" chuckled Gwynne.

The ruffian sprawled in the road, a torrent of foul words streaming from his lips. Wingate glanced at Dick.

"Cut off, kid!" he said sharply.

"Yes, Wingate!"

Ragged Dick hurried off towards the school, glad to get off the scene. Parker struggled to his feet as Dick disappeared up the road.

"I'm going after that kid!" he said. "He's a swindling young hound, he is, and he's taken the old gent in somehow. I'm going to have him on the road again, and I'll hide him—by gun,



"If you don't let me have a couple of quid," said Bunter, "I'll show you up before all Greyfriars!" Ragged Dick turned on him. Without answering, he took the Owl by the collar, and with a swing of his arm sat him down in the quad. "Oh!" roared Bunter. (See Chapter 8.)

I'll hide him till his skin comes off under my belt! I'll—"

"Put up your hands, you foul-mouthed brute!" rapped out Wingate.

And the pedlar had to dismiss Ragged Dick from his mind as the captain of Greyfriars came at him with left and right.

For some minutes there was a terrific fight.

The ruffian fought his hardest, with the fury of a wild-cat, and Wingate for a little while had his hands full. The rugged face of the captain of Greyfriars showed a good many marks.

But he was getting the upper hand, slowly but steadily, and at length the pedlar went into the grass again, breathless, spent, bruised, and thrashed, beaten to the wide.

He lay there, panting, regarding Wingate with half-closed eyes that gleamed with hatred and malice.

The captain of Greyfriars looked on him grimly.

"Have you had enough, you brute?"

"Yes!" breathed Parker.

"I'll let you off with that, then. But get out of this neighbourhood," said Wingate. "You could be put in prison, and you know it, for attacking young Compton; and if I find you hanging about here again, I'll see that it's done, too. Better tramp while you've got the chance."

Wingate put on his coat, and walked away towards the school with Gwynne of the Sixth.

The two Sixth-Formers disappeared from the ruffian's view, as he lay gasping and groaning by the road.

He lay there a long time, too spent to stir. Seldom or never, in all his lawless career, had Pedlar Parker received so terrific a thrashing, though doubtless he had often deserved it.

He was thinking, savagely, evilly, as he lay and groaned. There was nothing to be got from the one-time waif. However Ragged Dick had come by his good fortune, there was no share in it for his former tyrant. The ruffian had thought of seizing him by force, and dragging him back to the tramping life of the road; but he realised that it was out of his power. Grandson of a baronet—grandson of Sir Henry Compton, of Compton Park! How had Ragged Dick done it—how had he imposed on that severe-looking old gentleman whom the pedlar had seen taking him into the school a week ago? If the old man had placed him at school as his grandson, he must believe that the boy was his grandson—somehow, by unimaginable trickery, Ragged Dick had imposed upon him. But how, how? For it could not be true. Ragged Dick could not be the man's grandson!

The ruffian rose at last, groaning. A glimmer of white in the grass caught his eye. He had been lying on a letter, which had fallen in the grass, undoubtedly from Ragged Dick's hand, when the ruffian had first attacked him.

Parker remembered that the boy had been reading a letter. He picked it up and looked at it. It was the letter from Sir Henry Compton to his grandson in the Greyfriars Remove.

"My eye!" murmured Parker.

It was true, then, what those two contemptuous fellows had said—the boy was supposed to be a baronet's grandson. No wonder they had heard his statements with derision. Yet he had told the truth. Ragged Dick was Ragged Dick, a tramp of the roads; he was not, and could not be, grandson to Sir Henry Compton, of Compton Hall.

Pedlar Parker put the letter into his pocket, and loafed away, still mumbling over his injuries. It seemed that he could not harm Ragged Dick at his school. His story, told there, would be laughed at, treated with derision as Wingate and Gwynne had treated it. But there was another resource. Somehow, by some amazing deceit, as it seemed indubitably to Parker, Ragged Dick had imposed himself upon an old man; somehow, Sir Henry Compton had been made to believe that the tattered waif was his grandson. There, at least, the rascal could intervene; to the old baronet, at least, he could expose the cheat—he could tell him who and what Ragged Dick really was. There might be a reward to come for opening the old man's eyes to the deception. At least it would spoil Ragged Dick's game—queer his pitch, as the ruffian expressed it in his evil thoughts.

And the pedlar tramped away, his mind made up, deriving what consolation he could from the thought of "queering the pitch" for Ragged Dick with Sir Henry Compton, of Compton Hall.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

Let Down!

"I SAY, you fellows! Seen Compton?"

Billy Bunter was asking that question up and down Greyfriars.

The time was drawing near for the feed in Study No. 7, in which Harry Wharton & Co. were not to share.

The feed was coming off, all the same; at all events, William George Bunter was determined that it should.

The fellows who had turned down his kind invitations with laughter would laugh, as Bunter expressed it, on the other side of their mouths when that great spread took place, and they found themselves excluded from the good things.

The Famous Five and Peter Todd would repent them bitterly, Bunter considered, almost with weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. And if they sought to butt into the spread after all, Bunter would turn them down, in his turn. They deserved that!

His expected guests having failed him, Bunter had extended his invitations further. It was to be a big and impressive feed, and he wanted company. Had the spread been only enough for four or five, Bunter would have preferred to deal with it on his lonesome own. But he intended to have enough for a dozen, at least: his list of goods, supplied to Mrs. Mimble, was a lengthy one. It was true that though Bunter had supplied the list, Mrs. Mimble had not yet supplied the goods. The trivial question of cash intervened between the order and the execution thereof.

Hence Bunter's search for the new junior.

Skinner and Snoop, Bolsover major
THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—NO. 908.

and Fisher T. Fish, Stott and Micky Desmond, had agreed to come—dubiously. They were not such distinguished guests as the fellows who had turned the feed down. Bunter would rather have had the Famous Five, who were great men in the Remove; he would have liked to have Peter Todd, in order to demonstrate to Peter that he could, on occasion, stand his whack in the study, and a little over. Still, he had to have some guests, and Skinner & Co. obliged. They did not feel at all sure about the spread, the issuer of invitations being Billy Bunter; but they were sure about one thing, and that was that if there was no spread, they would give Bunter a ragging for pulling their leg. While, if Bunter played his old game of asking fellows to a feed, and suddenly discovering that the tuck had to be paid for first, and that he was unexpectedly short of cash at the moment—if Bunter played that game on Skinner & Co., they were quite prepared to deal with him. Certainly they would not supply any cash. But undoubtedly they would impress the fact upon Bunter that such a chicken would not fight with their noble selves.

Bunter, in fact, was the only fellow concerned who had no doubt about the great spread taking place.

Compton's refusal to supply him with the necessary loan he had dismissed from his fat mind.

Compton wanted his queer secret kept, and Bunter was keeping it. Half-a-dozen times at least already he had extracted cash from Compton on this ground. Now Compton had "kicked." But that was a little circumstance that Bunter disregarded.

He was quite confident of bringing the fellow to heel.

But an unexpected difficulty arose. Compton seemed to have gone out of gates; at all events, he was not to be found.

Up and down and round about went the Owl of the Remove, inquiring angrily for Richard Compton.

The cricketers had not seen him since the practice on Little Side, other fellows had not noticed him. Apparently he had gone out; and if he had gone out, he might not be back till call-over.

And the spread was booked for half-past five!

Bunter fairly boiled with rage.

This fellow, this tattered rotter who was pretending to be something better than he really was, this outsider whom Bunter could cover with disgrace as with a garment by opening his capacious mouth and letting loose his lengthy tongue, this fellow was dodging him—letting him down at the last moment.

The cheek of it was really exasperating.

Certainly, Bunter would give the fellow away if he did not come up to the scratch. But Bunter was not so keen on giving Compton away as on enjoying that great spread in Study No. 7.

The Owl of the Remove rolled down to gates at last, and blinked out wrathfully into the road.

There was no sign of Compton.

"The awful rotter!" murmured Bunter.

Five o'clock had long since rung out from the clock-tower. The time fixed for the feed was close at hand. All

was ready. The guests would already be assembled in Bunter's study; Mrs. Mimble had the order, and had only to deliver the goods; Bunter was prepared to take his place at the head of the festive board! Only one indispensable preliminary was lacking—the loan of the cash from Compton! But that preliminary was absolutely indispensable, and Compton was not there! Of course, he dared not face Bunter and refuse—that was how the fat junior looked at it. He was just staying away, and letting Bunter down!

Hotter and hotter grew Bunter's wrath.

Half-past five!

Time for the feed, and no Compton!

And then all at once the new junior came in sight on the road. He was coming along towards the school gates.

Bunter blinked at him savagely.

Compton looked as if he had been in the wars. There was a bruise on his nose, several marks about his face. Apparently he had been in a fight—not that Bunter cared what had happened to him.

Here he was at last, at all events—he had come back. He came up to the old stone gateway without even observing Bunter. He seemed deep in thought, to judge by the cloud on his brow. Bunter fairly jumped at him and grabbed him by the arm, and Ragged Dick started.

"You rotter!" hissed Bunter.

"Eh?"

"Letting a fellow down!"

Compton stared at him and shook off his fat hand.

"What do you mean, Bunter? Let me alone, you fat fool!"

"I've been waiting for you!" howled Bunter. "It's turned half-past five—I'm waiting!"

"What for?"

"You—you beast! I've ordered the stuff for the spread, and we're all ready. You can come if you like!"

"Oh, get out!"

Compton walked on, and Bunter rushed after him. He rolled along by the side of the new junior in a state of great excitement. Even yet he could not realise that Ragged Dick was in earnest.

"Don't you understand, you silly chump?" he breathed. "Look here, I've been disappointed about a postal-order—"

"Let me alone!"

"I'm short of cash—"

"Do shut up!"

"I want you to lend me a couple of pounds till to-morrow!" gasped Bunter. "Of course, I shall square! I've told you that!"

Ragged Dick walked on without answering.

"Do you hear, you dummy?" exclaimed Bunter. "By gum, if you let me down this time, Compton, I'll show you up to all Greyfriars!"

Ragged Dick turned on him.

Without answering he took Bunter by the collar and with a swing of his sinewy arm sat him down in the quad.

Bump!

"Oh!" roared Bunter.

"If you speak to me again I'll punch you!" said Compton, and he walked into the House.

Bunter sat and gasped.

Even upon his fat and obtuse mind the truth was borne in at last! Ragged Dick meant business—Compton had failed him—the horn of plenty really had run dry! Bunter was let down, as he regarded it. Apparently Compton did not care whether he kept the secret or not—at all events, he would not pay for the keeping of it. He was fed-up

ANSWERS
EVERY MONDAY—PRICE 2!

with Bunter and Bunter's dingy rascality—and there was nothing doing!

Bunter picked himself up. The guests were waiting in Study No. 7—doubtless getting impatient. And there was to be no spread! The only solace that remained to Bunter was to give Compton away—to tell his startling story to Skinner & Co. instead of handing out the feed they had assembled for.

That was a solace to Bunter. It was exceedingly doubtful whether it would prove a solace to Skinner & Co. But the fat junior did not reflect upon that; he was accustomed to centring his reflections upon himself. Breathing wrath and indignation he rolled away to Study No. 7 in the Remove, quite unaware of what awaited him there.

coming!" said Micky Desmond. "I'm not waiting for the fat spalpeen!"

And Micky lounged out of the study. The other fellows remained. If there was to be no feed there was to be an example made of Billy Bunter.

"I never believed a word of it, of course!" said Snoop. "It was worth while looking in on spec, that's all!"

"If there was a spread Toddy would be here, of course," remarked Stott. "Toddy knows better!"

Bolsover major snorted. "I didn't think even that fat idiot would have the nerve to pull my leg!" he said. "I'll make him sorry for it!"

"I guess I'll scrag the pesky fat clam," said Fisher T. Fish, with deep indignation.

"The cheeky fat rotter!"

"I guess I'll make potato-scrappings of the cheeky clam!"

"I'll smash him!" growled Bolsover major.

There was a step in the Remove passage.

"Hallo! Here he comes!"

The fat figure of William George Bunter rolled in at the doorway of Study No. 7.

Five separate and distinct glares were fixed on him. It was only the bare possibility that Bunter had been delayed, that the spread might yet come off, that prevented the exasperated guests from seizing Bunter on the spot.

Bunter blinked at them.

The Owl of the Remove was short-sighted, and he did not observe very



"You're in it, too!" gasped Pedlar Parker. "I—I never knew that, sir—on my davy I thought you was being took in by Ragged Dick. I—oh!" The ruffian gave a loud howl as the baronet's arm went up, and his stick came down with an angry blow. "That for your lying tongue!" said Sir Harry. "Now go—or I will have you arrested and sent to prison!" (See Chapter 11.)

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Bunter Asks For It!

"CHEEKY fat cad!"
"Pulling our leg, of course!"
"Why, we'll burst him!"
"Fooling us!" said Bolsover major. "Us! Me! Why, I'll make an example of him! I—I—I'll—"

Words almost failed Bolsover major. There were six Remove fellows in Study No. 7, waiting for Billy Bunter, and it was a quarter to six, and no Bunter had appeared. Still more important, no sign of a spread had appeared. The guests could have got on fairly well without their host had the spread been there—but the spread was not there.

Skinner & Co. had arrived promptly to time. Now they had waited a quarter of an hour.

And Bunter had not even come to the study.

The remarks that the assembled guests made to one another did not really sound like the remarks of grateful guests who had accepted kind and hospitable invitations to a record spread. Their feelings towards their generous host seemed to be of the Hunnish variety.

"Sure, it's a jape, and he's not

"The silly owl!"

"If he's not here in a few minutes I'll go and look for him!" said Bolsover major. "Pulling my leg, by gum, I'll teach him!"

"Asking fellows to a spread and not even showing up!" said Sidney James Snoop. "Of course, he was going to try to stick us for the tin—his old game. I suppose he thinks it won't work with us, so he's leaving us to wait for nothing!"

"I fancy he was going to screw the money out of Compton," said Skinner, with a grin. "He's stuck that ass for a lot of money since he came. But I suppose the worm has turned at last."

"Might be that," agreed Snoop. "Anyhow, here we are, and there's no spread."

Feeling was running high in Study No. 7 in the Remove. Bolsover major fairly breathed wrath. He was a great man in his own estimation, and he regarded it as an honour to Bunter to have accepted his invitation. And this was how Bunter appreciated the honour. Fisher T. Fish's feelings, also, were deep. Fisher T. Fish was always on the make; he had come to Study No. 7 on the make, and there was nothing to be made!

"We'll jolly well rag him, anyhow!" said Stott.

clearly the expressions of his guests. As a matter of fact, he was too full of his own disappointment and exasperation to bestow any thought on the disappointment and exasperation of other fellows. He rolled into the study, quite unconscious that his position was a good deal like that of Daniel entering the lion's den.

"I say, you fellows—"

"We're waiting!" said Bolsover major, in a deep voice.

"Ready and waiting!" hissed Fisher T. Fish.

"We've waited nearly half an hour, Bunter," said Skinner. "Where's the spread?"

"There isn't any!"

"What?" roared five voices in unison.

"Sorry and all that," said Bunter. "I've been disappointed about a postal-order—"

"A—a—a postal-order—"

"Yes. But I'll tell you what," said Bunter, with a gleam of hope. "The postal-order's certain to come by the first post in the morning—absolutely certain. It's from one of my titled relations, you know. Well, you fellows lend me a pound—"

"My hat!"

(Continued on page 16.)



THE GREYFRIARS HERALD

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HARRY WHARTON
EDITOR

Week Ending July 4th, 1925.



When you read of the Experiences
of our Contributors who were
"Snapped" at Awkward Moments.

BILLY BUNTER:

Fancy that boulder Smithy having the nerve to take a fortygraph in Big Hall while a publick flogging was in process! The unforchunit victim was your humble servant Me. Just as I was being hoisted on to the sholders of Gosling, the porter, Smithy whipped out his vest-pocket camera and held it in position. Then, just as the birch was swishing through the air, he took a snapshot of the paneful seen. It happened to be a bright morning, and Big Hall was fludded with sunshine, so the snap came out perfectly. Smithy showed it all over the Remove, much to my annoyance. It's awful to be snapped in such a yewmiliating posture!

MR. PROUT:

Feeling in a genial mood, and fired with the holiday spirit, I went for a donkey-ride the other day on the sands of Pegg. I had no idea that I was being observed, and that Newland of the Remove was lurking behind a boulder. The wretched donkey—apparently rebellious at having to carry such a weighty burden—started to dance and prance in a frantic effort to shake me off. Presently he succeeded, and I went sprawling in the sand. At that precise moment Newland came out from behind the boulder, and took a snapshot of the distressing calamity. Then he bolted at top speed. I hurried after him to forbid him to develop the film, but he was out of sight in a flash. Next day the snapshot was being shown round the school, and I was compelled to hide my diminished head. I could not face my sniggering pupils!

THE HEAD:

It is not often that I miss my shot at golf; but I missed badly the other day on the local links, and, losing my equilibrium, I sat down heavily on the turf. I was not aware that anybody had witnessed the incident, but the next day a snapshot of it was sent to me anonymously. It was a terribly realistic snapshot. My club was describing a vicious sweep through space, and I myself was in the act of coming to grass. I fervently hoped that similar snapshots were not in circulation; but, alas! for my hopes. They were being distributed broadcast throughout the school. I shall make every effort to discover the identity of the photographer, and he shall pay dearly for his transgression!

HORACE COKER:

Some cheeky young cubb in the Remove has had the ordassity to take a snapshot of me—me, mark you!—in the act of crawling out of a slimy duckpond, into which I had been hurled after a spill on my moter-bike. The snapshot made me nash my teeth with rage when I saw it. I looked like a drowned rat, and was covered from head to foot with reeds and slime. Wait till I get hold of the young munky who took that snap! I—I'll jolly well burst him!

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WILLIAM GOSLING:

I was a-ringin' of the risin'-bell the other mornin', when suddingly a sack of flour was shook over me from a hupper winder. I was smothered from 'ead to foot in a blinkin' havalanche, as ever was! I looked like a yewman snow-man. But the trouble didn't end there. That young raskil, Master Cherry, took a fortygraph of me just after the flour 'ad descended. I begged an' prayed 'im not to develop the fortygraph, but it was no use. 'E printed about a score of the pesterin' things, an' I've been a hobject of ridicool ever since. Wot I says is this 'ere—all young ribs wot takes fortygraphs oughter be drowned at birth!

EDITORIAL!

By Harry Wharton.

PHOTOGRAPHY is a fine art. I use the word "fine" advisedly, because wet weather is the photographer's bane. He likes a bright, sunny afternoon, without a cloud in the sky, to pursue his hobby.

And a very nice hobby it is, if you've the time and the talent and the "tin." Personally, I seldom find time to wander over the cliffs with my camera or to saunter along the seashore taking snapshots. I'm far too busy in my editorial "den." But I envy those fellows who can get out every half-holiday with their cameras. It's great fun.

There was only a slight ripple of enthusiasm for photography in the Remove until Monty Newland came to Greyfriars. Monty has transformed the ripple into a wave. He is as keen as mustard himself, and now he has infected everybody with his enthusiasm. There is scarcely a fellow who doesn't possess a camera; and if you peep into the woodshed any afternoon after lessons, you will find it being used as a dark-room by the enterprising photographers of the Remove.

Monty Newland's study is a sort of Royal Academy of photographs. His walls are simply swarming with them—photos of people and places, and every subject under the sun. Monty is clever as well as keen, and his snapshots are works of art. Only a few weeks ago he took first prize in a snapshot competition promoted by a weekly paper.

Photography is a very pleasant hobby, and there must be thousands of my reader-chums who are busy with their cameras at this time of the year. It is for their benefit that this Special Photography Number has been compiled. We are, of course, treating the hobby humorously; we are not setting out to teach or preach on the subject. That can safely be left to the text-books.

HARRY WHARTON.

BAITING BUNTER!

By Dick Penfold.

A SMART and dapper little man
Called at the school one day;
And Billy Bunter yelled to him:
"Hallo, sir! Lost your way?"

"Not so, my plump and portly friend,
I'm from 'The Weekly Stunter.'
I've come from town to interview
A youth named William Bunter."

"That's me!" cried Billy, with delight,
And bulging, glistening eyes.
"Can it be possible, old chap,
That I have won a prize?"

"You have, indeed!" the man replied,
With quite a merry laugh.
"And I've been authorised to take
The winner's photograph."

Then Bunter, with a whoop of joy,
Turned hurriedly to go
And don his stylish Sunday suit,
As cut in Savile Row.

He dressed with thoroughness and care
And looked quite spick and span;
No whiter collar had he worn
Since summer term began.

He donned some patent-leather shoes,
With white silk spats to follow.
Then, gazing in the glass, he cried:
"I'm handsome as Apollo!"

He posed upon the School House steps,
A "topper" on his cranium;
And in his buttonhole appeared
A large and pink geranium.

The "Weekly Stunter" man was there,
His camera in his hand;
And fellows flocked from far and near—
A laughing, chaffing band.

"Smile, please," the photo merchant said—
"A smile that wins all hearts!
You'll do it, if you feast your eyes
Upon this bag of tarts!"

He held the bag above his head,
And Bunter beamed with rapture;
Then Mr. Quelch came swooping down
As if to make a capture.

"Boys, what does this excitement mean?"
In thunderous tones he said.
"Oh, golly!" gasped the camera-man,
Then promptly turned and fled.

And as he scuttled through the Close
He shed his quaint disguise;
And Billy Bunter blinked at him
With staring, starting eyes.

"Oh, crumbs! I'm diddled, dished, and
done!"
He groaned, with jaws agape.
"That chap was WIBLEY all the time!
Oh, what a heartless jape!"



Touching Up!

By DICKY NUGENT

The Head!

A Nutshell Narrative of St. Sam's.

"LEND me your bike this afternoon, Lickham," said the Head, meeting the master of the Fourth in the quad. "I want to go over to Granchester."

"With plezzure, sir!" said Mr. Lickham. "Going to see the cricket match?"

"Blow cricket!" said the Head, with scornful dignity. "I'm going to have a foto taken—a foto of my fizz. Mr. Snapper will do the job. He's agreed to give me a sitting at three o'clock."

Mr. Lickham smiled.

"Mind you don't smash too many plates, sir!" he said. "Having your ugly dial fotographed will put a grate strane on the camera!"

The Head frowned.

"Are you looking for a thick ear, Lickham?"

"Nunno, sir!"

"Well, you'd get one if it wasn't for the fact that you've agreed to lend me your bike. A hansom young fellow like me will make a fine foto. I'm an Apollo—not a mere apology of an Apollo, like yourself! I'm going to have a special life-size foto done; and on Speech Day, when the Guvvners are here, I shall be hung in Big Hall."

"Good grashus!" gasped Mr. Lickham. "I always did say you'd be hung one of these days! Who's going to be the executioner?"

"Dolt! Idiot!" snapped the Head. "When I say I shall be hung, I'm referring to my fotograph, of corse!"

"Oh!"

The Head hurried away to the bike-shed, and a few minnits later the old buffer was peddling away towards Granchester. He had put on his best bib and tucker for the occasion, and he had trimmed his beard.

Mr. Snapper, the fotographer, greeted him cheerily.

"Squat down in that chair, sir!" he said. "Have you brought your gown and mortar-board with you? It's going to be an offishul foto, I take it?"

The Head nodded. He untied a brown-paper parsel and took out his gown; then he produced a crumpled and battered mortar-board from his coat-pocket. Having donned his robes of offis he squatted in the chair.

"Smile, please!" said Mr. Snapper, berrying his head under a cloth.

"Ratts!" growled the Head. "Head-masters never smile when they have their fotos taken. They look fierce and forbidding—like this!"

And the Head folded his arms and stuck out his jaw and frowned like Napoleon Bonypart.

Click! went the camera, and the deed was done.

"I'll send the foto along to you when it's finished," said Mr. Snapper. "The fee is two ginnies, payable in advance."

"Sorry—can't stop," said the Head. "Got an important appointment!"

And he was half-way down the staires before Mr. Snapper could say "Pay up!"

It was Speech Day at St. Sam's. A sollum function was about to be performed in Big Hall. The Head and the Guvvners stood on the platform, and a large, flat, brown-paper parsel, which had just arrived, was in the hands of Sir Frederic Funguss, O.B.E., the Chairman of the Board of Guvvners.

"My boys," began Sir Freddie, "I have here a foto of your esteemed and venerable headmaster, who has ruled the roost at St. Sam's for the last seventy years." (Cheers.) "I have desided to hang him"—loud applaws—"in a conspicuuous position on the wall, for all the school to see. Anybody got a penknife?"

"You want a rope—not a penknife!" came a voice from the back of the hall.

"Silense!" roared the Head.

He handed Sir Freddie a knife, and the string of the parsel was severed and the foto revealed.

With the aid of a map-pole Sir Freddie hoisted the foto up the wall and hitched it on to the nail which had been placed there in reddiness.

Suddenly a yell of larfter rang through Big Hall.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What a giddy guy!"

The Head glared at the foto with eyes that started from their sockitts. Some practikal joaker had been at work, touching up the portrate. He had lengthened the Head's beard till it was entangled in his feet; he had lengthened the Head's nose so that it looked like a Purch's beak; and he had filled in lots of wrinkles on the face, making the Head look about fifty years older than he really was.

Sir Freddie, who was short-sighted, failed to notiss these details.

"Behold your worthy and venerable headmaster!" he said impressively.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Head fairly danced with rage.

"Gimme that map-pole!" he spluttered. "Lemme take down that offensive fotograph! Somebody has been touching me up, and when I discover the young rascal's eyedentity I'll do some touching-up myself—with a cane!"

But, fortunately for a certain practikal joaker in the Fourth—Jack Jolly, to wit—the Head never discovered who had done it.

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OUR SNAPSHOT COLUMN!

By Monty Newland.

I AM accused of being a camera-fiend and a photo-fanatic, and I don't mind the accusation a little bit. I've been keen on photography ever since I could toddle. Just as some fellows are born with a silver spoon in their mouth, so, I believe, I must have been born with a camera in my hands! At all events, I picked up a working knowledge of the camera in record time, and actually won a kiddies' snapshot competition at the tender age of seven!

No need for me to dwell on the delights of this pleasant hobby. I have only to glance through my well-packed photograph album to realise how many happy hours I have spent with my trusty camera. I have taken hundreds of snapshots in the course of a term—some of them at great personal risk. Once, during a terrible storm, I waded into the sea in order to "snap" the mountainous waves as they hurled themselves against the little jetty at



Pegg. Suddenly I was swept off my feet by a receding wave, and was whirled out of my depth. Fortunately, a number of boatmen saw my plight, and they formed a human chain and rescued me from a watery grave.

On another occasion I climbed into the tree-tops in order to get a "close-up" of a rook's nest. I don't believe in bird-nesting; but I like to get snapshots of the various kinds of eggs and young birds. I was perched precariously on a slender branch, poising my camera ready for action, when the branch snapped in the middle and down I went, crashing through a jungle of twigs and leaves. Had I tumbled all the way to terra firma I should not have lived to take another snapshot. Fortunately, I was able to clutch at a stout branch in my descent, and thus saved myself. But the camera went crashing to earth, and it was hopelessly damaged when I picked it up. Better the camera than its owner, though!

Perhaps my most painful experience was when I tried to get a snapshot of Coker of the Fifth playing cricket. Coker was batting, and I tiptoed my way towards the wicket, approaching him from the leg-side. I halted a couple of yards from the batsman and got him nicely in focus. Down came the ball, and Coker swung round and smote it with all his might. It hit my camera with a terrific crash, and then shot up and caught me under the chin, knocking me backwards like a skittle.

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(Continued from page 13.)

"That game—with us!" gasped Skinner.

"I'll settle up in the morning, of course, when my postal-order comes."

"You fat spoofer!" roared Bolsover major.

"Oh, really, Bolsover—"

"Didn't Compton weigh in with a loan?" sneered Snoop.

"No; the beast let me down—I mean—that is—" stammered Bunter.

"I know what you mean," agreed Skinner, "and I know what I mean, too. Shut the door, Snoopy!"

Sidney James Snoop slammed the study door.

"I say, you fellows, about Compton," said Bunter, blinking at his enraged guests, and still not realising his impending fate. "I'm going to tell you about that cad—all about him. He's an impostor."

"Is he?" said Skinner. "Not such an impostor as a fellow who asks chaps to a spread and keeps them waiting half an hour, and then asks them for the tin to stand the spread."

"Oh, really, Skinner—"

"Anything more to say before we begin, Bunter?" asked Bolsover major grimly.

"Eh? You can't begin, as there's no feed," said the abstruse Owl. "But about Compton; I'm going to surprise you."

"We're going to surprise you, too, I think," murmured Skinner, taking up a strategic position between Bunter and the door.

"He's a tramp," said Bunter.

"Eh?"

"What?"

"Which?"

Bunter had succeeded in astonishing the Removites. In their surprise, they stared at him, instead of collaring him.

"Who's a tramp?"

"That fellow Compton," said Bunter eagerly. "I'm going to give him away—I'm not going to keep his shady secrets for him. His name's not Compton—at all really—he's called Ragged Dick."

"Is the fat idiot mad?" asked Skinner, staring blankly at the Owl of the Remove.

"Must be, I think," said Bolsover.

"Compton's the grandson of old Sir Henry Compton, at Compton Hall," said Snoop. "What do you mean by saying that his name's not Compton, Bunter?"

"It isn't, all the same. I saw him before he came to Greyfriars, and he was a ragged tramp and a beggar—"

"Sir Henry Compton's grandson was?" howled Skinner.

"Yes. I saw him, and—"

"Well, I've heard some pretty steep yarns from Bunter before," said Skinner. "But I think this one takes the cake. You fat dummy, do you think we're going to believe a silly yarn like that about Compton, when we know you've only made it up because he won't lend you any more money?"

Bunter started.

It had not occurred to his fat mind that that view might be taken of his startling story.

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"I've not made it up," he exclaimed. "I tell you I met the fellow in Compton Park, before he came to Greyfriars, and he was dirty and in rags and tatters."

"Yes, Sir Henry would be likely to let his grandson go around his park in rags and tatters—I don't think!"

"He wasn't his grandson—he told me he was a tramp, tramping the roads, without a home—"

"If he had told you anything of the sort, you fat idiot, he was pulling your leg," said Skinner. "Not that I believe a word of it! It's too jolly clear why you're spinning a yarn about Compton! You've been sticking him for loans, and he's chucked it up just when you wanted more to stand a spread—what?"

"Oh really, Skinner—"

"If you want to spin a yarn about a chap, why don't you make it a bit more probable?" grinned Skinner. "Tell us that he pinched his grandfather's gold watch and popped it with Lazarus, in Courtfield. Tell us that he goes to the races, blagging, with that precious Roger Compton we've heard about, and comes home squiffy at one in the morning. Tell us anything—except that fat-headed yarn you've just told us."

"Yes, make it a bit more probable, Bunter," chuckled Snoop. "Begin again at the beginning, and not so steep this time."

"You silly asses!" howled Bunter. "It's true. I tell you that fellow Compton was a ragged tramp, tramping the roads, before he came here—"

"And all because he wouldn't lend you a quid or two this afternoon!" grinned Skinner.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

There was an angry snort from Bolsover major.

"You needn't spin any more yarns about Compton, Bunter. I've noticed that you've been sticking him for money, just as you did Mauleverer when he first came. The fellow was a fool to lend you anything, and it's just like you to turn on him and tell silly lies about him afterwards."

"Oh, really, Bolsover—"

"Never mind Compton, and never mind your yarns. We came here for a spread. Where's the spread?"

"Owing to that cad Compton—I mean, owing to my postal-order not coming—"

"Is there going to be a spread?" roared Bolsover major.

"No!"

"Then there's going to be a ragging." Bunter blinked round in alarm. He realised his danger at last, and made a jump for the door.

Harold Skinner grinned, and shoved him back. Bunter sat down on the study carpet with a yelp.

"Collar him!"

"Rag him!"

"Lynch him!"

"Yarooocoh!" roared Bunter, as he was collared on all sides by his enraged guests. "Whoop! Help! Fire! Murder! Yow-ow! I say, you fellows—I say—Whoooooop!"

The following five minutes were like a fearful nightmare to Billy Bunter.

He hardly knew what happened to him. But he knew that it was very painful.

Study No. 7 had rather a wrecked appearance by the time the ragers had finished with William George Bunter. And Bunter was not only looking wrecked, he was feeling wrecked.

Skinner & Co. streamed out of the study, feeling that they had had their money's worth, if they had not had the spread. They left Billy Bunter strewn on the floor, gasping and gasping as if he never would leave off gasping.

"Ow, ow-ow! Oh, oh, oh! Grooogh! Gug, gug! Moooh!"

Such were the weird sounds that greeted Peter Todd when he came back to his study after tea with Squiff in Study No. 14.

He stared into the study.

Bunter was still sprawling on the floor, crimson, breathless, his hair like a mop, his collar and tie gone, all the buttons burst off his well-filled waistcoat—dusty, dishevelled, inky. He blinked dismally at the astonished Peter.

"What the thump—" gasped Toddy.

"Ow! Wow!"

"Has there been an earthquake in the study, old fat man?"

"Ow! Wow! Grooogh!"

"What's happened?" yelled Peter.

"Oh dear!" groaned Bunter. "There wasn't any—grooogh!—spread, and those beasts—ow!—set on me—wooooh! Look at me!"

Peter looked—and roared.

"Ha, ha, ha! You look a picture! Serve you jolly well right for making out you were going to stand a spread when you weren't."

"I was!" yelled Bunter. "That beast Compton let me down—"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Peter.

"I—I mean, I've been disappointed about a postal-order. Of course, I should refuse to accept a loan from a fellow like Compton—"

"You've accepted a good many, I think," chuckled Peter. "Seems to me the chap's been lending you money nearly every day."

"Ow! Wow! I've turned him down—yow-ow! He's a rotten outsider! He was a tramp and a beggar before he came here, Peter!"

"Eh?"

"That fellow Compton. I saw him in rags and tatters. He's an impostor. He's a rotten tramp really!"

Peter ceased to laugh, and gave Bunter a grim look.

"So that's the yarn you're spinning about a chap because he's put a stop to your plundering him," he said. "If you hadn't been jolly well ragged already, Bunter, I'd jolly well thrash you. As it is, I'll only kick you out of the study."

"Oh, really, Toddy—yaroooh!—leave off, you beast—leave off kicking a chap! Whooop! Yooop! Yarooooh!"

Bunter rolled out into the Remove passage, with the help of Peter Todd's boot, and the door of No. 7 slammed on him.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Chuck It, Bunter!

HARRY WHARTON and Frank Nugent were at prep in Study No. 1 when Dick came in. The new junior paused a little in the doorway, glancing at them, and then came firmly into the study.

What to expect he did not know. But he was assured that Bunter had told his story. There was no doubt about that. What to do, what to say, if he were taxed with it, Dick did not know. He was passionately determined not to lie to fellows who liked and trusted him—he would have died sooner than that. Yet it was impossible to admit the truth—his promise, and the commands of Sir Henry held him from that. For hours he had thought over the matter, keeping to himself in the secluded cloisters, but he had been unable to reach any decision. Now he had come in at last, not knowing what to expect, not knowing what to do.

Both the juniors looked up as their study-mate entered.

Both of them smiled.

"Hallo! Where have you been all this

time, Compton?" asked the captain of the Remove cheerily.

"I went out for a walk after the cricket," answered Dick. "I've been loafing about since."

"You picked up trouble while you were out, to judge by the look of your nose," said Nugent.

Dick coloured, and passed his hand over his bruised nose.

"Yes. A rotten tramp—"

"My hat! You've been scrapping with a tramp?"

"Wingate of the Sixth came along and thrashed him," said Dick.

"Good old Wingate!"

"Well, there's news, old man," said Harry Wharton, smiling. "You don't seem to have heard it."

"News?" repeated Dick.

"Yes; and about you."

"About me?" Dick's voice was a little faint.

"Yes; dear old Bunter is going it again," said the captain of the Remove, laughing. "It seems that you've stopped lending him money."

"Yes."

"Time you did," remarked Frank Nugent. "You were an ass, Compton, to let that fat sponger plunder you so much."

"And now he's spinning a yarn," said Harry. "I'm telling you because Bunter's told all the fellows, and it's a standing joke by this time. No need to get your rag out with Bunter. He's such a silly ass that it's not worth while taking any notice of his rot."

"Oh!" muttered Dick. "And what—what has he said?"

"That you were a tramp on the giddy road before you came to Greyfriars!" chuckled Wharton. "He makes out that he met you in rags and tatters in Compton Park—your grandfather's park. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" chuckled Nugent.

Dick looked at them.

He remembered how Wingate and Gwynne had derided the statement made by Pedlar Parker. He realised that the Remove fellows were taking Bunter's tale in the same spirit. He realised, too, that that was what might have been expected, for even had a truthful fellow told such a story it was too steep to be easily believed. And Billy Bunter was well known for his amazing yarns. The true story was amazing to Dick himself, so amazing that sometimes it seemed like a dream. It was not likely to find believers in the Greyfriars Remove without very substantial proofs to back it up.

Bunter, of course, had no proofs to offer. He had only his word—which was never likely to be taken on the lightest subject. Certainly no one was likely to take Bunter's word in such a matter as this.

Wharton and Nugent were evidently entertained by the story. That was all.

Both of them were laughing, and they seemed to expect Compton to laugh also.

Dick breathed hard.

He did not know whether to feel relieved or not. The thunderbolt had fallen, but it had missed fire. Bunter's story was laughed at—taken as a foolish and malicious invention of a fellow disappointed in his greed. In a few days it would be forgotten.

The secret, then, was safe.

But Ragged Dick was not sure that he felt relief. He was not called upon to deny the story. It was considered too absurd to need denial. It was simply laughed at.

That was a relief, and yet— Dick's troubled brow grew darker and more troubled.

Leaving these fellows—fellows who

trusted him—in their false belief. Was that not tantamount to actual lying?

Was he not deceiving them?

"No need to get ratty, old man," said Harry, mistaking the gloomy expression on Dick's face. "Bunter's only a chattering ass. Nobody takes any notice of his yarns."

"He's not even worth kicking," said Nugent. "Let him rip, and he will forget it, and have a new yarn tomorrow about somebody else. I say, you're not waxy, are you?"

"Oh, no!" muttered Dick.

"Nobody believes a word of it, of course," said Harry. "Don't take any notice of it, Compton."

"I—I won't!" muttered Dick.

He turned to the bookshelf and sorted out his books for prep, glad to be able to turn his face away from his friends for the moment.

Wharton and Nugent exchanged a rather puzzled glance, and resumed their work, dropping the subject at once.

They had expected Compton to laugh with them over "Bunter's latest." He

could he not be allowed to tell these fellows the truth? Why must he be forced to listen to their frank, careless talk with a secret sense of shame, almost of guilt?

Silence in such circumstances came near to deceit, perilously near to it. And his tongue was tied. He could not fly in the face of the old baronet's commands—the commands of the man who had done so much for him, to whom he owed it that he was at Greyfriars at all. And there was the promise of strict silence that Sir Henry had exacted from him. It could not be right to break a promise.

But why, why did the grim old man hold him to a silence that was painful, almost guilty, and—so far as Dick could see—unnecessary and futile?

It was such reflections that brought the first misgiving into Dick's mind—a misgiving that all was not right in this strange affair—this miraculous change in his fortunes.

Could Sir Henry have had some motive unknown to him? Was it possible that he had some hidden, mysterious reason to fear the truth becoming known?

It seemed a wild thought; it seemed a wrong to the man who had saved him from rags and famine. Yet it lingered in Dick's mind; he could not wholly drive it away. Had there been some reason he could not imagine or even guess at—for the old baronet's action; some purpose he had to serve by placing Ragged Dick in the position of the grandson who had died, and whose death, obviously, he must be keeping a secret? "Some sort of a swindle," Bunter had said—and the words haunted Dick. But was it possible to imagine the haughty master of Compton Hall concerned in any affair that was not honourable?

Dick went down to the Rag after prep with Wharton and Nugent, but he was not in a cheerful mood.

Bunter's tale was a topic in the Rag, and the fellows laughed over it, and some of them jested with Compton; but they did not perceive that it was an unpalatable topic to him. As soon as that was noticed most of the Removites dropped the subject; but there were some who were not good-natured, and Skinner, finding that his jests caused discomfort, proceeded to rub it in as much as he could in the way that made Skinner generally disliked in the Remove.

Not that Skinner suspected the truth, or dreamed of attaching the faintest belief to Bunter's yarn. His view was that the baronet's grandson's pride was touched by it—that the descendant of the Comptons was displaying a haughtiness that was out of place in the Lower Fourth Form at Greyfriars.

So Skinner talked on the subject with his friends, with sly glances at Dick, noting with satisfaction the reddening of his cheeks and his air of discomfort and annoyance.

"Oh, cheese it, Skinner!" said Bob Cherry at last. "Enough's as good as a feast, you know. We're fed-up on Bunter's bosh!"

"I know Compton seems fed-up!" grinned Skinner. "But he hasn't told us yet whether there's anything in it."

"Ha, ha, ha!" chortled Snoop.

"Not worth the trouble, I should think," said Harry Wharton. "If I were Compton, I'd rather punch your nose, Skinner, for your cheek!"

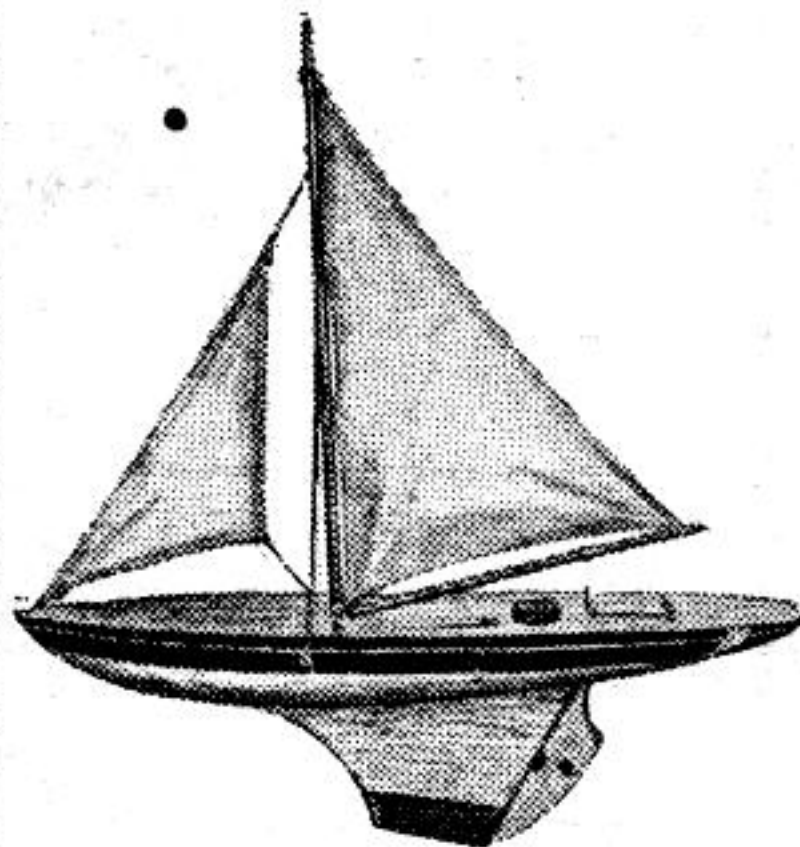
Dick looked round.

"And I will, Skinner, if you don't chuck it," he said. "It's no business of yours, anyhow."

"I say, you fellows, it's true—"

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(See Page 2.)

had struck them as a good-tempered fellow, easy-going almost to a fault. But if he was offended, there was an end of it, and the subject was done with.

Dick sat down to his work.

The three juniors worked in silence, Dick busy with thoughts that had little to do with the Latin he was preparing.

The danger had passed—he knew it. He need say nothing. Bunter could not harm him. He was not afraid of that. What troubled him was that the incident had brought home his position more clearly to his mind. At first, leaving everything obediently to the man who had rescued him from rags and poverty, he had seen no harm in coming to Greyfriars under the name of Compton—a name freely given him by the man who bore it. But more and more it was forced upon his mind that there was deception in it—that it savoured of trickery, if not actual imposture.

Why—why could not the old baronet let it be known that he was a Compton only by adoption? Why should the old man care whether it was known? Why

"Oh, shut up, Bunter!"
 "It's true!" roared Bunter desperately. "Every word! You fellows know that I'm a truthful chap—"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bunter—and truth!" chuckled Peter Todd. "Why, they don't know one another—never even been introduced."

"Oh, really, Toddy—"

Bunter blinked furiously at Dick.

"You know it's true, you beast! You were in rags and tatters when I saw you in Compton Park that day, and you're not a relation of old Compton at all—you know you're not. I don't know how you've taken the old donkey in, but you have—you know you have. You told me you were tramping the roads."

"For goodness' sake cheese it, Bunter!" exclaimed Peter Todd angrily. "This is the rottenest yarn you've ever made up. Do you think anybody is going to believe that Sir Henry Compton doesn't know his own grandson? Make up an easier one."

"I don't care; it's some sort of a swindle, I know that!" howled Bunter. "And Compton—I mean, that fellow's in it. I dare say old Compton's potty, or something. Anyhow—"

"Oh, cheese it!"

"Chuck it, Bunter!"

"I tell you—" howled Bunter.

"Chuck it!" shouted half a dozen Removites.

"I don't care—it's a swindle. He's not old Compton's grandson—he couldn't be, from what he told me in the park that day!" snarled Bunter. "If old Compton says he is, he's lying, that's all. I don't know why."

"I fancy not, you ass!"

"You crass duffer—"

"Chuck it, Bunter!"

Ragged Dick, with a crimson face, walked out of the Rag.

Harry Wharton jumped up.

"That's enough!" he exclaimed. "Compton doesn't like it, and naturally enough. You've got to chuck it, Bunter."

"I tell you—"

"Bump him!"

"I say, you fellows, I tell you— Yaroooooh!"

Bump!

"Have another, Bunter?"

"Whoop!"

"Are you going to chuck it?" demanded the captain of the Remove.

"Yow-ow-ow! Yes! Anything you like! Leggo! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And Billy Bunter, with deep wrath and indignation, "chucked" it.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Parker Tries It On!

"GUV'NOR!"

Sir Henry Compton halted. His wrinkled old brown face contracted in a frown, as he stared at the slinking figure before him.

Pedlar Parker touched his battered hat respectfully.

It required all Pedlar Parker's nerve to stop the haughty-looking old gentleman and address him at all. His manner was cringing as he stood abashed under Sir Henry's grim stare.

"Skuse me, guv'nor!" he whined.

"You rascal, what are you doing on my land?" asked Sir Henry harshly. "You are trespassing here! Take yourself off!"

"I got to speak to you, sir," said Parker. "It's important, sir, and when

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I come up to the 'ouse I was turned off by your servants, sir."

"I should say so!" exclaimed Sir Henry. "And if you do not get off my estate instantly, now, I will have you turned off by my keepers!"

"I got something to tell you, sir!" persisted Parker eagerly. "I've been watching for days, sir, for a chance to speak to you!"

"Nonsense!"

"It's true, sir—true as a die!"

"I never give to beggars, and certainly not to tramps!" said Sir Henry.

"You have nothing to expect from me but to be given into custody, if you beg here! Take yourself off!"

"It's about that boy at the school, sir."

"What?"

"Him what you call your grandson, sir."

Sir Henry Compton started violently. For a moment the colour wavered in his face. It was a sunny summer's afternoon, but the old man was conscious of a sudden chill.

Pedlar Parker saw that he had made an impression, though he was far from

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guessing the thoughts in the baronet's mind.

"I know something about that young cove, sir!" he said eagerly. "He's a young rascal, he is, and I'm putting you on your guard, sir. I ain't asking for anything, sir—on my davy! Jest telling the truth about that young rascal Dick, sir."

Sir Henry pulled himself together with an effort. It flashed into his mind at once that this was some associate of Ragged Dick's earlier days, who must have seen him now at Greyfriars. For a moment it had seemed to the baronet that his whole scheme was tumbling about his ears—the carefully-laid scheme that was to keep the spendthrift, Roger Compton, from shaming and ruining the old house and lands; the scheme which, lawless as it was, appeared justified in the proud old man's eyes. But in a few moments Sir Henry was himself again, his eyes fixed on the slinking ruffian with cold, grim scrutiny.

"Are you speaking of my grandson—a boy at Greyfriars School?" he asked quietly.

"He ain't your grandson, sir."

"What do you mean—if you are not mad or drunk?" snapped the old man contemptuously.

"You've been took in, sir!" said Parker eagerly. "Took in and done, sir! 'Ow the young hound's worked it I don't know, but he ain't your grandson any more than he's mine, sir. His name's Dick—he ain't got any other name. Ragged Dick was what he was called by the coves on the road, sir—jest Ragged Dick and nothing else. I know him, sir—I know him!"

"Who are you?"

"Parker's my name, sir—Pedlar Parker."

Sir Henry understood. Ragged Dick had told him of the ruffianly tyrant from whom he had escaped the very day that the old man had found him in Compton Park. So this was the man!

"And why are you telling me this story, my man?" asked Sir Henry, still quietly.

"To put you wise, sir," said Parker. "Jest to open your eyes, sir. You're being took in, sir. 'Ow he's done it I dunno, but I know he ain't your grandson, 'cause why, he's Ragged Dick, the tramp, and so I know you've been took in somehow, sir, by a young swindler, sir. You look into it, and you'll find that it's so sir, on my davy. You ask that young 'ound questions, and see if he can answer! Why, sir, I'd bring a dozen blokes that knowed him when he was tramping the roads—knowed him well, and could swear to him, if you wanted. He's took you in, sir."

Sir Henry eyed the man.

Knowing that the new boy at Greyfriars was Ragged Dick, Pedlar Parker knew that he could not possibly be, as was supposed, the grandson of Sir Henry Compton. The only theory he could form was that Dick had somehow made a foolish old man believe so. Certainly the grim old baronet did not look like a man to be easily imposed upon; but Parker knew what he knew—he knew that Ragged Dick was Ragged Dick!

Sir Henry smiled grimly.

"And you think I shall take any notice of this absurd story?" he asked harshly.

"You'd better, sir. I warn you you're being took in by a young swindler, sir!" urged Parker.

"Do I look like a man to be taken in?"

Parker did not answer that. He was, indeed, quite puzzled. The baronet looked like anything but a man to be taken in by an impostor.

"Do you think that I do not know my own grandson, a boy brought up under my own care?" said Sir Henry.

Parker eyed him in silence.

"You rascal!" said the baronet. "How dare you come to me with a foolish, lying tale like this? How dare you utter such a statement? By gad! I will have you taken into custody, and charged before the magistrates. I suppose you have begged from my grandson—is that it?—and he has treated you with the contempt such a ruffian deserves. And you have manufactured this childish slander. You shall repent it!"

Pedlar Parker backed away.

He was quite bewildered.

"I swear, sir—" he gasped hoarsely.

"Silence, you rascal!"

The ruffian stared at him. This was no foolish old man, taken in by a tale by an impostor; that was clear. Parker was a rascal, but he was no fool. It dawned upon his mind that if Sir Henry Compton regarded Ragged Dick as his grandson, it was because he chose so to regard him. Why he should so choose was a baffling mystery to the ruffian, a bewildering mystery. But the fact was clear. He knew now that Sir Henry

knew the truth—knew that the boy at Greyfriars was Ragged Dick, once a tattered tramp; and he realised that Sir Henry was savagely enraged by the discovery that he—Pedlar Parker—knew it, too.

"You scoundrel!" said the baronet in measured tones. "You slandering rascal! You do not know, perhaps, that you are talking to a magistrate! By gad, I will have you arrested and charged, and—"

"You're in it!" gasped Pedlar Parker. "I—I never knew that, sir. On my davy, I thought you was being took in, sir! I— Oh!"

The ruffian gave a loud howl as the baronet's arm went up, and his stick came down with an angry blow.

Pedlar Parker staggered under the lash.

"That for your lying tongue!" said Sir Henry grimly. "Now, go—go! If you are within ten miles of Compton Hall to-morrow I will have you arrested and sent to prison! Do you understand me, you scoundrel? Go!"

"By gum! I—"

Another lash from the old man's stick interrupted the ruffian. For a moment Pedlar Parker looked as if he would spring on the baronet; but the grim, fierce old face quelled him; he dared not. Muttering curses, he slunk away, and disappeared among the trees, burning with rage and disappointment and hatred.

Sir Henry Compton continued his walk, his hard face grimmer and harder. He had not foreseen this—that some out-cast associate of Dick's early, wretched days might turn up. The possibility had existed, but he had not thought of it. But, after all, there was nothing to fear. Pedlar Parker was certain to clear out of the neighbourhood. He knew the power of a magistrate in dealing with a man of his character; he would not dare to linger. And if he told such a tale, who would heed or listen?

There was no danger.

But, danger or no danger, Sir Henry Compton had no intention of deviating from the path he had marked out for himself. Danger or none, right or wrong, Roger Compton should never rule in Compton Hall. The gambler and drunken spendthrift should never scatter the old estate, bring shame on the old title. There might be danger—there might be difficulty. Even from Ragged Dick, raised to fortune from rags and tatters, there had come a hint of dissatisfaction. But, in spite of all, the grim old man would hold on his own way, undeviating, with iron resolution.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

Light At Last!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"
"I've seen that johnnie somewhere," said Harry Wharton.

Bob Cherry grinned.

"Relation of yours, Compton."

"What?"

Ragged Dick started, flushed, and stared in the direction in which Bob was looking.

The Famous Five had walked over to Cliff House that afternoon, and they had taken Dick with them for tea with Marjorie & Co.

Dick had enjoyed his afternoon immensely.

Marjorie and Clara had seemed to like him; certainly he had liked them. There had been a pleasant tea, and a pleasant talk, in the school garden, under the shady old trees, and Dick had



"You young fellows belong to Greyfriars, what?" asked Roger Compton. "Do you know a young relative of mine who has been sent to your school recently?"
"Yes," said Wharton. He wondered that Roger did not recognise Dick standing by him. Dick's cheeks were burning. This man was no relation of his; yet he had to let the juniors believe that he was. (See Chapter 12.)

been in the best of spirits. It was more than a week since Billy Bunter had told his strange tale at Greyfriars, and that tale had been almost forgotten by this time. Even Bunter himself made no further reference to it, discouraged by the general disbelief and contempt of the Removites.

That danger had passed. It left no trace, save in the misgivings that it had brought into Dick's mind.

But those misgivings were not always present. His life was a happy one now. He had many friends in the Remove; he was a chum of the Famous Five; he was getting on well in class, and getting on well at cricket. On this sunny afternoon Ragged Dick had felt that life was giving him as much as it could offer, save for that lingering, faint, but persistent misgiving at the back of his mind.

Under the westering sun the six juniors walked home from Cliff House, sauntering cheerily by leafy lanes. And about half-way to Greyfriars they sighted a horseman, coming towards them at a walk up the shady lane.

Ragged Dick, startled by Bob's words, fixed his eyes on the man, still in the distance.

He was well dressed in riding-clothes, mounted upon a handsome horse. Something familiar in his features struck Dick, though he was certain he had

never seen the man before. The next moment he knew what the familiarity was—a resemblance to the hard face of Sir Henry Compton, though this was a much younger man.

In the narrow lane, shut in by hedges and overhanging trees, the horseman, as he came on, would have to pass close by the juniors. Ragged Dick would gladly have slipped through the hedge to avoid the meeting, but such a movement would have excited too much surprise among his comrades. His cheeks burned, and his heart beat, as he looked at Roger Compton. He knew that this must be Roger Compton, the old baronet's only relation, whom Sir Henry had mentioned to him and warned him against.

"Your giddy relation, Compton," said Bob Cherry, with a grin. "Sort of an uncle three times removed, or something of the sort—what?"

"I suppose we'd better cap him, as he's one of Compton's people," said Harry Wharton.

"The politeness is the proper caper," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Are you on speaking terms with him, Compton?" asked Nugent. "I've heard that your grandfather won't let him come up to the Hall. There's a lot of gossip about it in the neighbourhood, you know."

Dick nodded.
 "Sir Henry has told me that he is a man of bad character, and that I am never to speak to him if we should meet," he said. "I—I think he has told the headmaster that if Mr. Roger should ever come to Greyfriars he is not to be allowed to see me."

"Quite right!" granted Johnny Bull.
 "I—I don't know much about him, of course," said Dick hesitatingly. "Indeed, the wail had wondered a good deal at the old baronet's deep bitterness towards his kinsman."

"He's a bad hat," said Johnny Bull.
 "He's pretty well known in this locality—he generally turns up for the Courtfield races, and he has been fined at Courtfield police-court for disorderly conduct. He's a thorough bad hat. I've seen him drunk in a car with a racing gang."

"Oh!" said Dick.
 "Don't pile it on, old man," said Bob.
 "He's a relation of Compton's, you know."

Johnny Bull grunted.
 "All the better for Compton to know what he's like, so that he can keep clear of him," he answered. "If the man had any decency, he would play his blackguardly games somewhere else, where his relations don't live. He could back horses and get squiffy at Newmarket or Doncaster, instead of here. He's a thorough bad hat."

"He looks it!" remarked Nugent.

There was no doubt that Roger Compton looked his character. His face had been handsome once, but it was marked and bloated by riotous living and reckless self-indulgence. Harry Wharton & Co. regarded him with some curiosity as he drew nearer. The reckless blackguard, a disgrace to an ancient name, was well known in the locality, and his wild doings were often the talk of the countryside. That he was on the bitterest terms with the head of the family, that he found a blackguardly satisfaction in disgracing Sir Henry's name in the county where Sir Henry was a great magnate all the countryside knew.

And all the more interest attached to the scapegrace, because only the life of a boy—known to be in delicate health—stood between him and succession to the title and estates at the old baronet's death.

The horseman had observed the

schoolboys, and his eyes—puffy and blinking from late hours and strong drink—turned upon them rather keenly. Ragged Dick dropped his eyes as the man came nearer. This was Sir Henry's relative, his only near relative, and his enemy. Dick had never seen him before, but he could see reasons enough in the man's face for the stern old gentleman's bitter dislike and scorn. From this man, more than from any other, Sir Henry had bidden him keep secret the story of the adoption; if Roger Compton ever saw him, he was to believe, more than all others, that Dick was the baronet's own grandson. Dick had wondered why, without giving the matter much thought.

Having decided to "cap" the man, as he was a relation of Compton's, Harry Wharton & Co. raised their hats as he came up. Roger Compton pulled in his horse.

"You young fellows belong to Greyfriars—what?" he asked. His voice and manner were agreeable enough.

"Yes, Mr. Compton," answered Harry.

Dick's cheeks were burning. This man was no relative of his; yet he had to let the juniors believe that he was. Again that discomforting feeling of deception haunted and troubled him.

"A young relative of mine has been sent to your school recently, I hear," said Roger Compton. "Do you know him?"

"Yes," said Wharton, with a smile.
 He wondered that Roger did not recognise the new junior; barred as he was at Compton Hall, he must have seen the baronet's grandson.

"The poor boy is in delicate health," said Roger. "I have been unable to call at the school to see him since he came back from abroad."

Harry Wharton & Co. contrived not to smile. They knew why the scapegrace had been unable to call at the school to see young Compton: because he would not have been permitted to see him. And they guessed that he was hanging about the neighbourhood now to catch sight of him outside the walls of the school.

Yet now that he was in his presence, he did not know him. It was odd enough.

"Is his health restored?" asked Roger. "I am naturally anxious to know."

"Oh, quite!" said Harry. "You'd never suppose that he'd ever been delicate if you saw him now, Mr. Compton."

And Wharton could not help smiling now at the expression that came involuntarily over Roger Compton's face. Certainly, he did not want to hear that it was a "good life" that stood between him and the Compton succession.

"Then he is well now?" asked Roger.

"Quite."

"He takes part in the school games, and so on?"

"Yes, rather; he's getting on famously at cricket."

Ragged Dick stood silent, looking at the ground. Roger Compton did not look at him, evidently unaware that this was the boy who went by the name of Compton at Greyfriars School. Harry Wharton & Co. did not feel called upon to enlighten him. As Compton had been forbidden by his grandfather to speak to the man, it was just as well.

"Cricket!" repeated Roger. "He plays cricket?"

"Oh, yes."

"The last time I saw him he could scarcely have lifted a cricket-bat, I think," said Roger, with a stare.

"Then he's changed a lot," said Harry Wharton. "He's as sound as a bell now, and he knocked out the biggest fellow in our Form in a scrap the first day he came."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Roger Compton, and he could no longer hide his annoyance and malice. "Impossible! He was a weak, puny lad—he was never expected to live. He could never have been anything but an invalid. You are not telling the truth!"

Wharton crimsoned.

"That's about enough!" he said.

"Come on, you fellows."
 The juniors passed the rider, and walked on. Roger Compton stared after them, biting his lip with anger, and then he struck his horse a cruel blow with the whip, and galloped on up the lane, and disappeared.

Harry Wharton & Co. walked on towards Greyfriars. Dick still silent and with burning cheeks.

"Jolly odd that he never recognised you, Compton," said Johnny Bull. "I suppose you've changed a lot since you got well; that must be it."

"Blessed if anybody would think that

(Continued on page 26.)

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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 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, who has the audacity to place Locke in Babbledbury Asylum.

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 at the same time rescues Ferrers Locke from the asylum.

That same night two masked men break into the premises of a West End jeweller, and, although their nefarious work is interrupted by the police, they make a successful get-away. Ferrers Locke is called in to investigate, and two important clues he hits upon throw considerable light on the series of daring outrages that have puzzled the police for so long, for they now fit in with a whole chain of clues that have hitherto led to nothing. Locke takes only Pyecroft into his confidence, for there is yet much to be done before the evidence is strong enough for a conviction. But the worst of the tussle of wits is over. Ferrers Locke now knows the identity and the quality of the scoundrels he is up against.

(Now read on.)

The Legend of the Hall!

"LOOK sharp, my lad!" Ferrers Locke set his opera-hat at the requisite angle, gave a tug at his dress bow, took one final glance into the long mirror, and then repeated his remark.

"Look sharp, my lad!" "Right-ho, guv'nor!" came Drake's cheery voice. "I'm trying to get this confounded bow to set right. The dashed thing's—"

He came into view in the open door that separated his bed-room from Ferrers Locke's. His fresh face was ruddy, his eyes were alive with excitement.

"You've got it all wrong," chipped in Locke, with a smile. "Here, let me give you a hand."

The refractory bow was put to rights in a couple of minutes; and then, as Drake slipped into his jacket, and made a grab for his overcoat and hat—

"We're on time, guv'nor. Jove, I'm looking forward to this treat!"

The detective's face hardened. "It may not be such a treat as you imagine," he said, and the words were only just audible.

"What a day it's been!" sighed the lad, walking to the door of his bed-room. "Rushing about all over the blessed shop, getting into a tangle at the Oval, and—" He paused, as he noted the look of disapproval on his master's face. "Now we're going to have a little pleasure," he added, by way of afterthought.

The detective walked down the stairs to the waiting car in the street below. Inspector Pyecroft, who was at the wheel, dragged out his watch.

"You've cut it fine," he remarked, starting up the engine. "Jump in!"

"Fine he blowed!" retorted Drake. "We're dead on time. You've been stuffed up like a blessed parrot in that dress-suit of yours for half an hour; we've had to change. See?"

Pyecroft grimaced at the reference to a parrot. Truth to tell, he never felt quite at his ease in dress-clothes. The collar half choked him, the shirt had a happy knack of riding up, making him look pigeon-chested. He grunted as he slipped in the clutch, and the car moved forward.

Locke, who was seated beside him, talked to him at intervals.

"We had better keep a sharp look-out to-night," he muttered. "I rather fancy that our criminal friends will not let a chance like to-night slip past. Sir Humphrey Dallas was wise to ask you to be present, Pyecroft."

"Wiser still to invite you, old man," retorted the C.I.D. man generously. "Sir Humphrey is afraid that someone might get up to monkey tricks. There have been so many robberies at these Society functions lately that I'm not surprised at his action."

"You know he's going to be there?" Locke put stress upon the pronoun, and the inspector nodded grimly.

"Sure! And so are we."

They were approaching a fine old house skirting Park Lane—the town residence of Sir Humphrey Dallas, the sporting baronet, as he was styled by his admirers. Locke looked at it with interest. He disliked the Georgian architecture himself—at least, the exterior architecture—but he was anxious to view at close quarters the interior of the historical old house.

It was well-known to the public that Dallas Lodge was a mystery house, inasmuch that it possessed a family ghost. That legend and the wonderful old staircase that was the envy of all antiquarians who beheld it was sufficient to keep it well to the fore in the City newspapers when they were in need of a "story."

Pyecroft brought the car to a standstill, and the trio alighted. They passed into the spacious hall, which was alive with flowers, palms, and dazzling lights, and waited to be announced. Drake was more than a little interested in the life-sized painting of a gallant, with drawn sword, garbed in the costume fashionable in the reign of George II., that graced the depth of one wall.

"Who's that, guv'nor?" he asked. "One of Sir Humphrey's ancestors, my lad," answered the sleuth. "He took up arms against the King, and paid the price of his folly."

"Hum!" muttered Drake. "Swash-buckling-looking cove!"

Next his glance travelled to the massive oak staircase. His brows wrinkled in perplexity for a moment; and then:

"Isn't this the staircase up which some clever johnny rode a horse for a wager, or something?" he said. "Gee! Isn't it a topper?"

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"You're mixing up your history," smiled Locke. "It was at Devonshire House that the gentleman wagered his friends he would mount the stairs on horseback. But this staircase was built during the same period—almost a replica of the famous Devonshire House staircase."

"But there's some fairy tale attached to this place," said Drake, wrinkling his brows. "I seem to recollect—"

"You mean the ghost of the musicians' gallery," said Locke helpfully. "That's in the ball-room. Legend has it that one of Sir Humphrey's ancestors—that fellow shown in the painting yonder—took arms against the King, in the reign of George II., that he was hunted by the King's men, and driven to seek refuge in his own house. When—"

"The soldiers burst in!" ejaculated Drake, his memory returning. "And the Dallas merchant fought them all single-handed, retreating all the time up the staircase in the ball-room, until he came to the musicians' gallery?"

"You've got it, my lad. And as Sir Humphrey's ancestor was disposing of the soldiers as easy as sticking pins into butter, the secret panel in the wall behind him moved, and Rupert Dallas, his kinsman, ran him through the back."

"He was a dirty skunk," said Drake, with disgust. "Expect he was after the title."

"Maybe you're right!" laughed Locke. "But to return to the legend. It is said by the succeeding generations of the rebel Dallas that he appears annually on the date of his assassination and haunts the musicians' gallery—"

"But that's all tosh!" retorted Drake scornfully.

"So says the present Sir Humphrey," chuckled Locke. "But if you have an old house you must surround it with a ghost story; it wouldn't be half so attractive to live in otherwise."

"And what's the date of the annual reappearance?" inquired Drake.

Locke chuckled.

"To-day's date—July 3rd, my lad."

"Oh!" Drake was rather taken aback. "And do the people think he'll put in an appearance to-night, gov'nor?"

"I expect some of them do," returned Locke. "But Sir Humphrey regards the whole legend as the fabrication of a weak-minded ancestor, who played successfully upon the fears and credulity of his womenfolk."

"Silly ass!" granted Drake. "Hallo! Why, here's Mr. Monty!"

He detached himself from Ferrers Locke as he spotted the broad back of Montague Manners a few yards away from him. Locke drew Pycroft's attention to the fact.

"Your kid seems struck on Monty," said the C.I.D. man. "He idolises him."

"Yes, but only because Manners found me in that accursed asylum," replied Locke. "Jack's interest in Manners is prompted wholly and solely by that. I have not the slightest doubt."

"Hum!" Pycroft did not like to be reminded of his failure over that unfortunate affair. "Here's Sir Humphrey."

The sporting baronet—a tall, thick-set individual, who looked the picture of radiant health—came forward, with outstretched hand. He brushed past Pycroft unconsciously in his delight at seeing Ferrers Locke.

"Delighted to see you!" he greeted, shaking the sleuth warmly by the hand. "And you, officer!" he added, turning to Pycroft and shaking his hand. "I did not know you were in town, Locke, until Inspector Pycroft informed me."

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otherwise I would have sent you an invitation. Still, you're here; and no one is more pleased to see you than myself."

"That's very kind of you, Sir Humphrey," said Locke. "You're going to have a crowd to-night, by the look of things."

"Two hundred," smiled Sir Humphrey. "I hope there will be no bother of any sort," he added, his smile being displaced by a frown of anxiety. "I'm thinking of the affair that happened at Lady Mondane's place, and Lord Barling's house recently. There are expert and daring thieves at work in London these days."

"Sure!" agreed Locke. "We'll keep our eyes open, you may be sure, Sir Humphrey. I make a habit of combining business with pleasure; it keeps my wits sharpened."

"I shall feel much easier in my mind knowing that you are about, Locke," whispered the baronet. "You carry a stock of confidence with you that is catching. The doors are being watched very closely," he added in an undertone. "No one except those invited will be able to get in."

Locke shrugged his shoulders and laughed.

"They'll find it harder to get out if they should get in," he made reply.

The baronet excused himself as some more of his guests came into view, and Locke and Pycroft wandered on into the spacious ball-room. Meantime, Drake was dragging Monty Manners over to where Locke and the inspector had seated themselves.

"He's getting shy of a sudden," grinned Drake. "I've had to drag him here."

The two detectives shook hands, while Pycroft—whose dislike of Monty Manners had grown more than ever—made some excuse and wandered off on his own.

"How do you feel, Locke?" asked Manners, taking Pycroft's vacant seat. "Is the head any better?"

"Right as a trivet!" replied Ferrers Locke. "Has Drake been pumping you about the family ghost?" he added, obviously wishing to switch the conversation on to anyone and anything other than himself.

"No, not yet," laughed Manners. "He'll have to talk to Mostyn about that."

Locke looked up sharply.

"Is Mostyn here, then?" he asked.

"Yes. I couldn't leave the old fellow at home, and Sir Humphrey had no objection to his coming; he'll make himself useful, I have no doubt."

"Of course," said Locke. "There you are, Drake, you'll be able to pump the old fellow. Apparently he knows more about it than I do."

"He knows the legend of this place backwards," chuckled Manners. "Fairly makes your blood run cold when he spins the yarn."

"Then I must look for Mostyn at once and get him to show me the panel where the dirty dick of a kinsman hopped through," said Drake.

"Moderate your transports," admonished Locke. "Remember, we're not at home now."

Drake laughed at this popular-stock phrase and took himself off. He found Mostyn after much diligent inquiry, and drew the full story of the haunted gallery from his aged lips.

Then he settled down to enjoy himself, what time Locke and Pycroft combined pleasure with business. The guests appeared to be enjoying themselves—smiling faces, cheery conversa-

tion, and light laughter indicative of the success of the affair.

And then, in the midst of the jollification, just as the old grandfather clock in the hall chimed the hour of midnight, Drake bethought him of the family legend. It was the witching hour. Would Sir Humphrey's ancestor take it into his head to walk abroad?

"Fool that I am!" muttered Drake. "I'm beginning to get spooky!"

As he spoke the main lights in the ball-room were dimmed for a "twilight" waltz, and from the broad gallery that ran around the four walls rays of light of multi-coloured hue played upon the assembly from lanterns built on the lines of theatrical lime-lights.

The effect was wonderful; but to Drake it was eerie, a forerunner of something more to come. And he was right. Hardly had the orchestra started an encore, when every light in the ball-room went out. Even the revolving lights in the main gallery, which were electrically driven, snapped out.

The effect was startling.

The ball-room was plunged in stygian darkness—a darkness in which moved highly hysterical women and their anxious escorts.

The Ghost!

"THE lights! Put on the lights!" Sir Humphrey Dallas' voice rose above the tumult that ensued, for women were exclaiming their fears aloud and the men were asking their neighbours what it all meant.

Drake stood there in the darkness, a victim of the jostling crowd. Above the din he could hear Ferrers Locke's voice and occasionally Monty Manners'. Then, when the nerves of the assembly were at a high tension, attention was drawn to the musicians' gallery.

Drake found his gaze drawn there, too. Then he gasped.

Framed against the dark oak panelling was a vapoury, white outline that took on the shape of a man. There was no mistaking it. The plumed hat, the long boots, the—Drake gasped—the drawn sword.

It was the ghost of Sir Humphrey Dallas!

"O-o-o-oh!"

The startled assembly stood transfixed, only the gasps of astonishment from the more nervous amongst them breaking the tense silence that reigned.

Then Ferrers Locke's voice rang out clear as crystal:

"That's no ghost!"

But his reassuring words came too late. There was a mad stampede for the door, and at the door occurred the sequel to the amazing phenomena of the musicians' gallery. Women felt their necklaces wrenched from their necks, but in their blind terror they heeded nothing but to get as far away from that grim spectre with the drawn sword as was possible. They heard not the repeated shouts of Locke, Pycroft, and Monty Manners that there was no cause for alarm—that there was no ghost.

The Baker Street detective ground his teeth with rage as he was swept along in the crowd. He knew the trickery that was going on, and was for the moment helpless to interfere. His right hand continually sought his hip-pocket, wherein reposed a loaded automatic. He would prove to this credulous crowd that no ghost roamed the gallery. But he was at the mercy of the trampling throng; and when at last his hand



Framed against the dark oak panelling was a vapoury outline that took on the shape of a man. There was no mistaking it! The plumed hat, the long boots, the drawn sword. It was the ghost of Sir Humphrey Dallas! "Oh!" The startled assembly in the hall below stood transfixed, only the gasps of astonishment from them breaking the tense silence that reigned. (See page 22.)

gripped the automatic he was unable to fire it, for fear of hitting the fear-stricken people about him.

"This is maddening!" He ground his teeth at his own impotency; and then, as the musicians' gallery came into line with his revolver, he compressed the trigger.

Crack!

The report seemed magnified a thousand times; but, far from comforting the panic-stricken crowd, it made them more terrified, especially as the "ghost" seemed unaffected by that death-dealing bullet. A crowd in such circumstances does not stop to think; the herd instinct predominant in ninety per cent of human beings took their steps towards the door.

"Stop!" It was Monty Manners' voice raised above the din. "There's no ghost, you fools! Stop!"

Crack!

His revolver spat fire, lighting the darkness with a vicious tongue of yellow flame. But his luck was as bad as Ferrers Locke's. The bullet seemed to have made no impression upon that white, swaying figure with the drawn sword.

But the majority of the people present did not turn their heads to see the effect of the revolver-fire; they were stampeding for the door and passing out in the broad hall beyond, thence to the street. And as they fled a light-fingered member of the cracksman fraternity relieved them of their valuables, safe in the knowledge that the darkness sheltered him, and that he could not be identified.

Suddenly Pycroft's voice boomed out. The C.I.D. man had been one of the first to reach the door, anxious to get on the track of the ghostly visitor. But commonsense bade him pay heed to the main switchboard in the hall, where, despite the darkness, he cleverly connected a broken fuse-wire.

"Hold on!" he bawled. "Don't get panicky!"

Even as he spoke the ball-room was flooded with light, revealing no more than a score of evening-clad guests with terrified faces, blinking like owls at the sudden change from darkness to light.

It revealed, too, Ferrers Locke and Monty Manners at no great distance apart, with smoking revolvers in their hands. Both the detectives were staring at the gallery—were staring at the "ghost."

Then Monty Manners broke into a laugh. For the "ghost" was nothing more than a full-sized portrait of the present baronet's rebel ancestor—the portrait which everyone had admired in the great hall when they came in.

"Well, I'm dashed!" he exclaimed, falling back.

Ferrers Locke, set of face, dashed forward and mounted the spiral staircase that approached the ancient gallery. He took one look at the "ghost," and then grunted.

"Phosphorescent paint!"

The sleuth was right. The ghost was nothing more than the life-sized portrait of Sir Humphrey Dallas, the rebel, coated rather skilfully with luminous paint. How it had got to the musicians' gallery had yet to be discovered.

Ferrers Locke retraced his steps and joined a circle of people clustered around the present baronet. Sir Humphrey was crimson with rage, and Monty Manners was trying to comfort him.

"Monstrous!" roared the baronet, clenching his big fists. "I'll—"

He broke off, at a loss for words in which to express his feelings. But if he was at a loss for words, a number of his guests who had been persuaded to return were not. They clamoured round him, bewailing the loss of their jewellery. The extent of the robbery almost made Sir Humphrey's hair stand on end. Fully thirty ladies declared that they were victims of the daring and outrageous robbery. Who had relieved them

of their jewellery—man or woman, or both—they were unable to say.

Monty Manners' face was a picture. "Do you mean to say that while this ghost business was going on a thief was at work?" he asked incredulously.

Sir Humphrey eyed him scornfully. "And you're a detective?" he exclaimed. "Do you think these guests of mine are making up a fairy story? Do you think that portrait was coated with phosphorescent paint and placed in the haunted gallery for fun? Huh!"

Sir Humphrey's sarcasm was deep, but it seemed to pass over Monty Manners like water on a duck's back. Evidently he was not so sensitive as some newspaper scribes had imagined.

Ferrers Locke took Sir Humphrey upon one side.

"I'm sorry this has happened," he said. "But perhaps you'll take comfort from the fact that there's every possibility of the stolen loot being recovered."

The baronet's eyebrows lifted in amazement.

"You think so?" he said huskily. "But what—"

"I'll say no more at this juncture," said Locke grimly, "except to censure myself for not having acted before. If I had, this regrettable affair would never have happened."

"But I don't understand—" began Sir Humphrey.

"You'll understand by to-morrow morning," smiled the detective grimly. "Ah, who—what—"

He broke off, and his attention was drawn to the open doorway. A good number of the guests were returning, and in their midst was old Mostyn—Monty Manners' servant.

The old fellow looked as if he had been under a steam-roller. His venerable grey locks were all awry, his collar was dangling on one buttonhole, his tie

was streaming behind his neck, and his evening clothes were smothered in dust.

Monty Manners detached himself from the crowd as Mostyn showed up. He eyed his servant in amazement and concern.

"Good lor'!" he exclaimed. "What on earth's happened to you?"

"I was bowled over by the crowd, sir," wailed old Mostyn, his hands shaking. "I was near this doorway when the ghost began to walk, and the crowd simply trampled over me."

"You're not hurt?" Monty Manners was full of concern.

"No, sir; only bruised a bit," said Mostyn, with a wan smile. "But I thought my last hour had come."

The company were all anxious on Mostyn's account. One titled gentleman helped the old man to a seat, whilst others ran to fetch him refreshment. Mostyn looked badly shaken.

In less than half an hour something like order had been restored. The "ghost" picture had been taken away from the musicians' gallery. But the damage had been done. The evening, from a social point of view, was a distinct failure. Half the guests who had rushed blindly out of the house had jumped into their cars and driven off to homes where no family ghosts walked abroad. And it seemed safe to assume that the lightfingered individual who had made such a haul in the darkness was gone, too.

"Put-up job!" said Manners, walking along the ball-room with Ferrers Locke. "The ghost and the robbery were all part of a daring plan."

"Obviously!" retorted Ferrers Locke dryly.

He seemed in no mood for conversation or company, and Monty Manners left him. The moment Manners had disappeared from sight Locke slipped out of the ball-room and made his way round to another portion of the house that gave access to the disused secret passage at the back of the musicians' gallery. The door blocking the entrance to the secret passage—and which he knew was kept locked and bolted—he was not surprised to find open. He smiled rather grimly as he noted the fact.

Then, with the aid of a lighted candle which he took from a sconce in the hall, the sleuth mounted the spiral staircase leading to the secret chamber at the back of the gallery. His keen eyes saw the lever that moved the panel, and those same eyes saw something else—the stump of a candle that stood on a jutting piece of carving on the wall. The detective looked long at that stump of candle; and then, anxious not to handle the tallow of it, he picked it up by the wick and placed it carefully in his pocket. With a grim smile he returned his attention to the lever that worked the panel, and he saw how the deception had been practised.

"A revolving panel; works on a central pivot," he muttered half aloud. "All the scoundrel did was to fix the portrait on the inside of the oak panelling, pull the lever. Thus the original inner side of the wall became the outer side—the side exposed to the view of the people in the ball-room. Very ingenious. The man who worked it must have been fairly well acquainted with the mechanism of the panel, and must have timed the deception to a nicety. Ha!" He laughed sardonically and descended the stairs.

Pycroft, looking very worried, met him in the hall.

"What do you think of it?" he asked. "Is it the work of the same man?"

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Ferrers Locke nodded vigorously. "Undoubtedly!" he exclaimed. "But we'll spoil the game yet, old man! I think it's time you and I went off to bed."

"To bed?" exclaimed Pycroft, in amazement.

Locke winked. "We've got to say something to our host," he returned. And Pycroft understood.

They walked back into the ball-room, to be met by Jack Drake. The sleuth's assistant, who had been carried with the crowd out of the ball-room, was wildly excited. He plucked his chief by the arm and whispered in his ear.

"I know who the scoundrel is who framed this stunt!" he said.

Locke eyed him curiously. Apparently Drake had been busy.

"You know?" he muttered.

"Look here!" answered Drake. He drew from his pocket a little washleather purse with a gold monogram upon it.

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Locke took it from him and examined it.

"C. R. D.," he muttered, reading the gold monogram. "Where did you get it, my lad?"

"On the doorstep of the house," said Drake, his eyes glittering with excitement. "The thief dropped it on his way out obviously. Those initials stand for Clarence Reginald D'Arcy. He was one of the guests. But look inside the purse, gov'nor."

With a casual air that irritated Drake the sleuth opened the bottle-neck of the purse and tipped the contents into his palm. He did not seem surprised at what he saw, although the approximate value of half a dozen gems that glittered in his palm was five thousand pounds, whilst their gold and platinum settings would have kept Drake in pocket-money for a year.

"Hum!" ejaculated Locke, replacing the gems in the purse.

"Hum!" reiterated Drake, a trifle petulantly. "Those were stolen from the guests to-night. I recognise that blood-red ruby pendant myself. Lady Fitzwarren was wearing it."

"Maybe. But you're no nearer the trail of the real thief than you were when you first entered the house to-night," said Locke kindly. "Still, you have done your bit, my lad."

"I've done more than that," said Drake warmly. "I've been hunting through the list of guests. I found that Clarence Reginald D'Arcy was amongst them. I heard, too, from one of the servants that D'Arcy left the house ten minutes before the ghost business occurred."

"And—" interjected Locke, with a slight smile.

Drake played his trump card. "And I've discovered that Clarence Reginald D'Arcy was due to sail for South America at three this morning. Obviously, he's hopped it with the swag. I've been busy, gov'nor," added the lad. "I've been pumping the servants, and, from what I hear, this chap D'Arcy, although well connected, is a bit of a bad egg, and his people are packing him off to America."

"And you think he's the villain of the piece—eh?" smiled Locke.

"I do!" said Drake. "The servants say that he is a fairly frequent visitor here, and that he knows all there is to know about that moving panel in the musicians' gallery."

"I'm sorry to disillusion you, my lad," said the detective kindly; "for you've been working hard—and in my interests. But you've believed exactly what the brains behind this robbery intended you—and me—to believe—namely, that D'Arcy, who has a fairly rotten reputation, should be blamed for the whole affair. But there's many a slip 'twixt the cup and lip, as some wise johnny has remarked. You see, I've been exploring that secret passage to the old gallery, and I found this."

He slipped his hand into his pocket, and withdrew the stump of candle. He handled it by the wick so that his fingers should not soil the faint impression of a man's finger and thumb that seemed to be etched upon it.

"But what's that got to do with it?" exclaimed Drake, eyeing the stump of candle in amazement.

"Everything!" replied Locke. "This candle was used by the man who worked the ghost on the revolving panel. He had to have light of some sort to see what he was doing, for it's pitch-black in the small chamber behind the musicians' gallery. That his hands were moist—perhaps with excitement—is plainly obvious, for the warmth of his finger and thumb has bitten into this candle as he carried it up the staircase, apart from which is a tiny speck of phosphorescent paint, which you would see quite easily were we in a dark room, instead of a lighted hall."

"That sounds very fine," said Drake. "But what's it prove? Certainly not this fellow D'Arcy's innocence."

"That's where you're wrong," smiled Locke. "For one of the impressions in this stump of a candle shows a particularly strong likeness to a fingerprint I have been paying especial attention to lately—the fingerprint I found on the papers of the man who put me away in Babbledy Asylum."

"That certainly wasn't D'Arcy," said Drake a trifle ruefully. "But, I say, gov'nor," he added, "I bumped into Monty Manners just now, and he pumped me. Suppose he could see that I was a bit excited. I told him what I had discovered, and he's rushed round phoning people—"

"Then he reckons your theory is the right one—eh?" said Locke a trifle amusedly. "Of course, he would!"

"Why of course?" protested Drake. "He wasn't to know anything about the fingerprint."

Ferrers Locke smiled, but made no rejoinder. He walked across to Sir Humphrey, whose kindly features were distorted with rage.

"I've just heard about your assistant's discovery from Manners," he said. "To think that that young wastrel D'Arcy should rob from my house—from my guests! It's monstrous! It's—"

"All tommyrot!" broke in Locke. "I give you my word, Sir Humphrey, that Mr. D'Arcy knows nothing whatever

about the robbery. It's a frame-up on him, but a deuced poor one as it turns out. And now, with your permission, Sir Humphrey, I'll get off. I'm feeling in need of sleep. But I promise you this—your guests will have their jewellery returned by breakfast-time to-morrow."

And, leaving the baronet speechless with amazement and incredulity, Ferrers Locke, with Pycroft and Drake in tow, bowed themselves out.

A Surprise Visit!

FERRERS LOCKE, with a casual glance at the cars drawn up outside the house, noted that Monty Manners' Daimler was amongst them.

"Evidently he hasn't gone post haste to Southampton, Pycroft," he whispered to the C.I.D. man.

"He's a washout as a detective!" grunted the inspector. "And at everything else!" he added.

Drake heard these remarks and wondered what they meant. But he made no comment.

The White Hawk drew away from the kerb and moved silently down the almost deserted streets.

"Where to?" said Pycroft, who was at the wheel.

"Jermyn Street," said Ferrers Locke.

"Jermyn Street?" echoed Drake.

"But that's where—"

"Manners hangs out," smiled Locke.

"Exactly! We're going to pay him a visit."

"But he hasn't left Sir Humphrey's place yet," persisted Drake, mystified.

"He will do within the hour," returned Locke. "He's asked us round to his place enough times, and we've refused. So we'll invite ourselves to-night."

The rest of the journey was negotiated in silence, with the exception of a few suppressed chuckles that escaped Pycroft from time to time.

The car drew up outside Monty Manners' chambers, and the trio alighted. What Locke intended to do next was a matter that puzzled Drake, for he knew that Manners kept no other servant than Mostyn—and Mostyn was at Sir Humphrey's. Who, then, was to let them in?

He wondered still more when Locke halted outside the front door of Manners' chambers and drew from his pocket a bunch of skeleton-keys.

"A little burglary!" he chuckled.

"Manners will forgive us this unorthodox method of entry, I feel sure."

As he spoke he manipulated one of the keys on his bunch until it turned in the wards of the lock. Then softly the door was swung open.

"Enter!" said Ferrers Locke, with a mocking bow.

Pycroft and Drake entered, the former chuckling to himself, the other wanting to cry out his objections to invading a friend's house in such a burglarious manner, but stifling them through loyalty to his "guy'nor."

The trio, with Locke at the head, mounted the stairs, scarcely making a sound as they did so. The private detective, who knew the plan of the interior from a previous visit, led the way to the sitting-room. He pushed open the door; and as he did so there came a startled gasp from someone inside.

"You!"

Ferrers Locke found himself within three feet of the one man who had so repeatedly escaped him—Dr. Fourstanton.

There was no mistaking those features—features all the more recognisable now that the rascal wore no disguise of any sort.

"Fourstanton!" The detective breathed the word unconsciously, whilst Drake and Pycroft, at his back, wondered what on earth was happening, and why it was the room was flooded with light. They moved forward and peered over Locke's shoulder round the half-open door. Then it was their turn to gasp.

"Up with them!" Dr. Fourstanton, although taken by surprise, was the first to get the draw. His right hand flashed up, and an ugly-looking revolver glittered in it. "Up with them!" he rapped. "Or I'll plug the lot of you on the spot!"

There was nothing for it but to obey. Slowly, reluctantly, the trio raised their hands aloft. And when Dr. Fourstanton saw them safely in that position he chuckled.

"Ha, ha! This is indeed a pleasant surprise. But do you usually break into your friends' houses like this, Mr. Locke—you, an eminently respectable personage? But perhaps you are after some valuables—eh—like myself? You know, Manners has a wonderful collection of valuables. I never knew he went in for collecting on so large a scale." He indicated with a slight movement of the eyebrows a pile of precious stones that lay upon the small mahogany table in the centre of the room. "He's a generous chap, I believe. Perhaps he won't object to my taking these few baubles."

That Dr. Fourstanton had broken into the place with the express intention of committing a burglary was obvious

now; and that he had little reckoned to be disturbed by Ferrers Locke & Co. had been evidenced by the surprised ejaculation he gave vent to when Locke had pushed his head round the door.

"You scoundrel!" said Locke. "What are you going to do with us?"

"I'm going to leave you here for a bit!" chuckled Fourstanton, gathering up the precious stones from the table with his disengaged hand and pocketing them. "You'll be quite safe here for five minutes or so. That will give me all the time I need to get clear. You'd rack your brains for a thousand years to find out where my hiding-place is, but you'd never get within a mile of it!" he added.

He advanced a pace, and calmly ran his disengaged hand over Locke's clothing. He smiled grimly as his fingers closed upon the detective's revolver—which was no longer the detective's property a moment later. Pycroft was treated in the same way, the escaped convict's revolver never wavering by so much as an inch from Locke's forehead as the scoundrel went about his work. He knew that by covering Locke he was safe, for Pycroft and Drake would attempt nothing rash whilst the private detective's life hung in the balance.

Having relieved Pycroft of his revolver, Dr. Fourstanton, a mocking smile on his intellectual features, backed away to the door.

"I'll bid you good-night, gentlemen!"

As he said the words the scoundrel whipped out into the passage, slammed the door, and turned the key in the lock. Even as Locke and Pycroft darted forward they heard the sounds of muffled footsteps on the carpeted stairs as Dr.



Manners eyed the pile of jewels on the table. "They took in that yarn about D'Arcy all right," he said. "That's where you're both wrong!" A calm voice broke in upon Manners' and Mostyn's merriment, causing them both to sit upright. Hardly had the words echoed across the room when the screen was swept aside, and Ferrers Locke stepped forward, revolver levelled. (See page 26.)

Fourstanton descended, and a suppressed peal of laughter. Evidently Dr. Fourstanton was pleased with his night's work

So Near and Yet—

LOCKE and Pycroft, trying to open the door of the sitting-room with a skeleton-key, heard the familiar drone of the White Hawk's engine a moment later.

Ferrers Locke started, as if a sudden thought had struck him, and then he chuckled.

"Fourstanton's going to borrow my car!" he ejaculated. "He's more than welcome to it. He's doing us a good turn, Pycroft, old scout!" he added, with a laugh. "We were fools enough to leave the car outside for Manners to see when he came in. Really our meeting with Fourstanton has borne good fruit."

Pycroft started.

"We were blamed fools indeed to leave the car right outside the door!" he admitted.

"Which just shows you, Pycroft," smiled Locke, "that the best of detectives sometimes make mistakes. Ah, the door opens!"

He turned one of his keys in the lock and opened the door.

"You're not chasing Dr. Fourstanton?" queried Drake, as Locke began to look around him curiously.

"Not to-night, sonny," said the detective. "We are after higher game. Just possess your weary soul in patience."

Drake did. He seated himself in one of Manners' comfortable armchairs, what time Pycroft and Locke went through the various rooms. When they returned a few moments later Ferrers Locke was smiling.

"What do you think, Pycroft?" he asked.

"I think you're a marvel, Mr. Locke!" exclaimed the C.I.D. man, in great admiration. "What's next on the programme?"

"We'll hop behind this screen when the time comes," said Locke thoughtfully. "It's all right; I've got a re-

volver here in case of trouble. I took the liberty of borrowing it from Manners' bed-room. 'Shush! There's the outer door!"

He switched off the electric light as he spoke, and held up his hand for silence; and the trio listened eagerly.

Sure enough there came the sound of the outer door being shut home, followed by footsteps that rang louder as the parties approached.

"The screen—quickly!" whispered Ferrers Locke.

With scarcely a sound Drake and Pycroft followed Ferrers Locke behind the screen and waited. They had not long to wait. To their ears came Monty Manners' cheery voice and the less cultured tones of Mostyn, his butler-valet.

A moment later the footsteps halted outside the sitting-room door, and then the light was switched on. Manners and Mostyn entered—that much the watchers behind the screen could see through the fairly open weaving of the texture that formed the screen.

The pair of them threw their opera hats on to the settee, and their overcoats

RAGGED DICK'S RESOLVE!

(Continued from page 20.)

Compton had ever been such a giddy invalid as that johnnie described," remarked Bob Cherry. "You've been jolly lucky to pull out of it, Compton."

Dick nodded without speaking.

"The dear man was awfully keen on getting information," chuckled Bob. "So concerned about his dear relative's state of health! He really is a bad hat, and no mistake. You could see by his face that he'd have been glad to hear that Compton was on his last legs."

"Plain enough, that," said Nugent.

Dick started.

"I thought so, from his look," he said. "But why? Why should he want anybody to be in bad health?"

"Mean to say you don't know?" asked Bob.

"I can't imagine! He looks to me like a bad man," said Dick. "He looks like a very bad man, I think. But—"

"I fancy he's badder than you guess, then," said Bob, laughing. "Of course as you've lived abroad"—Dick winced—"you haven't heard the cheery gossip that goes on round about here about your grandfather and his giddy relation. It's pretty well known that jolly old Roger is living on his expectations and the moneylenders; and with you in a roaring state of good health, how much money will they lend him on his prospects? I fancy it must have been a knock-down blow to him when he heard that you were well enough to be sent to Greyfriars."

Dick stared at him blankly.

"But why—why?" he panted. Back into his mind that haunting misgiving came, with it a gleam of light—a gleam of understanding of Sir Henry Compton's motive.

"My dear chap," said Bob, in surprise. "You don't need me to tell you that that man comes next to you as heir of Compton Hall."

"Next to me!" muttered Dick faintly.

"Of course."

"He's rotter enough to think about that, and calculate on it," said Nugent, with a nod. "I rather think the moneylenders will dun him to death when they

hear that Sir Henry's grandson isn't a giddy invalid any longer, but one of the heftiest chaps in the Greyfriars Remove."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Serve him jolly well right!" said Bob Cherry. "He's a bad hat! By gum, what's the matter with you, Compton? You look as white as a sheet, old man. Did it give you a shock meeting that bounder?"

"Yes," breathed Dick. "But—but I don't understand. I—I suppose Sir Henry can leave his estates to whom he pleases, can't he?"

"Well, my only hat!" ejaculated Bob Cherry in amazement. "I should have thought that giddy landed proprietors knew more about their own affairs than that! Mean to say you don't know that your grandfather's estate is entailed? Any kid in the village hereabouts could have told you that!"

"Entailed!" repeated Dick faintly.

"Of course."

"Oh!" muttered Dick.

He had heard of entail, though he had never thought about the matter.

"The jolly old estates, and the jolly old Hall, go to the heir male," grinned Bob. "No girls need apply! Besides, if the old gent could leave the estates by will, he couldn't leave the title."

"The—the title!" Poor Dick had never even thought about the title. He was thinking now.

"Don't bother your head about it, old man," said Harry Wharton. "It's common talk about here that Sir Henry's grandson was not expected to live, and that Roger Compton was up to the neck with moneylenders on his expectations. Serve him jolly well right to be let down! Don't bother your head about him. He's really a bad sort."

Dick nodded without speaking.

His brain was in a whirl.

So that was it?

Bunter had surmised that it was "some sort of a swindle." It was more than that. Roger Compton, rogue and blackguard as he was, was the heir of Compton Hall; the baronet's grandson was dead! In the place of the boy who had died stood Ragged Dick, barring the scapegrace from his inheritance! That was Sir Henry's motive—the

motive that the waif had vainly tried to fathom! He was an unconscious party to a fraud, a fraud for which the prison gates would open for him if it became known. The hapless lad's brain whirled as he tried to think of it.

He did not speak a word till the juniors reached the school. Harry Wharton & Co., wondering a little, could only surmise that the meeting with Roger Compton had given their chum a shock, little dreaming how terrible the shock had been.

As soon as they reached Greyfriars, Dick slipped away.

He shrank from meeting the crowd of fellows in the House; he shrank even from the cheery company in the study. He slipped away quietly to the solitary Cloisters, to think, if he could.

What was he to do?

Keep on the imposture—for he knew that it was an imposture now! Cheat Roger Compton of his inheritance, and thus become a worse rogue than the man himself was! He could not, and he would not! Face the grim old baronet, and tell him that he knew the truth—that he would give up all he had received, and go back to hardship and want on the roads; turn his back on Greyfriars, on the school he had grown to love, the fellows with whom he had made friends—all that made his young life worth living! If he hesitated, who shall blame him?

But his hesitation was over; his mind was made up and irrevocably fixed when he came out of the old Cloisters in the dusk, his face pale and set. He knew the truth now, and knew what he must do. He knew that Compton of the Remove must drop out at Greyfriars, and that the dusty roads would know Ragged Dick again. That was Ragged Dick's Resolve.

THE END.

(Seldom has a boy of fifteen been placed in such an unenviable position. It says well of Ragged Dick that he can muster the strength to throw up the glorious prospects in front of him, and yet there are bigger barriers to such a course than he imagines. Mind you read next week's brilliant story—"A BOY'S CROSS-ROADS!" Mr. Richards has excelled himself!)

followed suit. Then, crossing to the small sideboard, Monty Manners poured out two glasses of spirit, one of which he handed to Mostyn.

"Good health an' good luck to Clarence Reginald D'Arcy!" said Manners, and he chuckled.

"Good riddance—and be blowed to him!" returned Mostyn; and the watchers saw him drain his glass at a gulp.

"A smoke?" Manners held out a box of Havanas, and Mostyn selected one.

The pair lit up; and then, selecting a comfortable armchair a-piece, made themselves comfortable.

"A good night's work, Mostyn," said Manners, eyeing a curling smoke-wreath contemplatively.

"I rather think so," smiled Mostyn, pulling away appreciatively at his cigar. "But you haven't seen the stuff yet."

He rose to his feet as he spoke and walked across to the settee.

The watchers behind the screen saw him gather up the overcoat and dive his hand into the outside pocket. It emerged with a handful of glittering jewels and precious stones that sparkled like specks of dew.

Manners eyed the first "dip" with an air of satisfaction.

"Not bad!" he remarked casually. "About twenty thousand, I expect. Let's see the rest."

Again the hand dipped into the overcoat pocket, again it came out loaded with jewellery. The second lot was placed alongside the first—on the small mahogany table. The light from the alabaster bowl overhead played upon the heap of stones like sunlight upon water, throwing off reflections of multi-coloured hue and brilliance.

Drake's eyes nearly popped out of their sockets as he beheld this amazing scene. He asked himself time and time again—what did it all mean?

But Locke and Pycroft merely smiled sardonically and waited.

For the third and last time Mostyn delved into the pocket, and added to the collection on the table. Then, with a satisfied grin on his wrinkled features, he reseated himself.

Manners eyed the pile of jewels and gold on the table thoughtfully.

"At a rough computation, my dear fellow, the evening's been worth sixty thousand of the best. You didn't leave any of the stuff in the car, did you?" he added.

"Not on your life!" answered Mostyn. "The only stuff I dropped was when that fool kid of a detective's assistant came nosing round. He dropped on to the scent all right. They've all swallowed the tale of Clarence Reginald D'Arcy."

"Ha, ha, ha! Deuced good!" laughed Monty Manners. "Poor old D'Arcy! I—"

"That's where you're both wrong!"

A calm voice broke in upon Manners' and Mostyn's merriment, causing them both to sit bolt-upright like statues. Hardly had the words echoed across the room when the screen was swept aside, and Ferrers Locke stepped forward, revolver levelled.

"I beg to differ, gentlemen," he said coldly. "They have not all swallowed the tale of Clarence Reginald D'Arcy."

"Wha-a—" Monty Manners' throat failed to perform its office. But his eyes nearly started out of his head as he beheld Locke, Pycroft, and Drake in his room.

Mostyn, who looked more of a desperado than his master, appeared aggressive; but Pycroft edged closer to him, in readiness for any trouble.



"Your little mistake, Locke," drawled Manners. And quick as lightning he pulled a tiny glass sphere from his pocket, and there came a blinding flash. The pellet of glass had struck the floor. Immediately the air became thick with choking vapour—it rose like a thick, grey blanket between Ferrers Locke and his companions and Manners and his confederate. (See this page.)

"This is an unexpected pleasure, Locke!" said Monty Manners at last, recovering his old composure and easy confidence. "But I wasn't aware that I had invited you."

"Cut the foolery!" snapped Locke, making a significant gesture with his revolver arm. "The game's up, Mr. Monty Manners!"

"And so you've hit my trail," said Manners, and there seemed no trace of fear or regret in his voice. "You, who I counted my friend!"

"Don't talk to me of friendship!" hissed Ferrers Locke. "I've been rarely deceived in a man as I have been deceived by you—you, who put me, with the help of that wrinkled old hypocrite Mostyn—who is really no more old and wrinkled than I am—into an asylum, safely out of the way, eh?"

"So you know that much, do you?" said Manners, a smile playing at the corners of his mouth. "It's a pity I went to your rescue this afternoon. Far better had I left you to the mercy of those toughs of Dr. Fourstanton."

"And you would have done," retorted Locke, "but for the fact that you were playing to the gallery. The bracelets, Pycroft!" he added.

"You're surely not going to let me suffer that indignity?" protested Manners.

"I'm not trusting you a moment longer," said Locke, "or your butler-valet!" He stressed the last two words, and Manners looked at him sharply, as if to read his thoughts. "You're safer with the bracelets round your wrists!"

"Your little mistake, Locke," drawled Manners.

And quick as lightning his delicate fingers sought something in his waistcoat pocket. For the fleeting fraction of a second the trio of detectives caught sight of a tiny sphere of polished glass.

Locke darted forward, thinking that Manners intended committing suicide. But even as he moved there came a blinding flash.

The pellet of glass had struck the polished floor of the sitting-room. Immediately the air became thick with choking fumes of gas that seemed to fill the lungs to bursting-point. A grey-blue vapour rose like a thick blanket between Ferrers Locke and his companions and Manners and Mostyn.

But the latter two were on the right side of that vapoury blanket—the draught from the open door was directing the fumes away from them.

It all happened in a flash—a thousand times quicker than it takes to describe. But when Ferrers Locke, gasping and spluttering, clawed his way to the door of the sitting-room he was in time only to hear the sound of the outer door below being slammed to.

Monty Manners and his butler-valet had gone!

(Will Monty Manners and his confederate show a clean pair of heels to the machinery of the law, or will Ferrers Locke and his cleverness prove too much for them? Next week's final instalment of this pulsating story will tell you. Don't miss it!)

TO AND FROM YOUR EDITOR!

DETAILS, PLEASE?

HOW'S that? Interest in the **MAGNET** grows apace. That can be taken for granted. But as keenness increases there is, for me, one matter of regret. Sometimes I want to hoist the danger-signal, or send forth an S. O. S. For it is this way. I am snowed under with jolly queries about what goes on behind the scenes. For example: -What did Bunter have for breakfast on April 1st, 1925? Does Mr. Quelch play bowls? What's become of Miss Cora? Did Greyfriars ever lose its head?

IT CAN'T BE DONE!

There is no means of tabulating all the required information. Indexing would not do it. Even Frank Richards himself, and he is a perfect demon for hard facts, could not keep all the Bunter bills of fare. Personally I doubt much whether Quelch has time for the good game of bowls. His spare time goes to dotting the i's and ticking up the t's in his prodigious History of Greyfriars, that Magnum Opus which is sure to see the light some day.

GREYFRIARS IN STONE!

My chum, F. Cook, 24, Greenfield Road, Harborne, Birmingham, has hit on an original idea for showing his admiration of Greyfriars. He made a

model of the old school in cardboard, but that was not enough for him! At present he is making one out of stone, and from what he tells me about the scheme, the result will be highly satisfactory. Do many of my chums go in for carving? It is a fascinating hobby.

CRICKET TIPS.

One day last week I happened upon a small manuscript book which was apparently devoted to cricket. Not a word will escape me about the authorship of the interesting fragment, but one may hazard a guess. The scheme of the book seemed to be Bunterian. The writer earnestly recommends his readers to keep clear of cricket, which is, he says, a most unpleasant game. If you must play, wear chain armour. Be very careful of the ball as it may catch you one. Use glue for the bails; it is better; the bat comes in usefully for self-protection, and for keeping the umpire in his place.

FREE GIFTS FOR READERS!

How's that for a grand piece of news, boys? It's quickened your pulses, I'll be bound! A Free Gift for every Magnetite! It's no dream—it's just one of those delightful treats that comes to all of us at some time or another. I'm not telling you too much this week; I merely want to create a flavour in your mouths, as it were. In next Monday's Chat you'll find full particulars of this great scheme. And it's not a scheme wrapped up with a host of difficulties. You do nothing except buy a copy of this paper and the FREE

GIFT is inside it. Now mind you order next week's **MAGNET** in good time. It will give you the date on which this gigantic presentation scheme starts. 'Nuff said!

NEXT WEEK'S PROGRAMME!

My loyal chums have got an extra special story from the pen of Mr. Richards in store for them next week—a story that rings down the curtain on **Ragged Dick** and his amazing adventures. The title—

"A BOY'S CROSS-ROADS!"

gives you more than an idea of the strength of the theme running throughout the yarn. If you miss this "topper" you'll regret it, boys!

"THE SPORTING DETECTIVE!"

Next week's long instalment of this popular detective story is full of exciting interest and unexpected developments. Ferrers Locke is nearing the end of his quest, and the climax is a hair-raising one, to say the least. Look out for this concluding instalment.

"YACHTING!"

That's the subject the "Herald" staff has selected for their next number. Yachting appeals to most of us, even although we may not be fortunate enough to possess yachts. It's remarkable what knowledge Harry Wharton & Co. have picked up of this fascinating sport. You'll enjoy this coming supplement from the word go! Don't miss it!



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