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

## The Mystery of the Empty Compartment.

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

### CHAPTER I.

#### The 8.12 Express

**I**T was seldom indeed that Panther Grayle took a holiday. Certainly he rarely prepared to take one.

Occasionally he would wake up in the morning with the decision already fixed in his mind that he needed a short rest, and if business were not too pressing he would take one forthwith.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**CAN YOU TELL  
WHAT HAPPENED?**

READ  
"THE MYSTERY  
OF THE  
EMPTY COMPARTMENT."



A Now and Interesting Story for All.



# COUSIN ETHEL'S SCHOOL DAYS

YOU CAN START NOW.

## A TALE OF TOM MERRY'S CHUM

BY MARTIN CLIFFORD

### GLANCE OVER THIS.

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

missed a £5 note from her desk during the night, and she naturally suspects Dolores of having taken it. Dolores passionately denies her guilt, and Ethel determines to prove the Spanish girl's innocence. To this end she visits Mrs. Scruton, a dress-maker in the village of Elmhurst, to whom one of the girls, to Ethel's knowledge, is in debt.

(You go on with the story.)

"You—you must not take the note there," said Ethel hastily. Mrs. Scruton looked astonished. "Why not?" "Because—because—Oh, did you not think it strange that Ethel should have so much money?" exclaimed Ethel. The woman's face hardened. "She told me her aunt had sent her the banknote," she replied. "Of course, I believed her. Do you mean to say that the note did not belong to her?" "It did not."

English girl and hugged her, and kissed her upon both cheeks. "How good and kind you are!" she exclaimed. "How unlike me! If I had had you for a friend when I came here, I should have done much better than I have." "Nonsense," said Ethel, smiling. "But it is true! I—I wish I were to stay at St. Freda's now," said Dolores. "I have been thinking—and this—this horrible thing that has happened has seemed to clear my brain. I wish—oh, I wish I had not run away last night, Ethel!" "I wish you had not, dear."

"Then she stole it," Ethel flushed. "Never mind that; but it would be better for you to take the note to Miss Penfold, and explain how you came by it. I know that Ethel had no money last evening, and she was very much afraid of what you would do. It is you who have caused her to do this wicked thing."

"And you tried to stop me, and I said I hated you," said Dolores; and Mrs. Scruton threw open the door with a theatrical gesture. "If you have come to insult me in my own house, you had better go," she exclaimed.

"Leave my house!" Ethel walked down the garden path and joined Dolly. Her heart was beating hard; she felt as if she had just left the den of an ogre. Dolly looked at her flushed face. "Had a row with Scruton?" she asked.

"What you said to me?" Ethel laughed. "Not exactly, dear. Let us go away."

"She's going to be easy with Ethel," asked Dolly. "Surely the half-sovereign will keep the Shylock quiet for a time, anyway?" "I don't know."

Ethel seemed to think that it's all right. She told me that she had paid the half-sovereign on account, and Scruton was all serene. Ethel did not reply. She did not wish to expose Ethel's falsehoods to her companion.

Ethel had lied faithfully was certain; but her greatest folly was in overlooking the fact that a note, being numbered, could be traced if Miss Penfold chose to call in the aid of the police. But the foolish girl had been too frightened and confused to even think of that, in all probability. Ethel was very angry during the walk home to St. Freda's. That did not matter to Dolly, however, who talked enough for two. When she arrived at the school, Ethel went as soon as she could to the dormitory, and looked in at Dolores's cubicle. Dolores was not there, but Ethel caught sight of her in the window-seat at the end of the dormitory, and hastened to join her. Dolores looked at her with a faint smile. "You will still speak to me?" she exclaimed.

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

"And who is it?" "Ethel Craven?" "Oh!" "Miss Penfold will know it soon," said Ethel softly. "You will be cleared, but I hope Miss Penfold will not be very hard on Ethel. The silly girl was frightened into it by a bad woman—though it was very, very wicked of her to let it fall upon you."

Light as Last. MISS PENFOLD sat upright in the high-backed chair in her study, and the high back of the chair was not stiffer than Miss Penfold. Miss Penfold's face looked as hard as the oak of the table beside her.

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

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

"You weren't expecting me?" said Mrs. Scruton, with an uneasy laugh. "No."

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

"What?" Ethel Craven asked. "That?" "Yes, Miss Penfold."

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

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

"What was the girl's name?" "Craven—Ethel Craven." "That's not the name she had expected to hear—though she could not imagine, either, that Dolores had paid the note to Miss Scruton."

"Miss Craven paid you this banknote," she asked. "Yes."

"When?" "Today—about half past twelve."

"Why did you bring the note to me?" asked Mrs. Penfold abruptly. "Because—I—I need not say that Mrs. Scruton—" "If it was stolen—"

"I did not say it was stolen," said Miss Penfold coldly. "Thank you very much for retaining your silence."

"Good afternoon!" And Mrs. Scruton, almost before she knew it was being shown out by the woman behind her, returned to the room to simply crush Miss Penfold—to make sneering remarks on the conduct of a school where banknotes were allowed to be used.

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

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

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

(Continued on following page.)



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

