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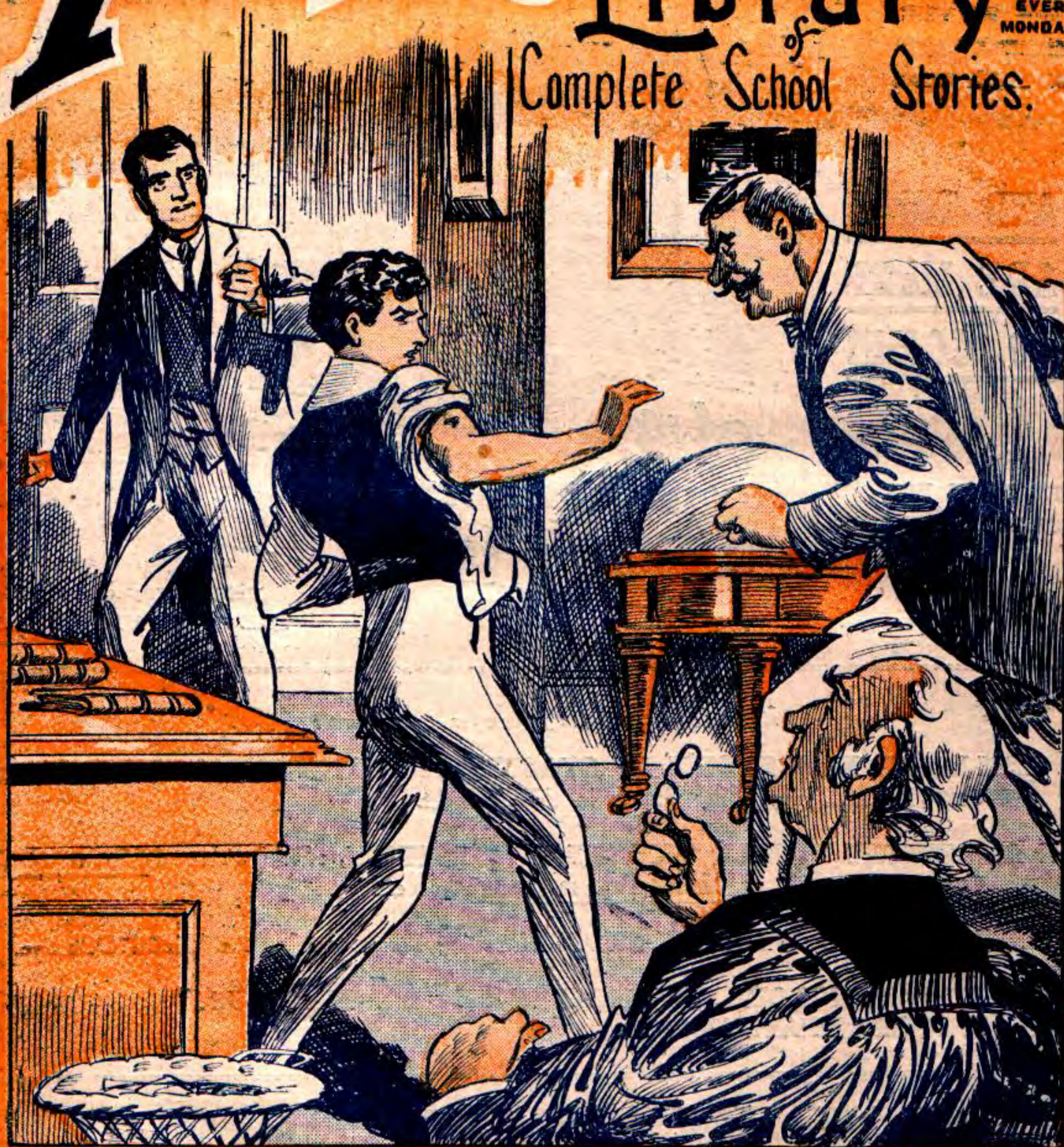
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No. 909. Vol. XXVIII.

Week Ending July 11th, 1925.

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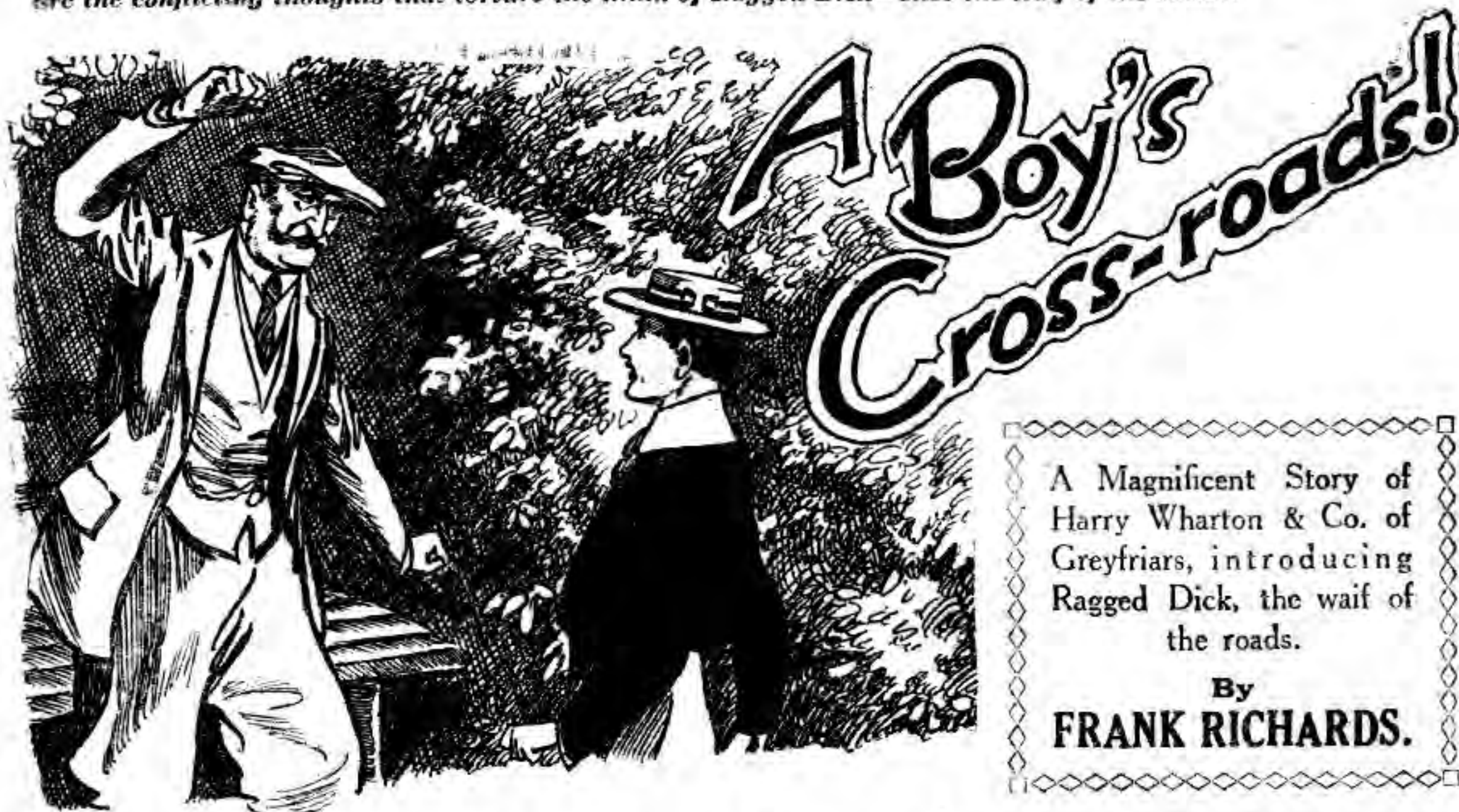
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A Magnificent Story of
Harry Wharton & Co. of
Greyfriars, introducing
Ragged Dick, the waif of
the roads.

By
FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Man Missing!

MAN in!"
"Compton!"
"Where's Compton?"
"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared
Bob Cherry. "Where's that ass?"

Harry Wharton frowned.

Temple, Dabney & Co. of the Fourth were in the field. Fry of the Fourth, with the round red ball in his hand, was ready to bowl. But the wicket was vacant. The field and the bowler had to wait. Compton of the Remove, next on the batting list, was not to be seen.

Bob Cherry had just come off. Certainly, Fry of the Fourth had had wonderful luck in taking his wicket. Really, it had not been expected. Bob, as a rule, was good for a "first in and not out" innings, against any bowling that the Fourth Form cricketers could give him. Still, there it was; he was out, and Compton was next on the list, and should have been ready. And he was not even there!

"Dash it all, it's too bad!" exclaimed Harry Wharton. "Has the silly ass gone off the field?"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Oh, dry up, Bunter!"

"But I say——"

"Where's that ass Compton?"

Harry Wharton was, naturally, annoyed. Compton was a new fellow in the Remove, and Wharton was giving him a chance in a Form match. At the very least, the fellow might have been ready when called upon.

"For goodness' sake, Bunter, don't butt in!" exclaimed Harry Wharton impatiently. "Roll away!"

"But I've seen Compton!" howled Bunter.

"Oh! Where is he?"

Bunter grinned.

"He went up to the House."

"What the merry thump did he go up to the House for in the middle of a cricket-match?"

"The post's just in," explained

Bunter. "Compton went in to see if there was a letter for him."

"What rot! How do you know if he did?" said Frank Nugent.

"Because I heard him ask Mr. Quelch for his letter," chuckled Bunter. "There was one, and he's got it. Quelch gave it to him."

"Well, he's not here, anyhow," said Harry Wharton. "We can't keep the game waiting. You go in, Toddy."

"Right-ho!" said Peter Todd.

Temple, Dabney & Co. were exchanging sarcastic grins. As a matter of fact, Temple & Co. were extremely leisurely in their own methods, and thought nothing of keeping the field waiting several minutes on occasion. Still, now they were kept waiting themselves they felt entitled to be sarcastic about it. Cecil Reginald Temple called out to the captain of the Remove, with polite sarcasm:

"Don't hurry, you fellows! If your man's takin' a nap, or anythin', don't wake him up on our account."

And the Fourth-Formers chuckled.

"Get a move on, Toddy," said the captain of the Remove. "Bother that fellow Compton!"

Peter Todd went out to the vacant wicket. There was no hurry for Compton to turn up now; Peter was more than capable of putting paid to Edward Fry's bowling.

"Queer that Compton should walk off like that," remarked Frank Nugent. "He was keen enough on playing."

"Bless him!" said Harry.

"The queerfulness is terrific," remarked Hurree Janset Ram Singh. "But perhaps there is some trouble in the happy home, and the esteemed and fatheaded Compton is anxious for a letter."

Wharton nodded, his frowning brow relaxing.

"Quite likely. I know he's been looking rather down in the mouth for some time," he said. "Still, cricket is cricket, and he ought to be here. I suppose he will turn up by the time Toddy's out."

"I'll trot off and look for him," said Bob Cherry.

"Do," assented Wharton.

Bob Cherry walked away towards the House, what time Peter Todd was knocking the leather all over the field, and giving Temple, Dabney & Co. plenty of leather-hunting to keep them busy.

Bob was good-naturedly anxious that Compton should not lose his chance in the Form match. He had not been long at Greyfriars, and he had known little of cricket when he came; but his keenness on the game pleased the Famous Five, and they helped him on a good deal. He was good enough to play the Fourth; but there were plenty of fellows to replace him, and if he kept the game waiting again the captain of the Remove was very likely to scratch him out of the team. A cricketer's place was to be where he was wanted and when he was wanted, and Wharton was punctilious on such points; he did not share Cecil Reginald Temple's easy-going ideas about cricket.

"Seen Compton?" asked Bob, coming on Skinner of the Remove lounging near the House.

"Isn't he at the cricket?" yawned Skinner.

"Bunter says he came in for a letter."

"I remember now; I saw him. He went upstairs," said Skinner.

Bob went into the House.

He ascended the stairs of the Remove passage, and went along to Study No. 1, which the new junior shared with Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent.

Bob was feeling rather puzzled.

It was quite likely that Compton of the Remove was perturbed about a letter from home. His grandfather, Sir Henry Compton, was well known at Greyfriars as a crusty old gentleman, and letters from him were quite likely not to be either grateful or comforting. Still, it was rather "thick" for a fellow to forget about a cricket match, especially a new fellow who really was very lucky to get a chance to play even in a Form

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match. Compton had had plenty of time to read his letter and return to Little Side, but he had not done so.

However, Bob was ready to root him out, and rush him down to Little Side at top speed.

The Remove passage was quite deserted and silent. It was a sunny half-holiday, and all the fellows were out of doors, most of them on the cricket-ground. Even Lord Mauleverer had been tempted by the sunny weather to take a little walk, and was adorning a deck-chair on Little Side with his lazy person. There was nobody to be seen in the passage. Compton, if he was there, had the Remove quarters all to himself.

The door of Study No. 1 was half-open.

Bob arrived at it, and had raised his hand to hurl it wide open with one of his energetic thumps, when he suddenly stopped. From Study No. 1 came a voice, the voice of Compton, the new junior, apparently speaking to himself. Bob heard a crumple of paper as a letter was crushed in a hand.

"I must go! I will go! I must see him! I can't keep this on—I can't!"

Bob stood rooted to the floor in sheer astonishment.

Evidently Compton had something on his mind. The letter from Compton Hall had been a disturbing one.

"I must go! I will go! He has no right to refuse to see me. I will go!" repeated Compton's voice passionately.

"My hat!" murmured Bob Cherry.

Thump!

The door flew open, and Bob strode into the study.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

Ragged Dick's Resolution!

RAGGED DICK jumped up. He thrust the letter quickly into his pocket, as he turned a flushed and startled face on Bob.

As plainly as if he were speaking, his flushed face asked whether Bob Cherry had overheard his incautious exclamations.

Bob was surprised, there was no doubt about that. But he did not concern himself about what he had heard; it was no business of his.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" he exclaimed. "Forgotten the match?"

"The—the match?" repeated Ragged Dick.

"Yes; the jolly old cricket match! Blessed if we should have known where to look for you, if Bunter hadn't seen you coming up to the House."

"Oh! I—I—" stammered Compton.

"Did you expect me to stay in till the wind-up?" grinned Bob. "Fry got my wicket, as it happened. Sort of a giddy miracle, but there you are."

And he chuckled.

Compton pulled himself together.

Bob could see that he was deeply disturbed by the letter he had thrust hurriedly into the pocket of his blazer; and that he was covered with confusion at the idea that Bob had heard his ejaculations as he came up to the study. For that reason, Bob was carefully careless, as it were, in his speech, to put the new junior at his ease. He did not want Compton to think that he was interesting himself in another fellow's private affairs.

"Wharton's sent in Toddy, as you weren't on the scene," went on Bob. "You oughtn't to have forgotten, old bean. We take cricket matches rather seriously here, you know."

"I—I forgot—" stammered Compton.

"I know you must have; but come

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along now. If Toddy's wicket goes down, you have to go in next."

"I—I—"

"And Fry may get him—he's in form to-day," said Bob Cherry. "You can generally rely on the Fourth to leave your wicket standing as long as you like. But the unexpected happens sometimes."

Compton was breathing hard.

"I'm sorry," he stammered. "I—I forgot. I—I've had a letter from Sir Henry Compton, and—and—" He seemed to be struggling for an explanation, and Bob struck in to save him the trouble.

"All serene—all serene, old man! Come along now, and there's no great harm done."

"I—I'm coming."

"March!" said Bob cheerily.

He tramped out of the study again, and Compton followed him.

The new junior's face was still flushed and troubled, and Bob avoided glancing at him as they left the House together. As they walked down to Little Side, Bob chatted cheerily on the subject of the match, affecting not to notice that Compton did not answer him. Inwardly, Bob could not help wondering that a letter from his grandfather should upset a fellow to this extent—crusty old gentleman as Sir Henry Compton was.

Get Ready to Welcome HOBBS AND SUTCLIFFE.

"Hallo, here he is," said Frank Nugent, as Bob and his companion came up to the pavilion.

"Oh, you've found him, Bob," said Wharton.

"Yes; rooted him out," said Bob Cherry. "Toddy still going strong, what? Temple doesn't look like bagging his wicket."

Cecil Reginald Temple himself had taken the ball to deal with Peter Todd. But Peter was still knocking the leather all over the field, and running with Ogilvy again and again, in spite of the efforts of the great Cecil Reginald.

"Anything up, Compton?" asked the captain of the Remove, glancing at Dick.

"Eh! No—not exactly!" stammered Dick.

"A fellow ought to be on the spot, you know, when he's down to bat."

"I—I know! I'm sorry! I—I knew the post was in, you see, and I wanted to see if there was a letter from Sir Henry Compton." Ragged Dick's face flushed again. "And—then I forgot about—"

"Jolly interesting letter from the old folks at home, to make you forget that a cricket match was on, I should say!"

remarked Johnny Bull, with a surprised stare at Compton.

"I—I—you see—"

"Oh, it's all right," said Harry Wharton. "I was only giving you a tip, Compton. No harm done."

"I—I'm sorry—"

"All serene!" said the captain of the Remove.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Four for Toddy!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"Good man, Toddy!"

"Bravo!"

The attention of the Remove cricketers was taken off Compton, much to his relief.

He moved into the pavilion, and sat down.

He was ready now, if a wicket fell and his name were called; but in point of fact, he was not thinking much about cricket. The junior who was known at Greyfriars as Compton of the Remove, and who in other days had been known as "Ragged Dick," had matters of more serious import on his troubled mind that sunny afternoon.

Ragged Dick! That was what he had been, though the name would have seemed absurd now, applied to the handsome, well-set-up fellow, in his spotless flannels and blazer. But Ragged Dick was what he had been—Ragged Dick was what he must be again—his life at Greyfriars was but an episode—a happy dream of an hour. It had been so wonderful a thing to him, coming to Greyfriars, that it had seemed dream-like, unreal; yet he had very quickly shaken down into his place in the old school. And now—the day of parting was close at hand, though no one but himself suspected it, and he had to make up his mind to leave it all. No wonder his comrades in the Remove had noted the cloud on his brow for some days past—no wonder he was unable to throw himself into the game of cricket with the happy carelessness of schoolboy-hood.

Harry Wharton & Co., and the other fellows standing near the pavilion, were watching the cricket—Peter Todd and Ogilvy making the running, while the Fourth-form fieldsmen panted in the sunshine after the ball. Compton slipped his hand into his pocket and took out a letter.

The cricketers were not observing him; but Billy Bunter, loafing round the pavilion, blinked at him through his big spectacles. Compton did not notice the Owl of the Remove.

He read through the letter again, written in the crabbed hand of the old baronet of Compton Hall. For days and days he had waited for that letter, in reply to one of his own written to Sir Henry; for days and days he had waited in vain. Now it had come:

"Dear Richard,—I have already told you that I do not desire you to come home until the school holidays.

"I have nothing further to say on the subject,

"Your grandfather,

"HENRY COMPTON."

Ragged Dick crushed the letter in his hand after reading it again.

His eyes glinted.

The old man was treating him like a child, or like a slave! He had written to ask when he might come, telling Sir Henry that he must see him; that he knew now what he had not known when he came to Greyfriars, and that something must be done. More he had not ventured to put into writing, but he knew that the old man must guess the nature of the discovery he had made. And this was Sir Henry's answer!

Grim, hard, unbending! That was the character of the old man who had taken Ragged Dick from the dusty roads, given him his name, and sent him to Greyfriars as Richard Compton, heir of Compton Hall.

His word was law to the waif; he exacted unquestioning obedience; and in all that was right, Ragged Dick was willing to yield as much.

But all was not right now—he could not, and he would not, carry on the deception now that he knew it was a deception. He could not and he would not, he told himself passionately. Waif and outcast he had been; but never a rogue or a rascal. In his hard days with Pedlar Parker, he had been savagely beaten because he would not steal—and was it better than stealing to stand as the heir of Compton Hall, in the place of the rightful heir? Was the old man mad, or so besotted with pride and arrogance, that he considered his iron will a law to which even the law of the land must bend? Ragged Dick, at all events, would not bend to it, against his conscience.

"I will go!" he muttered. "I shall go! I must go! And I will tell him that this must finish! And if he will not listen, I will leave Greyfriars—and go back to the road! I will not stay here a cheat—it must end, and the sooner the better."

He thrust the letter into his pocket again and looked out before him at the stretch of green—the white figures running on it, the bright colours of the blazers dotted about in the sunshine, the old shady trees, and the grey old buildings in the distance—and a choking feeling came into his throat. It was hard to leave all this and go back to tramping the dusty roads.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! There goes Olgivy!"

"Man in! Compton!"

This time Ragged Dick was ready. He jumped up.

"Man in!"

"Right!"

And Ragged Dick, with an effort, drove the thronging, troubling thoughts from his mind and tried to think only of cricket as he walked out with his bat to face the Fourth Form bowling.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

The Rank Outsider!

HARRY WHARTON watched the new junior with interest, as he stood at the wicket to receive the bowling from Fry of the Fourth.

He liked the new fellow, and he had been glad to give him a chance in the cricket. Dick had improved wonderfully at the game in the few weeks he had been at Greyfriars. A game with the Fourth Form was not a matter of great consequence in the eyes of the Removites; but if Dick shaped well against Temple, Dabney & Co. he had a chance of figuring in more hefty matches, against St. Jim's and Rookwood. He had been very keen on it, but it seemed to the captain of the Remove now that his keenness was mostly gone.

Wharton, naturally, did not guess anything of the secret trouble that preyed on the mind of the new junior.

So far as he could see, Compton of the Remove was a "lucky bargee"—heir to an old title and a great estate, one of the favourites of fortune.

That Compton's good fortune had come like a dream, and might vanish like one, was not to occur to anybody in the Remove.

But for days now it had been borne in



"But, I say, you fellows, it's true—yaroooooh!" roared Bunter. Johnny Bull had his bat under his arm, and he allowed the business end of it to drop on Bunter's foot. "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the juniors, as Bunter danced on one foot and clasped the other. "Yow! You beast, Bull!" (See Chapter 3.)

on Dick's mind that he would have to leave Greyfriars—there was no help for it.

That knowledge clouded his brow and weighed on his mind and subtracted a great deal from the natural cheeriness of his manners.

He was anxious to see the old baronet and to get the matter settled. Ever since his chance meeting with Roger Compton, old Sir Henry's cousin, he had known the truth, and known that this deception could not go on. But Sir Henry, whether he guessed or not what the boy had discovered, refused to see him.

Of his trouble and doubt Dick had said no word. The fellows in his study were his friends, and they liked him, but they could not be in his confidence. There was no one at Greyfriars, or out of it, in whom he could confide.

But Harry Wharton had observed that a good deal of the cheery brightness was gone from his looks, that he often fell into fits of deep and troubled musing, and he had rather wondered what was troubling this "lucky bargee."

Whatever it was, doubtless it was worrying him now. He had forgotten the cricket match, and after Bob had brought him to Little Side he had sat in the pavilion in a brown study till his name was called. Now he was going quite briskly to the wickets, but the effort he had made to pull himself together was quite visible to the eye.

"There's something amiss with

Compton," Harry Wharton remarked to Nugent.

Frank nodded.

"I've noticed it," he said.

"He can't be bothering about that idiotic yarn Bunter spun about him, surely," said Harry.

"Oh, really, Wharton—" chimed in Bunter's fat voice.

"Buzz off, Bunter!"

"It wasn't a yarn I spun about him," said the Owl of the Remove, with an indignant blink through his spectacles. "I tell you it was true!"

"Cheese it."

"I tell you I saw him in rags and tatters in Compton Park a few weeks before he came to Greyfriars—"

"Rats!"

"And he admitted that he was a tramp on the roads."

"Can it!"

"I was struck all of a heap when I saw him at Greyfriars, and he made out that he was old Compton's grandson!"

"You'll be struck all of another heap if you keep on with that silly yarn!" interposed Bob Cherry.

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"But I say, you fellows, it's true—Yaroooooh!" roared Bunter. Johnny Bull had his bat under his arm, and he allowed the business end of it to drop on Bunter's foot.

Bunter's remarks terminated in a wild yell.

He danced on one foot and clasped the other, and there was a roar from the fellows at the pavilion.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yow-ow! You beast, Bull," yelled Bunter. "Ow! Wow!"

"Chuck it!" said Johnny Bull. "We're fed-up with your silly yarns about Compton, Bunter. You've been warned to chuck it before. You can take that as another warning."

"Ow! I tell you it's true! Keep off, you beast!" roared Bunter, as Johnny Bull lunged at him with the bat.

The Owl of the Remove dodged into the pavilion amid chuckles from the Removes.

True or false, his story about Compton was not welcome in the Remove. It had caused a good deal of comment, but nobody believed a word of it. It was a just punishment for the Ananias of Greyfriars that when, by a miraculous chance, he told the truth he found no believers.

"I don't think Compton is bothering about Bunter and his rot," said Frank Nugent thoughtfully as the fat Owl retreated. "I can't help thinking that that meeting with Roger Compton had something to do with it. You remember, we met him the day we took Compton over to Cliff House to tea."

"I remember. The man's a rotten character," said Harry. "He's got his name up all over this part of the county. But I don't see why he should have any effect on Compton. He's only a distant relative, and Compton isn't responsible for his juicy reputation."

"I know; but old Compton doesn't seem the same since that day," said Frank. "He had some sort of a shock at meeting that chap, though I'm blessed if I understand how or why."

Wharton nodded thoughtfully.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Talk of giddy angels!" exclaimed Bob Cherry.

"What—"

"There he is!"

Bob made a gesture towards a man in riding-clothes who was strolling on to the cricket field.

The juniors recognised Roger Compton, cousin of the old baronet and next heir to Compton Hall after the baronet's grandson.

Wharton knitted his brows as he glanced at the hard, dissolute face of the wastrel.

"That fellow has no right to come here," he said.

"He isn't a nice man to know," grinned Bob Cherry. "But the giddy public are allowed to come in and see the matches if they like. We can't shoo him off."

"I suppose not. But—"

Wharton frowned.

He knew that Compton had been forbidden by his grandfather to hold any kind of communication with Roger Compton, the gambler and waster and spendthrift, whose wild life was something like a scandal on the countryside. It was fairly certain that the Head would never have allowed Roger to call at the school to see Richard Compton. In the circumstances, it was in the worst of taste for the man to come on the cricket ground.

But there he was, strolling along coolly, carelessly flicking his riding-breeches with his whip, at ease with himself and all the world. Many qualities Roger Compton lacked, but certainly he did not lack cool effrontery and impudence.

He came up to the pavilion and bestowed a nod on Harry Wharton & Co., whom he knew by sight.

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The chums of the Remove barely acknowledged his greeting.

They neither liked nor respected the man, and they wanted to have nothing at all to do with him. There was a slightly sarcastic smile on Roger Compton's face—a face that had once been handsome.

"Compton's shaping well!" remarked Tom Brown, with his eyes on the batsman.

Dick had knocked the ball away, and was running with Toddy, and they had already crossed the pitch three times.

Ragged Dick had succeeded in driving his haunting trouble from his mind, and throwing himself into the game. It was his first match at Greyfriars, and likely to be his last; and he was determined to play his hardest, and justify Wharton's action in putting him into the Form eleven. And he was succeeding. Fry, the best bowler in the Fourth, was unable to touch his wicket; and Temple & Co. were leather-hunting again.

"Bravo!"

"Well hit, Compton!"

"Good man!"

Roger Compton glanced at the running figures on the cricket pitch. That one of them was his young relative, he knew must be the case, as he heard the name shouted.

"My young cousin is playing, what?" he asked, addressing the captain of the Remove.

"Yes, Mr. Compton," answered Harry shortly.

"Which is he? It is a long time since I have seen Richard, you know; and when I saw him last he was a helpless invalid," said Roger Compton. "He must have changed wonderfully—this restoration to health is really little short of miraculous."

"Jolly good thing, isn't it, Mr. Compton?" said Bob Cherry, with a grin. Bob was quite well aware that the good health of the boy who stood between Roger and a rich inheritance was not a good thing in the eyes of the wastrel.

"Quite!" said Roger calmly.

"The goodness is terrific," remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The restored healthfulness of the esteemed and ridiculous Compton is a boonful blessing."

Roger Compton's eyes were on the cricketers.

The ball had come in now, and the batsmen were safe at the wickets. Dick at the pavilion end. Fry of the Fourth was preparing to bowl again.

"Which is my relative?" asked Roger.

It was odd enough that he did not know Compton of the Remove by sight, howsoever great the change in him, the juniors thought. But Harry Wharton remembered that he had not known him, at that meeting in the lane a short time before.

"That's Compton—at this end," said Harry.

"The lad who is batting?"

"Yes."

"Great gad!"

Roger Compton's eyes fixed hard on Ragged Dick. He had a good view of Dick's handsome profile.

"He has the Compton mouth," he said, as if to himself. "But is that Richard Compton? Is that the boy I almost saw at death's door? You are not pulling my leg, what?"

"That's Compton of the Remove," said Harry shortly.

"It's amazing, then," muttered Roger.

"There he goes again!" said Squiff.

The ball whizzed away from the

gleaming bat, and the batsmen were running again. They changed places, and changed again. As Ragged Dick came back to his wicket, something impelled him to look towards the pavilion, and his eyes fell on Roger Compton. He met the keen, inquiring, suspicious glance of the waster, and he stopped suddenly, the flush dying out of his handsome face. For a moment he stood, and then he ran on and clumped his bat on the crease.

Roger Compton drew a deep, hard breath.

His brow was dark as midnight; his eyes gleamed. There was a savage suspicion in his looks.

The last ball of the over came down. There was a jubilant shout from Fry of the Fourth.

"How's that?"

"Out!"

"Man in!" said Harry Wharton.

Compton's innings had collapsed all of a sudden. He came off the pitch, with a clouded brow, and Hazeldene went out to take his place.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Ordered Off!

ROGER COMPTON kept his eyes fixed on the handsome junior as he came back towards the pavilion.

Ragged Dick did not look at him again.

He joined the Remove fellows.

"Sorry, Wharton," he said, in a low voice.

"All serene, old man," said the captain of the Remove. "You've put ten on the score, and that's not bad."

Dick nodded silently.

It was clear enough to his friends that it was the sight of Roger Compton that had put him off his game. But for the unexpected presence of the waster, Dick's innings might have gone on to the finish.

The man was a "rotter"—it was written all over his dissolute, evil face. But it was strange enough that the sight of him should affect Compton of the Remove in this way. Relative as he was, he was almost a stranger to the baronet's grandson; their ways lay far apart. There was no reason, so far as the juniors could see, why Dick should concern himself in the least about his grandfather's cousin.

But that he did, was quite clear.

Dick's heart was beating painfully.

This was the man whose place he had, all unconsciously, taken, as heir to Compton Hall. This was the man who was to be cheated of his inheritance, by the old baronet's unscrupulous device of substituting Ragged Dick for the grandson who had died in a nursing-home abroad. Dick had a vague idea of the old man's motive—to save the estate from the waster and spendthrift, whom he hated and despised; to save it in the only possible way, since it was entailed, and could not be willed away from the heir-in-entail. Hated and despised by the stern old man, Roger Compton could not be prevented from succeeding him as master of Compton Hall, now that the intervening heir was dead—only by one device, and that device the old man had adopted, as Dick knew now.

He had known nothing of it when Sir Henry adopted him as his grandson, and sent him to Greyfriars. He had wondered at the secrecy the old baronet had impressed upon him, but he had obeyed without question—not a word had passed his lips. But now he knew—he knew—and in the presence of

Roger Compton, rogue and waster as the man was, he felt guilty and ashamed. He could not meet the man's eyes, evil as they were.

Those eyes were fixed on him, he knew; he felt as if they burned him. He wondered whether some suspicion had awakened in Roger's brain.

It was possible enough.

He had known that young Richard Compton was an invalid—that he was scarcely expected to live, in spite of all that medical specialists and a soft southern clime could do for him. He had counted on the poor boy's death—the money-lenders whose loans supplied his extravagance had counted on it. Now he saw Richard Compton—as he supposed—in glowing health, playing cricket with the Greyfriars fellows, showing no sign of having ever been anything like an invalid. It was enough to excite suspicion in a less suspicious mind than Roger Compton's.

Dick did not suppose that he bore any resemblance at all to the dead boy in whose place he stood. Some of his fiends had told him that he was like his grandfather in feature—the handsome, well-cut Compton mouth was distinctive. But that had only made Dick smile, knowing that Sir Henry was not his grandfather.

His heart throbbed as he felt the sharp, penetrating eyes of Roger Compton scanning him.

"You can cut off, old chap," said Wharton, in a low voice. "It's a single innings game, you know; you won't be wanted to bat again. You don't want to see that giddy relation of yours. Cut off."

"I—I think I will," muttered Ragged Dick.

"Richard!"

Dick was moving off, when Roger Compton came up. He planted himself directly before the Greyfriars junior, and it was not possible to avoid him.

Ragged Dick looked at him at last.

In the sharp, restless eyes of the wastrel, he read suspicion—vague so far, but undoubted.

"Richard! It's a long time since we've met, my boy."

Roger held out his hand.

Dick hesitated, and stepped back. He was wronging this man, by the part he was playing; but his whole nature was repelled by the evil, dissolute face, the shifty, cunning eyes. He could not touch the man's hand.

Roger's eyes glittered.

"You know me again?" he asked.

"I know you!" muttered Dick.

"You aren't glad to see me?"

"No."

Roger Compton laughed—a hard, evil laugh.

"I did not know you, Richard," he said. "You have changed—wonderfully changed. Who, seeing you now, would believe that you had been taken to a nursing-home in the charge of doctors and nurses, and not expected to live?"

Dick's face crimsoned.

Who, indeed, would have believed it, seeing the handsome, sturdy, healthy boy? He saw some of the Removites glance at one another.

"Your grandfather must be overjoyed to see you like this, Richard," said Roger, with a sarcastic grin.

No answer.

"Have you nothing to say?"

"No!" said Dick, with an effort. "I—I've been told not to speak to you, and I don't want to."

"That is frank, at all events," said Roger Compton, laughing. "Your grandfather has told you to bar me—what?"

"Yes."

"But I have a natural interest in you, my boy. I was quite surprised to hear that you were in England again—that you had been sent to Greyfriars. You can guess what a surprise it was to me."

Dick was silent.

"When did you return to England?"

Harry Wharton interposed.

"Mr. Compton!"

"You need not interrupt me," said the wastrel coldly.

"Compton's grandfather has ordered him not to speak to you," said the captain

of the Remove. "He's bound to play up. You know best whether Sir Henry has good reasons for barring you off. Compton, old man, you'd better get into the House."

Dick nodded, and turned away.

He walked towards the House, with more glances turned on him than on the cricket.

Roger Compton gave the captain of the Remove a black look, and followed Ragged Dick. Wharton's eyes gleamed.

"By Jove! If he doesn't let the kid alone we'll jolly well boot him off our ground!" he exclaimed.

"There's Quelch!" said Nugent.

Mr. Quelch, master of the Remove, appeared in the offing. The juniors saw him frown as his eyes fell on Roger Compton. The scapegrace's reputation was better known to Mr. Quelch, and better understood by him, than by the juniors. He came up quickly.

"Compton, go into the House!"

"Yes, sir."

"May I not be allowed a few words with my relative, sir?" asked Roger, with sarcastic politeness.

"No, sir!" said Mr. Quelch grimly.

"It is Sir Henry Compton's wish that the boy should see nothing of you—a wish of which I heartily approve. You are not a man to hold any communication whatever with a schoolboy, Mr. Compton. You will oblige me by taking yourself off."

"Sir!"

"Your disgraceful reputation is well known to me, sir," said the Remove master hotly. "It is impudence, sir—sheer impudence—for you to come here. You had better go."

Roger Compton shrugged his shoulders and walked away. On Little Side the Form match went on. From a window in the School House Ragged Dick watched the wastrel as he disappeared beyond the elms in the distance.

"He suspects!" muttered Ragged Dick.

"He is suspicious, at least. It must end—it must end!" He drew the letter from his pocket, and looked at it again. A hard and stern look came over his face.



"Which is my relative?" asked Roger Compton. "That's Compton—at this end!" said Wharton. "The lad who is batting?" asked Roger. "Yes!" "Great gad!" Roger Compton's eyes fixed hard on Ragged Dick. "It's amazing!" (See Chapter 3.)

At that moment, youthful as it was, it had a strange resemblance to the stern, grim old face of Sir Henry Compton. "He will not see me, he says. Well, I shall see him! I will see him this very day! It's got to finish!"

Ten minutes later Ragged Dick had changed out of his flannels, and was wheeling out his bicycle. While Harry Wharton & Co. were winding up the Form match on Little Side, and beating Temple, Dabney & Co. by a handsome margin of runs, Ragged Dick was pedalling away by leafy lanes to Compton Hall—to see Sir Henry Compton, in spite of his stern refusal.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

Ragged Dick Speaks Out!

SIR HENRY COMPTON removed the cigarette from his mouth and held it between two brown, lean fingers. His grizzled brows knitted.

He was seated on the bench in the little old summer-house in Compton Park. The little building was half-dismantled, overgrown with ivy and thick creepers, but it was a favourite resort of the old baronet when he was at the Hall. It was there that Ragged Dick had first seen him; it was there that Jenks, the keeper, had brought him the fatal telegram announcing the death of his grandson—the boy for whom he cared little, but in whom all his hopes had been centred.

The old man was thinking of it, as he sat in the deep shade of branches and tangled ivy, through the interstices of which fugitive gleams of the sun came like gold on the summer afternoon. He was thinking of it when he saw a boyish figure approaching through the trees of the park, and recognised Ragged Dick.

His grizzled old brows knitted darkly.

He had forbidden the boy to come, forbidden him to approach Compton Hall until Greyfriars should break up for the summer holidays. Yet here he was—in defiance of the command. On the Compton estate Sir Henry's word was law. Over his dependants, and even his tenants, he ruled like an autocrat. On two thousand fertile acres he was monarch of all he surveyed. And this boy, whom he had snatched from rags and beggary, dared to dispute his will. Blacker and blacker his mastiff face grew as he watched the Greyfriars junior coming towards the summer-house.

Dick did not see him as yet.

He had gone up to the great house a little timidly. He had asked for Sir Henry, had been told that the master of the Hall was walking in the park. Leaving his bicycle, Dick had walked into the park to look for him, and, remembering how he had seen the old man sitting in the summer-house, smoking his incessant cigarettes, he turned his steps in that direction. He was determined to see Sir Henry before he went back to the school—if indeed he went back at all. On that point he was not decided.

It was in his thoughts to make a clean cut that very afternoon, to save the awkwardness of explanations to his friends, the pain of parting, by a sudden disappearance. Compton of the Remove would vanish from Greyfriars. Ragged Dick would tramp the dusty summer roads again, and that would be the end of this strange episode in his life. But he had to see the baronet first.

He came on, glancing about him under the trees for the tall figure of the lord of Compton Hall.

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In the dusk of the summer-house the glimmer of Sir Henry's cigarette caught his eye, and he knew that the old man was there.

He stepped into the entrance, raising his straw hat, with its band in the Greyfriars colours, blue-and-white.

Sir Henry fixed his eyes upon the handsome face.

"You here, Richard?"

"I had to see you, sir."

"I ordered you not to come."

"I know."

Sir Henry breathed hard.

"Am I to expect disobedience from you, Richard—you?"

Ragged Dick flushed. There was a tone of scorn in the old man's voice. He realised, more clearly than he ever had realised, that to the haughty old gentleman he was still Ragged Dick, the tramp, serving a purpose, tolerated and patronised because he was serving a purpose; but still Ragged Dick, with no real claim on his patron.

"I am sorry, sir—" began Dick.

Sir Henry made a gesture with the lean brown hand that held the smoking cigarette.

"That will do, Richard! Go back to the school!"

"I must speak to you, sir!"

The First Pair!

HOBBS AND SUTCLIFFE.

"I do not desire to hear you," said Sir Henry.

"I must speak!" said Dick firmly.

The old man's face grew darker.

"Is this the beggar I picked off the roads?" he said harshly. "Do you presume to argue with me?"

"I have no choice."

"Silence—and go!"

Dick did not move.

He had not lost his awe of the grim old man; and he respected him, in a way. But he did not go; he did not think of going. Matters had reached a point now when he had to be firm, and the old man was confronted by a will as determined as his own.

"If I go, sir," said Dick quietly, "I shall not go back to Greyfriars. I shall go back to the road."

Sir Henry laughed contemptuously.

"You will go back to rags and tatters?" he said. "I am not likely to believe that. Hold your foolish tongue, boy, and obey my commands; and return to the school at once."

"I cannot!"

"What do you mean?" exclaimed the old man angrily. "Has anything happened at Greyfriars? You have not been mad enough to talk—to tell anyone—" He broke off, with a savage frown at the boy.

"No, sir."

"Then go, and be silent still."

"I have told you that I cannot," said Dick. "I will leave you if you wish, sir; I cannot force you to listen to me. But if I go, I shall not return to the school, I warn you of that."

"What does this mean?" asked Sir Henry, after a short pause. "What have you to complain of, boy? Is there anything you wish me to do for you, that I have left undone?"

"Nothing, sir. But I have found out something—I mean, something has become known to me, and I could not help it," said Dick. "I never understood why you had taken me up, given me your name, adopted me as your grandson Richard was dead; and that you had given me his place—I believed that you had a right to do so if you chose."

"Do you question my right now?" exclaimed Sir Henry harshly, his eyes gleaming at the quiet, steady Greyfriars junior, standing before him.

"Yes," said Dick. "I met Roger Compton some time ago, when walking with some of my friends in the Remove."

"I commanded you to hold no communication with Roger Compton, if he should seek you out."

"I did not speak to him—he did not know me. But—talking to my friends afterwards—I learned something."

"And what did you learn?" asked Sir Henry, with a sneer, but with an uneasy scrutiny of the boy's set face.

"That the Compton estate was entailed, that you could not legally leave it to an adopted grandson, and that if I became your heir, as you told me, it would be robbing Roger Compton," said Dick.

Sir Henry drew a deep breath.

It had been in his mind that sooner or later the boy must know.

The Compton's, of Compton Hall, filled a great space in the countryside—Sir Henry was a great man, and his relative, the spendthrift, was the talk of the county; Compton affairs were a matter of incessant local gossip. Sooner or later, his adopted grandson had to know. He was certain to hear enough, sooner or later, to set him on the track of the truth. It had happened sooner instead of later—that was all. But certainly he had not supposed that this ragged waif, saved from rags and tatters by his munificence, would dare to arraign him for what he had done; would risk losing a rich inheritance by uttering a word about what he might discover. Accustomed to his own way, to universal subservience to his lofty will in the little world where he reigned as master, the grim old man had never dreamed of opposition from—of all people—the waif who owed everything to him. He was discovering his mistake now.

"So you have learned this?" said Sir Henry, at last.

"Yes," said Dick.

"And what then?"

"I—I suppose you believe that you have a right to do as you choose, sir," said the junior. "But I cannot be a party to it. I cannot. I know that Roger Compton is a bad man—a thorough rotter. But right is right, and law is law. He, and not I, is heir to the Compton estate, and I cannot cheat him. I am not your grandson—and I know now, only too clearly, that it was from no kindness to me that you called me so. I did not know that I was doing any harm, when you sent me to Greyfriars under your name. I know now."

"Listen to me," said Sir Henry, subduing his anger and speaking calmly. "Roger Compton, my cousin, is a waster, a spendthrift, a gambler, a scoundrel. He is in the hands of the

moneylenders, up to the neck; he is the last of the Comptons, and therefore has the power to break the entail, and scatter the estate. I have a very few years to live—at my death, this scoundrel will be master of my estate, and it will be broken up, to satisfy a crew of usurers—if anything is left over from their ravenous clutches, it will be wasted in disgraceful riot and extravagance. That I am determined to prevent. My grandson died—and I have taken you in his place. For you I care nothing—why should I care? For the Compton estate I care a great deal. You are the means of saving it from that scoundrel, and keeping it together. You understand? For this, I have taken you from rags and beggary; for this, I exact from you implicit obedience. That is enough."

Dick listened quietly.

He could understand, and he could feel for the proud old man. But his resolution was unchanged.

"It is not enough, sir," he said quietly. "If Roger Compton wastes his inheritance, it will be his own to waste—it cannot be mine! It is not my business what you do, so long as you do not ask me to carry on a deception and a cheat. That I cannot do."

"You cannot? You, a beggar and a tramp!" said the old man savagely.

Dick winced.

"I was a tramp, but never a beggar, and never a thief," he said. "When I was with Pedlar Parker, I was beaten because I would not steal. And this—this is theft—"

"What?"

"If I step between Roger Compton and his inheritance, I am a thief—and I cannot and will not do it," said Ragged Dick. "I was bound to tell you so, sir, so that you will know what to do. You can throw me over if you choose, and let me go back to my rags. I have asked nothing of you, and I ask nothing now. But I cannot be a cheat."

"Gad!"

The old man raised his hand, as if he would strike at the handsome set face before him.

Dick did not flinch.

"I was bound to speak, sir," he said. "So long as you live, no harm is done, perhaps—Roger Compton has no claim in your lifetime. But, after that—I could not step in and rob him. I could not, and will not. I could not let you believe that I would."

The old man was struggling with his anger. For some minutes he was silent.

"Listen," he said, at last. "But for Roger Compton, there might have been another heir. I had a brother once—a brother much younger than myself—we became enemies, and it was Roger who first planted animosity between us—Roger who flattered my pride, and irritated me against my brother Robert—who caused at last the quarrel that led to our parting. We parted in anger—Robert went, and I never saw him again; he died in poverty and misery and went to a pauper's grave—it was years later that I learned so. But for Roger Compton's treachery, it might never have happened—and Roger would not be the heir in entail to Compton Hall. My brother should have outlived me by twenty years—he should have left sons to carry on the old name—when my own line failed. Heaven knows, he may have left a son when he died, unknown to me, far away from me. But for his treachery and trickery, Roger would not now be my heir. Is he to receive my estate as a reward?"

Dick was silent.

He could not help thinking that the old man's grim pride and arrogance had probably been the cause of the bitter quarrel with his kinsman, as much as



"Let me see your arm before I let you go," said Roger between his teeth. "I refuse!" "That is enough! I will satisfy myself, then!" And with that Roger Compton made a spring at the boy and grasped him. (See Chapter 6.)

any treacherous intervention from Roger. But it was not for him to say so.

There was a long silence.

"We have said enough," said Sir Henry, at last. "You will obey my wishes, my commands. There is no need to say more. Return to Greyfriars, and let me hear no more of this."

"I cannot, sir," said Dick, "I do not want to displease you or to disappoint you; but I must do what I know to be right."

"And this is the beggar I have saved from famine!" said the old man, with bitter scorn.

"I am ready to give up all that you have given me, sir," said Dick, in a trembling voice. "I would rather give it up—I ask nothing of you."

"It is too late! I cannot replace you, or I would send you back to your rags and tatters for your insolence," said the baronet harshly. "But the same trick cannot be played twice. You have appeared as my grandson—and now you must play out the game to the end."

"I cannot, sir. And even if I wished, I do not believe that it is possible," said Dick. "Roger Compton came to Greyfriars to-day—he saw me playing cricket. I could see in his face that he suspected a trick."

"And why?"

"He saw your grandson a weak and dying invalid," said Dick. "He saw me as I am! Perhaps he does not guess, so far, that you concealed your grandson's death, abroad, that you took

a nameless boy and called him your grandson. But he suspects something—I could see it. He has the right, and the power, to make investigations—to cause me to be questioned—and if I am questioned, can I tell lies, and lies, and lies? I cannot, and I will not. If my headmaster should question me, I am bound to tell him the truth—or nothing! And if I refuse to answer, even, what will be thought of it?"

"And you learned to be so particularly honourable, tramping the roads and begging your bread?" said Sir Henry sardonically.

"I never begged my bread—I have worked for it, and am ready to work again," said Ragged Dick. "I have starved, many a time, and I will starve again, before I will be a liar and a thief. If you were not blinded by pride and self-will, you would see that you are asking me to do what no decent fellow could do."

Sir Henry Compton started.

"You use this language to me?" he stammered.

"You have forced me to speak plainly, sir. I am sorry to make you angry; but I do not fear your anger!" said Ragged Dick steadily. "But I fear my own conscience, and I will not do what I know to be wrong."

Sir Henry Compton rose to his feet.

"Enough!" he said harshly. "More than enough! Go back to the school, and hold your tongue! I will think THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 909.

over this—I will think what is to be done! In the meantime, keep silent and play your part. As you have said yourself, until my death, Roger Compton has no claim—you are not wronging him, as you call it, until you step into the estate at my death. My name and my bounty I have a right to give you if I choose—I may call you my grandson, if I do not make you my heir—do you understand?"

Dick hesitated.

As clearly as if the old man had said so, he knew what was in Sir Henry's mind—that the longer the nameless waif enjoyed wealth and leisure, honour and distinction, the less likely he would be to give it all up for honour's sake when the time came.

But Ragged Dick had confidence in himself; and he felt that he had said enough.

"For the present, then!" he said, at last.

"Go!"

And Ragged Dick went.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

The Mark of the Comptons.

"RICHARD!"

Ragged Dick halted, his brow darkening.

He was treading his way slowly among the beeches and oaks of Compton Park, on his way back to the house for his bicycle. The scent of a cigar came to his nostrils; he glanced round, and saw Roger Compton.

The scapegrace nodded to him with a grin, as he called his name.

Dick stopped for a moment, and then walked on resolutely. He wanted no words with the scapegrace—the enemy of his adopted grandfather. He wondered what the man was doing there—on the Compton lands, and it came into his mind that he had been right in thinking that Roger was suspicious. He knew that the man was barred at the Hall—that the servants had orders not to admit him if he came. Yet here he was, strolling in the park with an air of carelessness, smoking his cigar, looking what he was—a cool, hardy, insolent blackguard. It seemed to Dick, from the man's manner, that Roger Compton felt that he had power in his hands now.

"Stop, my boy!"

Dick walked on. The man's whole personality repelled him. In his rough days on the road, Dick had come upon many a rascal, many a blackguard; but he had never met a man who impressed him as so wholly evil as Roger Compton. The man was bad through and through. Dick felt as if the touch of the blackguard's hand would have made him shudder. Looking at the hard, insolent, dissipated face, he almost thought that the baronet's scheme was justified—that any measures were justified to keep this scoundrel from ruining and wasting the land of his fathers.

Roger Compton swung out of his way, and interposed, stopping the schoolboy.

"Hold on, Richard!"

Ragged Dick's eyes gleamed at him.

"Let me alone, Mr. Compton," he said. "I will not speak to you. I will have nothing to do with you. Leave me alone."

Roger laughed.

"I want only a few words. You came here to see your grandfather, because I saw you to-day at the school, what?"

"I came here for my own reasons."

"Because you saw that I suspected

you?" said Roger Compton, staring hard at the schoolboy's face.

Dick smiled contemptuously.

He knew that the man's object was to startle him into an admission—a proof that Roger Compton suspected the trick that had been played. But the boy was on his guard.

Compton gritted his teeth, and his light bantering air dropped. He came closer to Dick, scanning his face savagely.

"You have some likeness to the Comptons," he said. "You have the Compton mouth—there is a likeness to the race. But there is no likeness to the puny weakling I saw two years ago—the wretched invalid who was at death's door even when he was sent to the south of France in the care of doctors and nurses. You are not he."

Dick did not answer.

"It is a substitution—a trick!" said Roger savagely. "I suspected it when I first heard that Richard had returned to England—that he had been sent to school. Did old Sir Henry suppose me such a gull, then? If that sick lad had ever recovered, he would never have recovered to this extent. You young rascal, tell me the truth! Sir Henry's grandson is dead, and you have been put in his place to cheat me of my inheritance."

His eyes gleamed threateningly at Ragged Dick.

The Greyfriars junior's lip curled.

He would not deny the truth; but he would not answer the question. He would never cheat Roger Compton of what was his; but so long as the old baronet lived, nothing was his. So far, he had done no wrong. He never would do wrong; so far as he was concerned, the Compton estate would go to the heir in entail. But it was not for Dick to betray the man who had befriended him—to place a weapon in the hands of this scoundrel. He stood silent, only his scornful look answering the angry scapegrace.

"Will you speak?" hissed Roger Compton.

"It is Sir Henry whom you should ask," said Ragged Dick sarcastically. "If you want information, go to him, not to me."

"Do you deny it?"

Dick shrugged his shoulders.

"Do you admit it, then?" hissed Roger.

"I deny and admit nothing," said Ragged Dick. "I only want to keep clear of you, Mr. Compton. Go and eat coke!"

"You young rascal! You are a party to a plot to cheat me—to rob me of what must come to me when that old fool is gone!"

"I am not a cheat, at least," said Ragged Dick quietly. "I shall never rob you of anything, Mr. Compton."

"Do you dare to tell me that you are Richard Compton, son of Sir Henry's son who was killed on the Somme?" snarled Roger. "You—as healthy a lad as any at Greyfriars—and he a puny, sickly boy whose arm was no thicker than your wrist? You lie, you young villain, you lie!"

"Have you finished?" said Ragged Dick coolly.

Roger breathed hard with fury.

"If you are Richard Compton, there is a proof of it," he said. "If you do not satisfy me, I will see what the law can do—I will not be cheated, I promise you. You call yourself Richard Compton; and if you are indeed he, changed out of all recognition, then there exists a proof. Bare your right arm to the shoulder."

Dick stared at him.

"What? And why?"

"Because if you are Richard Compton you have the birth-mark of the Comptons on your arm," said Roger. "It is a proof that no one could gain-say. I have seen it, with my own eyes, on the arm of Richard. If you are Richard, it is still there."

"There is a mark on my arm," said Dick.

He stared at the man in wonder as he spoke.

"A mark there may be, but not the one I speak of," said Roger. "If you are a Compton, you know the mark. Describe it to me."

Dick did not answer.

"I tell you that it is a sign of the race—that no Compton is born without that mark," said Roger. "Sir Henry has it, his son had it, and his grandson, and I myself. If you are Richard you have it, on your right arm near the shoulder. Let me see your arm, then, and I shall be satisfied. Refuse, and I shall not need to ask again whether you are an impostor."

"Well, I refuse."

"That is enough. I will satisfy myself, then!"

And with that Roger made a spring at the boy and grasped him.

"Let me go!" shouted Dick, struggling in his grasp.

"I will see your arm before I let you go," said Roger, between his teeth. "I will know the truth. If you are Richard Compton I am a ruined man; but I do not believe it, and I will know."

But the wastrel, though he was a man against a boy, was flabby from life-long indulgence. Drink and late hours had sapped his vitality. Ragged Dick was hard as nails—hard all through. He struggled fiercely with the blackguard, and suddenly he hooked his leg in Roger's, and sent the wastrel sprawling on the ground.

Roger spat out a curse as he sprawled, gasping.

Ragged Dick did not linger.

He had no desire for a brawl with Sir Henry's cousin on Sir Henry's land, and he was determined that the wastrel should never have the proof he demanded. The part he was playing had to end—he was resolved on that—but he was bound to consider the old baronet in the matter—to make things as easy as he could for the old man whom he was to disappoint so bitterly and completely. Roger Compton should learn nothing from him, at least.

While the gasping waster sprawled on the grass, Ragged Dick ran on, and in a few minutes was in the drive leading up to the great house.

Roger did not follow him.

Ten minutes later Dick wheeled out his machine and rode away to Greyfriars. Once, on the way, he glanced round, half-expecting to see Roger Compton again. But he saw nothing of the wastrel, and he reached the school, and went up to Study No. 1 to tea, still Compton of the Remove for yet a little while.

"You here!"

Sir Henry Compton stood and looked down upon his cousin.

Roger had dragged himself up, gasping, breathless, spent by the brief struggle with the hardy Greyfriars boy. He was leaning against a tree, to recover his breath, still panting, when the old baronet came up. The tall, stern old man glowered down upon the panting waster.

"You here!" he repeated.

Roger gave him an evil look.

"I came to see you," he snarled. "I

was refused admittance at your door, and I came—"

"I saw you attack my grandson," said Sir Henry coldly. "He dealt with you as you deserved, you ruffian. Now take yourself off my land, before I call a keeper to remove you."

"I came to see you," repeated Roger. "I have something to tell you, Sir Henry Compton. I know your game."

"What do you mean, if you mean anything?" asked Sir Henry, his lip curling contemptuously.

"I know that the boy is not Richard Compton," said Roger, between his teeth. "I know that he is not your grandson. I know, from this trick, that your grandson is dead, and that I am heir to Compton Hall."

"And what has put this wild idea into your mind?" asked Sir Henry, masking the icy chill of apprehension that seized him under an outward air of scornful indifference.

"You deny it, then?"

"I do not take the trouble. Tell such a story, if you choose," snapped Sir Henry. "Tell it where and when you like. Your character is rather too well known for any wild story you tell to be regarded."

Roger gritted his teeth.

"There exists a proof," he said.

"And that?"

"Richard Compton had the family birthmark on his arm," said Roger. "You saw me seize that boy; it was to force him to show me his arm. He refused; he dared not let me see it. If he is Richard, he has the mark of the hawk's head on his arm. If he is some nameless nobody whom you have substituted for your grandson, he has not the mark. Ah, that touches you, does it?"

The old man had blanched.

"It is a mark that cannot be counterfeited," sneered Roger. "The boy had never even heard of it, and he calls himself a Compton! He is a cheat and an impostor. He is no grandson of yours; he is no Compton at all, though he has some family likeness—a chance resemblance, for which you picked him out, I suppose."

"Is that all you have to say?"

"Will you call the boy, and let him show me his arm?" said Roger. "I stand next as heir to estate and title, and I have a right to the truth. Call him—if you dare!"

"I refuse!"

Roger laughed mockingly.

"I knew that you would refuse. You dare not let the matter be put to the test, Sir Henry Compton. It is a plot—a scheme laid between you and this nameless young rascal to cheat me!"

"You believe so?" said the baronet, his grim old face unmoved.

"I know it—I know it!"

"If you know it, you need no information from me—no proof from the boy," said Sir Henry ironically. "Do as you choose in the matter. In the meantime, go!"

"I tell you—"

"Johnson!"

A man in gaiters was standing at a little distance, looking on, and he came up as the baronet called.

Sir Henry pointed to his kinsman.

"Johnson, see this man off my land. If you should find him on the estate again, see that he is given into custody for trespass!"

"Yes, Sir Henry."

Roger Compton clenched his hands.

"You—you dare!" he panted.

"Take him away," said the baronet coldly.

And, with the keeper's hand on his arm, Roger Compton was taken away, to be thrust out of the gates of Compton Hall.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

The Blow Falls!

HARRY WHARTON gave Dick a nod and a smile as he came into Study No. 1 in the Remove.

Dick was looking a little more like his old cheery self. Now that he had told Sir Henry Compton his intentions a weight was off his mind.

For the present he had to continue to play his part. He was bound to consider his benefactor in every possible way. But his conscience was at ease now.

And, with his conscience satisfied, there was no doubt that he was glad to keep on at Greyfriars.

He did not want to go; it was a struggle to make up his mind to go. Now that he had made it clear to the old baronet that he would not and could not carry on the imposture to the extent of wronging the rightful heir, there was no harm in what he was doing. He had a right to what the baronet had given him, if Sir Henry chose to give, and he was thinking now that he might finish

up the term at Greyfriars, and leave when the school broke up—a few more weeks of happiness as a bright interlude in his clouded life.

So he smiled cheerily back to the captain of the Remove as he drew a chair to the tea-table. Tea was rather late in Study No. 1 that day.

"Match finished?" asked Dick.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"Yes; the Fourth collapsed rather suddenly when they came to bat. Inky knocked their wickets in great style."

"Poor old Temple!" said Frank Nugent. "He went on to get a century."

"And what did he get?" asked Dick.

"A duck's egg!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Jolly glad to see you looking so merry and bright, Compton," remarked Harry Wharton. "I thought you looked a bit down over that blackguard butting in to-day. I think Mr. Quelch made it plain enough to him that he was to keep off the grass, though. You won't see him any more."

Dick's face clouded for a moment.

"I hope not!" he said.

But he wondered.

Roger Compton knew—or at least, strongly suspected—the truth; and he was not likely to let the matter pass. What could he do?

As heir in entail to Compton Hall he



"I will be silent if you choose," said Dick, "but silence will amount to admission. I cannot tell my headmaster lies." "Enough," said Sir Henry harshly. "You have made up your mind to defy your benefactor—I realise now that you are in earnest, and that our connection must end." Dick was silent. (See Chapter 9.)

must possess the legal right and power to satisfy himself that a false heir had not been substituted to defraud him. But the old baronet would resist investigation, that was assured. Legal proceedings were costly, and Roger Compton was a ruined man. He had lived and rioted for many years on money lent him at ruinous interest by usurers, on his prospects—on the practical certainty that poor little Richard would never live to inherit from his grandfather. Were they likely to advance more money when they heard that Richard Compton was restored to health—that what they had already advanced to Roger was as good as lost? If he told the moneylenders his story of a substituted heir—yes, if they believed him, too! Otherwise, the cent-per-cent gentlemen would not throw good money away after bad.

Dick realised that if he stood in with the old baronet, determined to carry on the deception, Roger would have little chance. The weakness of the position was that Dick was determined not to be a party to a fraud—not to utter a single falsehood. But Roger Compton could not know that—could not dream of it. Undoubtedly he believed that Dick was heart and soul in the conspiracy, judging the boy by himself.

What could he do? What would he do?

The man was desperate, and he would not shrink from any desperate measure. But what could he do?

Dick wondered, and the next day he more than half expected to hear something of Roger Compton.

But he heard nothing; and the next day, and the next, there was nothing, and gradually he dismissed the man from his mind.

It was probable that Roger had his mind fully occupied, at that time, in dealing with the usurers, disappointed of their gains and dunning him for money. He was not seen in the neighbourhood of Greyfriars School, and in a few more days Dick almost forgot his existence.

He was happy enough in the bright summer days at Greyfriars.

He had thrown himself into the cricket, and he was getting on splendidly, and Harry Wharton was already considering whether to give him a place in the team selected to meet Tom Merry & Co. at St. Jim's.

On the whole, now that he had made matters clear to Sir Henry, Ragged Dick was glad that the old man had not broken with him on the spot, as he had half expected and half hoped. This would be his only term at Greyfriars. Next term he would not come back when the school reassembled after the holidays. That would be the best way out of it. And in the meantime he was enjoying his school life immensely. Only the thought of the evil face of Roger Compton was like a dark cloud lingering on the horizon.

On the day that Tom Merry & Co. came over from St. Jim's for the cricket match Dick found his name in the Remove team. It was sheer joy to him to find it there.

He turned out with the Remove cricketers, and played a great game, with twenty in his first innings and thirty in his second, fully justifying the captain of the Remove in giving him his chance.

Bob Cherry clapped him on the shoulder after the game.

"Gratters, old man!" said Bob cheerily. "Do you know you've done

best of the lot, excepting Wharton and Smithy? You're a rod in pickle for Rookwood!"

Dick smiled brightly.

It had been a glorious day, and a great game, and Ragged Dick had enjoyed himself thoroughly. And he had the Rookwood match to look forward to now; he was sure to play at Rookwood. Some of the Remove fellows went out with Tom Merry & Co. in their brake to the station, in the summer dusk, and Dick went with them. But the brightness was to be followed by shadow. As he walked back from Courtfield with the Famous Five a man passed him on the road, and paused for a moment to stare at him with evil, glinting eyes.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! That's your giddy relation again," said Bob Cherry, as he recognised Roger Compton.

Dick compressed his lips and hurried on. Roger Compton interposed. The man had been drinking, and his face was flushed, his step unsteady.

"Stop a minute!" he said thickly.

"Get out, you boozy bounder!" exclaimed Bob Cherry in disgust. "You're not fit to speak to a decent fellow! Get out of it."

Roger did not heed him.

"So you are still keeping it up?" he said, with an evil stare at Ragged Dick. "Still keeping up the cheat, you young scoundrel and impostor? Do your friends

Reserve a Place on your Mantelpiece for **HOBBS AND SUTCLIFFE.**

know that you are a cheat—living under a name that is not your own, substituted for a boy who is dead, to rob me of my inheritance? Have you told them that?"

The next moment Roger Compton was sitting in a bed of nettles by the road, unceremoniously shoved there by Bob Cherry.

The juniors walked on; Roger did not follow.

They went in silence.

Dick's face was white as a sheet, his features set and rigid. The blow had fallen!

Harry Wharton & Co. would have regarded the man's wild words as the inconsequential talk of a drunken man and a blackguard. But they had not forgotten Bunter's story, though they had disregarded it. In spite of themselves, in spite of their liking for Dick, and their faith in him, the scapegrace's words struck them with a chill of doubt.

It needed only a word from Dick to drive the doubt away. But that word he could not utter.

They expected him to speak, and he did not speak. In the summer dusk his face gleamed white.

The chums of the Remove exchanged uncomfortable glances; strange thoughts were in their minds. They walked on to the school, silent, not a word was uttered before they reached Greyfriars.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

The Story of Ragged Dick!

"WHARTON!"

Ragged Dick spoke in a low voice.

Prep was over in Study No. 1; scarcely a word had been spoken. Wharton and Nugent were troubled in mind. Dick was silent, miserable, conscience-stricken. They were his friends, and he had deceived them, and the deception could not go on. He felt at the end of his tether. It had seemed to him that there was no harm in playing his adopted part till the end of the term. So long as he was not questioned, so long as he told no lies, what did it matter by what name he was called—he, who had no name of his own!

But that meeting with Roger Compton had lifted the veil from his eyes. It could not go on now.

"Wharton!"

The captain of the Remove pushed away his books and glanced rather curiously at Dick.

"Coming down to the Rag?" he asked, with an assumption of his usual cheery and friendly manner, a little awkwardly, however.

"I've something to say to you first."

"About what that blackguard said?"

"Yes."

Wharton paused a moment.

"There's no need," he said at last.

"The man had been drinking, and we know he's a rank outsider. We believe in you, Compton—"

"Quite!" said Frank Nugent.

Dick smiled faintly.

"What he said was true," he answered.

"What?"

"Compton!"

The chums of the Remove stared blankly at Ragged Dick. They had wondered, and they had not known what to think; but his confession was like a thunderbolt to them.

"You're wandering in your mind, old chap," said Harry, after a long pause of amazement.

"It's true."

"Rot!" said Nugent uneasily.

"I'm bound to tell you," said Dick miserably. "I'd have told you before, only I was bound by a promise. But now that the man has told you, there can be no harm in my explaining—I'm bound to explain. I—I don't want you to think me a rogue, as that rascal does."

"I know you're not a rogue," said Harry. "But—but what are you saying, Compton? That yarn of Bunter's—"

"That was true!"

"But it's impossible!" exclaimed the captain of the Remove.

"I never denied it," said Dick. "You will remember that I never denied it. You fellows never asked me questions—if you had, I shouldn't have told you lies."

"Let's have this clear," said Harry Wharton, very quietly. "Billy Bunter told all the fellows that he'd seen you, a few weeks before you came to Greyfriars—that you were a tattered tramp on the roads—that you owned up to it—that you were hanging about Compton Park as a trespasser. Nobody took any notice of Bunter's foolery—we all knew he was savage because you wouldn't let him plunder you."

"That's so. But it was true, all the same," said Ragged Dick, "and you fellows, too, had seen me in the same state, if you only knew it."

"We had?" exclaimed Nugent.

"Don't you remember, when I first

came, you fancied you had seen me before somewhere?"

"Yes; but—"

"Well, you had seen me," said Dick. "Try to remember—one day near Compton Park, you found Pedlar Parker thrashing a ragged kid—and you chipped in, and he got away from the brute. I—I was that kid."

"You!" almost shouted Wharton.

"I!" said Dick.

"My hat!"

Wharton and Nugent gazed at the white face across the study table.

It was amazing enough, but they no longer doubted.

Now that they had the clue, they recognised Ragged Dick; indeed, they would have known him before, but for the apparent impossibility of any connection between Pedlar Parker's victim, and the wealthy grandson of the master of Compton Hall.

"But—but—" stammered Frank Nugent at last. "I—I can't understand. You were that kid—Ragged Dick—"

"I am Ragged Dick!"

"But you're Sir Henry Compton's grandson."

"I am nothing of the kind."

"But—but how—"

"Sir Henry found me in his park—that was after I had met Bunter," said Dick wearily. "He had a telegram—I knew afterwards that it was a telegram announcing the death of his grandson Richard, who had died in a nursing-home abroad. He fell in a sort of fit, and I helped him. After that—the next day—he took me in his charge—he adopted me as his grandson, on the condition that I kept the adoption a secret. I saw no harm in it—you can fancy that I was glad of such a chance. I needn't go into details—that was how it came about. I saw no harm—I know you'll believe that—I thought he had a right to give me his name, if he chose, to make me his heir if he wanted to. But afterwards I knew—"

"He could not make you his heir," said Harry. "Everybody knows that the Compton estates are strictly entailed on the heirs male. And the title in any case would have to go to the heir by blood."

"I did not know it all then—I did not think about it. But when I knew—" Dick paused. "On the day Roger Compton came here, I went to see Sir Henry—I told him I knew the truth, and that it must end. That cleared my conscience—I had never meant to be a party in a fraud, and I was determined not to be. You believe that?"

"Of course," said Harry. "But then—"

"I should have gone then," said Dick. "It would have been better if I had gone then! But Sir Henry had placed me here as his grandson, and there was no fraud in the matter until he should die, and I should keep Roger Compton out of the estate. That I never meant to do—that I never would do. But Sir Henry has done very much for me—I felt that I had to let him down lightly, and I made up my mind to stay out the term here. I do not see that there was any harm in it. What Sir Henry gives me he has a right to give—and no one is harmed by my using the name of Compton."

"But what is your own name, then?" asked Nugent.

Dick shook his head.

"I don't know! I never had a name that I know of."

"By Jove! But how—"

"But you must have some name," said Wharton blankly.

"I know! But I never knew it! I don't remember my father. I know he



Ragged Dick fought hard, but he had no chance. He was down on his back in the dust and a ruffianly knee was planted on his chest. "Chuck it, kid!" said the man who was kneeling on him. "We ain't going to hurt you." "You're not going to rob me, either, you rotter!" panted Dick. "Help!" (See Chapter 10.)

was very poor, and he died. I don't remember even his death. It must have happened when I was a very little kid. I believe he was tramping the roads when he died, and I was with him. Whether he had ever known anything better, I can't say. The first clear thing I remember is tramping with gipsy vans, and I believe the gipsies kept me after my father died, with their gang; but I was still a small kid when I ran away from the gipsies, and I've tramped the roads ever since—till Sir Henry Compton took me up. That's all I can tell you."

"And you never even went to school?" asked Frank, in wonder.

"No. But at one time I tramped with a man who had been a master of arts at Oxford. He came down through drink; but he was a kind man, in his way, and he taught me a great deal. I was always keen on learning things—it turned out luckily for me when I came here."

"And you're no relation of the Comptons at all?"

"None."

"But there's a likeness," said Nugent. "You've got the Compton mouth, and the Compton brows, too. I've seen you looking just like old Sir Henry when you've been in a bad temper."

Dick laughed.

"That's fancy. I can't be like the Comptons when I've no connection with them in any way."

"I—I say, this is a jolly queer business," said Harry Wharton. "Does the Head know?"

"He thinks I am Richard Compton, grandson of Sir Henry. Naturally he took Sir Henry's word for it."

"But, dash it all, the old scout is dabbling in fraud, in playing a trick like this," said Harry. "If you succeeded him as the next baronet, as I suppose he intended, it's cheating Roger Compton out of his own."

"That was his intention, as I found out afterwards," said Dick. "He wants to keep that rotter from breaking up the estate and wasting it. Quite right, too, if it could be done by right means. I don't think Sir Henry realises that he is doing wrong. If the estate was not entailed, he could do as he liked with it; and he has simply shut the law of the entail out of his mind, and refused to consider it—that's how it seems to me. But I know what I must do."

Wharton drew a deep breath.

"I'm glad you've told us this, Compton. I knew you were true blue; and I can't see that you've been to blame in any way, so long, of course, as you don't let the old man carry out his scheme. But what are you going to do now?"

Dick made a hopeless gesture.

"I don't know! I thought I'd stay

(Continued on page 16.)

THE GREYFRIARS HERALD

Supplement No. 230.

HARRY WHARTON
EDITOR

Week Ending July 11th, 1925.

THE JOLLY YACHTSMAN!

By Dick Penfold.

SOME fellows are crazy on cricket,
And others to tennis are tied;
Some pedal with vigour upon a
smart "jigger,"

Some fancy a charabanc ride.
Whilst others, of studious mind,
Sit tight in their studies a-swotting;
But I, in my leisure, indulge in the
pleasure,
The popular pleasure of yachting!

Sing-ho for the joys of the sea!
How grandly it tumbles and tosses!
When lessons are over, I'll set out for
Dover,
Away from the beaks and the bosses.
Let others taste cricket's delight,
Or on the broad highway go trotting;
But to the wide ocean I'll pay my
devotion,
And on its blue surface go yachting!

Behind me, the freshening breeze.
Before me, the billows are bounding;
With flag gaily flying, my yacht is defy-
ing
The waves that come pushing and
pounding.
Away to the right and the left,
Ships of all sorts and sizes I'm spot-
ting;
But life on a liner could not be diviner
Or better (or wetter) than yachting!

And what with the sun and salt spray,
My face is as brown as a berry;
There isn't a chappie so thoroughly
happy,
So gay and light-hearted and merry!
For yachting's the queen of all sports;
Already I'm planning and plotting;
To spend the next vac on the watery
track.
Enjoying the raptures of yachting!

EDITOR'S COMMENT!

I fancy that Penfold is "rotting,"
For yesterday, when he went yachting,
His craft ran aground,
And he nearly got drowned,
Then back to the school he came trot-
ting!

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 909.

YACHTING NOTES!

By Bob Cherry.



THE yachting season is now in full swing, and the merry yachtsmen of the Remove are having the time of their lives. I only wish we had more leisure to devote to this ripping pastime, but the claims of cricket demand our attention on most half-holidays. However, we have managed to make a few cruises round the coast, thanks to the generosity of Lord Mauleverer in lending us his magnificent yacht, which Mauly seldom uses himself. We have got thoroughly soaked on our voyages, but we have come home healthy and happy and hungry!

WE have sailed up the coast to Folkestone and Margate, and even as far as Southend. Our crew consisted of the Famous Five. On one occasion we took Alonzo Todd just for a treat. But Lonzy didn't regard it as a treat. It was a choppy sea, and he was in great distress. "Oh dear! I'm certain we shall all be drowned!" he wailed. "I wish I had stayed behind at Greyfriars, sailing paper boats in the basin of the fountain! I have a horrible premonition that I am going to be seasick!" Unfortunately for Alonzo, his horrible premonition was fulfilled!

MR. PROUT, the master of the Fifth, is a great yachting enthusiast. He owns his own yacht, and he proposes to go on a cruise through the Mediterranean when the holidays come along. "Of course, I shall find it rather tame after the thrilling adventures of my youth," said Mr. Prout. "I shall never forget the occasion when I shot the rapids in a canoe!" I should like to have seen that daring exploit. Prout might have been a dab at shooting the rapids, but he's certainly no expert at shooting the rabbits!

COKER of the Fifth is seriously thinking of "swopping" his motor-bike for a sailing-yacht. Personally, I think he'll be much safer on the ocean blue than on the King's highway. At all events, he will be able to exceed the speed-limit without peril to pigs and pedestrians! Coker proposes to christen his yacht the Pride of Pegg. Why not the Koker Kween?

NO issue of the "Herald" seems quite complete unless we can find a corner for the views of Gosling, the porter. Gosling is not a lover of yachting. He only sampled this form of recreation on one occasion, and it

left him cold. It left him jolly wet into the bargain, for the yacht capsized in a gale. "I don't 'old with these 'ere yachts an' sailin' wessels!" said Gosling. "They're dangerous toys for landlubbers to hexperiment with! Next time I wants to make a trip on the ocean, I shall-book a first-class cabin on the Majestic or the Olympic, an' travel in comfort an' luxury."

EDITORIAL!

By Harry Wharton.

THIS week, my chums, we deal with the delights of yachting. Landlubbers like Alonzo Todd, who venture no farther than ankle-deep into the sea, and who promptly turn tail "when the stormy winds do blow," declare there are no delights in yachting. But the amateur yachtsmen of the Remove know differently. Sailing yachts and steam yachts yield no end of fun and adventure.

I was saying a short time ago that the caravanning holiday was the happiest holiday of all. But the yachting holiday runs it very close. What could be grander than a cruise round the coast or a fortnight on the Norfolk Broads? If I were anything of a poet I could go into raptures about it; but I'm leaving it to Dick Penfold to describe, in ringing, swinging verse, the joys of yachting.

I often envy Lord Mauleverer, who owns a yacht of his own, and has it moored at Pegg. Mauly only uses it about once in a blue moon. Even yachting is too energetic a pastime for his lazy lordship. He doesn't mind it if he can doze off to sleep while he sails the ocean blue, provided he has a companion on board who knows how to handle a yacht, and who doesn't mind the fearful fag of adjusting the beastly sails and things, begad!

Being a generous sort, Mauly often lets us use his yacht on a half-holiday, and when there doesn't happen to be a cricket fixture. Many a merry cruise have we enjoyed, garbed in grey flannel "bags" and white sweaters, and bare-headed and barefooted. We generally take our provisions on board, and don't return until locking-up time. If, in the course of our cruise, we come across another yachting party, we challenge them to a race. Yacht-racing is one of the grandest sports I know. My heart beats quicker at the thought of it, and I feel rebellious at having to sit in a stuffy study, penning this Editorial. But duty must come before pleasure. If we didn't earn our pleasures by hard work we shouldn't enjoy them half as much.

We have prepared a budget of tip-top numbers for the weeks ahead. Camping-out, summer sports, and sea-side joys—do these appeal to you? If so, you will revel in the treats to come.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 909.



My Yotting Adventurers!

Billy Bunter

A Thrilling Romance of the Mighty Deep.

I WAS once the proud owner of a yot. I don't own one now. And thereby hangs a tail.

Last summer I was taken by my pater to see the Cows Regatter. And I gazed with grate envy at the Royal Yot, and all the other yots in the Solent. I asked my pater to buy me a yot, about the same size and stile as the Royal Yot, only with the Bunter arms painted on it. The pater shook his head.

"I can't afford a steam yot, William," he said. "I've had heavy losses on the Stock Exchange just lately. But I tell you what I'll do. I'll buy you an ordinary sailing yot."

Half a loaf being better than no bread, I fell in with my pater's propositon. A new yot had just been built by a firm of boatbuilders near Pegg, and my pater inspected it, and agreed to buy it. The yot was painted blue, and I crissened it the Ocean Kween.

As soon as my schoolfellows heard that I was the owner of a yot they treated me with curtesy and respect. Harry Wharton and his pals fairly fawned on me. They invited me to tea in Study No. 1, and begged me to take them out for a crooze on the next half-holiday. My lip curled with scornful content at their cadging suggestion. However, I agreed to take Wharton and Cherry for a crooze on the Wensday afternoon. "I hope you are good sailers," I said, "bekawse I'm going to take you halfway across the North Sea. And if it blows up ruff I shall eggspect you to behave with coolness and curridge. Don't start getting into a pannick, and wishing you'd never come."

"No fear of that, Buntie," said Bob Cherry. "You'll find us cool and calm and collected in a crysis."

When Wensday afternoon came we launched the Ocean Kween and sailed merrily away over the blue waters. The sea was as smooth as a glass of still lemonade, and we had the breeze at our backs, so we made jolly good progress. I stood by the sail, and adjusted it from time to time, when necessary. Wharton and Cherry, who are utterly iggnurant of how to handle a yot, sat in the stern, munching chocklits.

We were a couple of miles out to sea, when suddenly, and without warning, a fearful storm broke. The lightning come down in sheets, and the rain flashed across the summer sky. The thunder was blowing grate guns, and Wharton and Cherry went white to the lips.

"Put back to Pegg, Buntie!" puffed Wharton. "If you don't buck up we shall be capsised and drowned."

"Cowherd!" I cried scornfully. "Craven, chicking-hearted cowherd! I knew you'd get into a blue funk as soon as a storm came."

Bob Cherry said nothing; only his teeth were chattering.

I reversed the yot, but could make no headway against the angry billers. And presently a grate gust of wind came

along and carried the sail bodily away. Wharton wrung his hands.

"We are doomed!" he groaned. "We shall be drowned, like flies in a teacup!"

"What if we are?" I replied boldly. "I, at least, can face my fate without flinching. The blud of the old seadogs runs in my vanes. My grate-grandfather was the chap who smashed up the Spanish Armada at Trafalgar, only, being a very modest man, he aloud Nelson to take all the honner and glory. The old chap met his death in just such a storm as this, and when the ship went down he was singing that immortal song:

"Fifteen men on a dead man's chest,
Yo-ho, and a bottle of rum!"

Wharton shuddered. And Bob Cherry shook in his shooze.

"I say, Bunter!" muttered Wharton. "Haven't you any lifebelts on board?" I answered in the negative.



I grabbed each of them by his hare.

Wharton gave a hollo groan, and berried his face in his hands.

"Buck up and be brave!" I said. "You know what old Shakespear said? 'Cowherds die many times before their death; the valiant only taste of death but once.'"

"But I don't want to taste it even once!" wailed Wharton.

By this time we were in a hopeless plite. Grate billers were leaping and sweeping over the Ocean Kween. It bobbed up and down on the angry sea like a parched pea in a frying-pan. Our sail had gone, and we were shipping water by the bucketful.

"This yot," I said, "won't be a yot much longer. It will turn turtle!"

"My hat!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Fancy making joaks, when we're face to face with death!"

"All brave men do that," I replied. "If you joak at death you take away its sting. In another minnit, you fellows, we shall probably be food for fishes."

"Ow!"

"Yow!"

The two craven cowherds sat huddled together in the stern, with pail faces and gibbering lips. At Greyfriars they had always been regarded as fine, fearless fellows, whilst I had been regarded as rather a worm. It just shows you that people have no sense of values.

Presently a mity wave, mitier than all the rest, came crashing upon us, and the Ocean Kween, my pride and joy, was reduced to matchwood. We found ourselves struggling in the water. Wharton and Cherry shrieking for help at the top of their lungs.

Both went under, and when they came to the surfiss I grabbed each of them by his hare.

"Don't struggle," I said, "I can manage to hold you up for an hour or two, and perhaps some vessel will come along and reskew us."

It seemed a forlorn hope, and Wharton and Cherry were in despare. But I was very bright and cheery. Somehow, I couldn't see myself getting drowned. The world can't afford to lose such rare fellows as me.

I was still holding Wharton and Cherry by their top-notts, when suddenly I caught sight of a trawler, plowing its way through the stormy sea.

"Ahoy!" I shouted.

"Ahoy!" yelled Wharton and Cherry despritley.

In a few minutes the trawler was alongside, and ropes, with lifebelts attached, were slung out to us.

I saw my companions safely hauled on board, and then I permitted myself to be reskewed.

The trawler was bound for Hastings. I think it was Hastings. One of the Sink Ports, anyway.

We lapped safely, and went on by trane to Greyfriars.

I said nothing to the fellows on the subject of our adventhers, for I didn't want to pose as a gallant hero. But Wharton and Cherry had a fine old tale to tell in the Rag that evening. They had the cheek to say that they had saved my life; and they said I had shown awful cowherdiss when my yot was trapped by the storm. But the boot was on the other foot, as this story will show. And when the Greyfriars fellows read the true facts of the case I sinseerly hope they will give Wharton and Cherry a jolly good bumping!

THE END.

**LOOK OUT FOR
NEXT WEEK'S
FREE GIFTS!**

They're simply top-hole!



(Continued from page 13.)

on here till the end of the term, and then get out quietly when the school broke up. I'm bound to consider Sir Henry—I can't do as he wants, but I don't want to give him away and disgrace him, and cause a lot of gossip and scandal. It would be better for me to go quietly, without any fuss. But now that Roger Compton has brought the matter out in public, I don't know what to do."

"The man was drunk," said Nugent slowly. "If you denied the story, he wouldn't have a leg to stand on, and he would naturally expect you to deny it."

"But I can't."

"No, you can't," agreed Frank.

"I—I had to tell you fellows," went on Dick, after a pause. "I had to tell you something, and I couldn't tell you lies. But, of course, you won't say anything about it. I want to get out quietly, without any fuss or scandal—without giving Sir Henry more trouble than I can help. It's not long now till the end of the term, and, if you're still my friends, tell me what you think I ought to do."

"Of course we're still friends, fat-head," said Nugent.

"Of course," said Harry.

"Then what do you think I had better do?"

There was a pause.

"I wouldn't do anything in a hurry," said the captain of the Remove at last. "While Sir Henry Compton lives you're not wronging anyone, and he's good for a good many years yet. You're bound to consider him. It would cause a frightful lot of talk if it came out what he's done. He's done wrong, that's true; but it's not for you to turn on him when he's done so much for you. You're bound to keep the secret, but yet—"

"And go at the end of the term," said Dick. "But if Roger Compton should repeat what he did to-day—if there should be more talk—"

Wharton rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"He spoke to-day only before my friends," said Ragged Dick. "But he may speak next time before others. He feels certain now that there has been a trick, and he may think it serves his purpose to cause gossip and suspicion. I—I don't know whether I've a right to call myself a Greyfriars man, but that sort of thing isn't wanted at Greyfriars. I can't stay on."

Wharton nodded.

"You can't betray Sir Henry, and you can't stay on and keep the secret without telling a bushel of lies, as soon as there's public talk about it," he said; "and you're not going to begin telling lies, old man. No, you can't stick it out to the end of the term if Roger Compton means mischief, and I suppose he does."

"That was what I was thinking."

"But you'd better see your grandfather—I mean, Sir Henry Compton—first," said Harry. "Warn him of what to expect; and if he's got any sense, he'll take you away from Greyfriars at once, before anything further happens. That's

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the best way out. We'll be sorry to lose you, old chap; but it can't go on like this."

Ragged Dick rose to his feet.

"That's settled," he said.

And, with a nod, he left the study. Harry Wharton and Frank Nugent looked at one another.

"Poor old chap!" said Frank softly.

"It's hard on him," said Harry. "That giddy old baronet must be a tough old customer. I can quite understand his being up against that rotter who is heir to his estate; but it's too thick. He's made use of that poor kid—made use of him unscrupulously—and made him accustomed to a lot of things he will have to give up now—things he'd never have missed if he'd never had them, but that he will miss now, poor chap. It's rotten hard lines. He could still do a lot for the kid if he liked, but I'm afraid he's more likely to throw him over."

"And what will become of him then?" asked Frank. "Back to the road—to the state he was in when we chipped in to stop that brute Pedlar Parker?"

Wharton knitted his brows.

"The old man's bound to prevent that, after taking the kid up," he said. "But if Compton is left on his own, I'll jolly well see that something is done for him. My uncle will take him in hand, I know, if I explain to him. He couldn't stay on here after coming here in a false name; but there are other schools, and my uncle will help him out, if it comes to that. He jolly well sha'n't go back to rags and tatters!"

The next day, Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh were told. But the story remained the secret of the Famous Five. And all the five agreed that it was up to Dick to see the old baronet without delay, to warn him of what to expect, and then to withdraw at once from the false position in which Sir Henry Compton's strange scheme had placed him.

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

The Last Word!

"WELL?"

Sir Henry Compton snapped out the words.

He stood with his horse's reins looped over his arm; an old, gnarled, but still handsome and upright figure in riding-clothes. In a deep, leafy lane a mile from Greyfriars School, the old baronet had dismounted from his horse and waited—waited ten minutes or more till Ragged Dick came up from the direction of the school.

Dick raised his hat rather timidly to the old man. His face was flushed, but his manner quite resolute.

Sir Henry took no notice whatever of the salute. His deep-set eyes were fixed on the boy, gleaming under his grey old, wrinkled brows.

"Well?"

"You told me to meet you here, sir," faltered Dick.

Sir Henry made a gesture.

"I did not choose that you should come up to the Hall," he said. "If this arrangement is to end, if you are to betray me and fail me, the less you are seen there the better. I do not want the whole county to be talking of a fictitious grandson of mine, placed at a public school, acknowledged in public by me, and vanishing from sight. I have my name and reputation to consider."

Dick felt a pang.

The old man had done wrong—hard and unscrupulous wrong—to carry out

his daring project of keeping the Compton estate from the clutches of the spendthrift. But Dick could feel for his disappointment in the failure of his scheme. In his pride and arrogance, he had never dreamed that this tattered waif of the roads would dare to set himself up in opposition—that the nameless wanderer would venture to lay claim to a finer sense of honour than Sir Henry Compton, Baronet, of Compton Hall. It was a hard and unexpected blow for the proud old man, and Dick did not wonder that he was bitterly angry and disappointed.

"You insisted upon seeing me," went on Sir Henry. "As I did not answer your last letter, you telephoned to the Hall."

"I was bound to see you, sir."

"You are bound to be disrespectful, disobedient, and ungrateful," said the baronet. "I might have expected as much in a nameless beggar taken from the roads. I have made your fortune, and I am a fool for my pains. The wretched waif I have befriended is now setting up to teach me honesty and morality—to betray and threaten me. That is my reward."

Dick crimsoned.

"I do not mean that—anything like that!" he exclaimed. "I am grateful. It is hard enough for me to give up all that you have given me."

"But you will give it up?"

"I must," faltered Ragged Dick. "I told you in my letter—Roger Compton has told his story before a lot of Greyfriars chaps. How can I keep up the game after that?—I had to tell my friends—I could not let them suspect me of being a liar and a cheat—but it is still a secret. Let me leave Greyfriars, sir, before I am bound to speak out to others who will not keep it all a secret."

"Roger Compton is helpless, if you play the game thoroughly. His reputation is that of a villain, a liar, an envious scoundrel. Nobody would heed his wild accusation if you denied it."

"I cannot deny it."

Sir Henry made an angry gesture.

"Then, if your headmaster, Dr. Locke, should hear that villain's story, and question you, you will tell him all?" he exclaimed.

"What can I tell him?" exclaimed Dick desperately. "I will be silent, if you choose, but silence will amount to an admission. I cannot tell him lies."

"Enough!" said Sir Henry harshly. "You have made up your mind to defy your benefactor. I realise now that you are in earnest, and that our connection must end. If you are to admit Roger Compton's story, you must not be at Greyfriars when it is told there. Now that he suspects the facts, the man has impudence enough to call on the headmaster and inform him of his suspicions."

Dick was silent. To the autocratic old baronet, any opposition to his lordly will was "impudence." Roger Compton was a bad man, a very bad man, yet he was entitled to defend his rights of inheritance, as Dick could see very clearly, though apparently Sir Henry could not. But the boy would not argue with the old man; it was useless to add fuel to the flame of his anger.

"The thing must end," said the baronet. "I understand that. I thought I had found a tool ready to my hand, and I was mistaken. I found a viper that would turn upon me and sting me. Let it end, then. Go back to your rags, since you prefer them—go back to hunger and want on the roads, if that is your choice."

"Better hunger and want, than lying and cheating!" exclaimed Dick, stung into retort for once.

Sir Henry knitted his brows. "Silence, boy! You will listen to my instructions now," he said. "I do not choose to cause talk and scandal and comment—there has been more than enough of that concerning my affairs. I would gladly remove you from the school to-day, since it is clear that you will be of no further service to me, and will prove a trouble and a danger instead. But I must consider appearances. I shall communicate with Dr. Locke, and ask him to let you come home for the week-end. You will leave on Saturday as if you were simply coming to the Hall for a few days. You understand?"

"Yes," muttered Dick. "That will excite the least remark; and I shall think of a reason for your not returning to Greyfriars afterwards. You do not want me to explain to the headmaster that I have imposed upon him a nameless tramp as my grandson?" asked Sir Henry, with sardonic bitterness. "Your tender conscience does not require me to go so far as that?"

"You will do as you think best, sir," said Dick, with a heavy heart. "It isn't for me to dictate to you. Only I have a right to say that I will not join in a deceit and a cheat." "Enough! The matter is settled, then," said Sir Henry. "You leave Greyfriars on Saturday—never to see it again! I shall not, however, send you back to beggary—deeply as you deserve it. I shall see that something is done for you—you shall not starve."

Dick shook his head. "I cannot do as you wanted, sir—and I cannot accept anything from you in charity," he said. "When I leave Greyfriars, you will be done with me, and I hope you will forget that you ever saw me. It seemed all the time too wonderful to last; and when it is over I shall try to be contented with what I had before. I shall never forget what I owe you—the happiest weeks of my life. But I shall take nothing more. I shall clear off, and you will never see me again."

The baronet shrugged his shoulders.

"I have made the offer," he said. "It was due to myself to make it. If you choose to refuse it, you are your own master, and I have nothing to say. You will return to Greyfriars now, to keep up appearances until the end of the week—I presume that I may depend upon you to that extent?"

"Yes, yes!" "You will have the satisfaction, such as it is, of having disappointed and disobeyed a man who is not accustomed to disobedience," said the old baronet bitterly. "I have done less for others, and have received more thanks. To you, who had nothing, I gave everything; and you throw

it in my face. You will repent it, you ungrateful boy; but your repentance will come too late to serve you."

"I don't think I shall repent it, sir," said Dick, in a low voice. "I—I suppose you can't understand my motives. You have been too rich and proud all your life to understand that other people have wills of their own, and consciences of

their own. You expect all the world to act like the menservants at the Hall."

The old man looked at him angrily; but his face relaxed again. Angry, disappointed, bitter as he was, there was something in the iron determination of this boy that appealed to his own grim obstinacy of character. Blinded as he was by pride and anger and prejudice, he realised what Ragged Dick was giving up for his conscience sake—he knew that it must have cost the boy a hard struggle.

"Let us not bandy words," said the old man in a gentler voice. "The matter is settled now; let us part."

"I—I'd like to say I'm sorry for having disappointed you, sir," said Dick. "It's hard to me to give up this new life, but it was harder still to make up my mind to disappoint you and overthrow your plans, sir. I'd like you to believe that. I'd do anything—anything I could—"

"You can do nothing," said Sir Henry. "But it is possible—if that troubles you—that the disappointment you have inflicted upon me may not be so great as you think. You have failed me; but Roger is not yet master of Compton Hall. I have not lost time since you came to warn me—not to depend on you." He smiled sardonically. "I had a brother once—I told you of him. He died—in poverty, far away; but I had heard that he married in his poverty—a fool, as he always was. He wrote to me, to ask help for his boy—he had a boy—" The old man seemed to be speaking rather to himself than to Ragged Dick, standing silent, wondering. "That letter I threw into the fire, unanswered. My own son was living then—the War had not taken him from me—and he had a little son—the Compton line was safe. But now—now—if Robert's boy still lives, he may be found! It is twelve years since I heard of him, and Heaven knows what may have become of him—but he may live—and if he lives, he is heir of Compton Hall." He turned his eyes on Ragged Dick again. "If that child lives, I shall not need the help of a nameless waif to save my estate from Roger Compton. And since you came to me that day in the park, I have had detectives searching for traces of him—I will spend all my fortune to find him, if necessary; if only to leave him the entailed lands and the title. And if he is found—if he is found—"

Ragged Dick's heart beat. "If he was found, you would need me no longer to keep up this imposture—and you would have thrown me over?" he exclaimed.

Sir Henry's lip curled. "Do you dream that I would leave the Compton lands to a nameless stranger, if one of my own blood stood there to inherit?" he said contemptuously. "I must

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save them from Roger, but if Robert's boy lives, do you dream that I should prefer you to him? No—my pretended grandson would have disappeared—the farce would have ended."

"And that was what I had to expect, if I had done as you asked me, against my conscience and against my honour," said Ragged Dick bitterly. "You would have thrown me over if it suited you—as I should have deserved, too, if I had been such a rotter."

He checked himself, and turned away without another word. He heard Sir Henry Compton call to him, but did not look back.

The baronet shrugged his shoulders, and remounted his horse, and rode away slowly towards the Hall.

The farce, as he called it, was to end; on Saturday, Compton of the Remove would be known no more at Greyfriars. The pretended grandson would disappear—for ever; the baronet's hopes in the success of his scheme had turned to dust and ashes. Only a faint hope was left to him—the faint hope that after twelve years the orphan son of his estranged brother might be found. And upon that faint hope all the old man's thoughts were now centred, and he had no thought to waste on Ragged Dick.

THE TENTH CHAPTER.

Harry Wharton & Co. to the Rescue!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"What—"

"Look!" ejaculated Bob Cherry.

The Famous Five were sauntering along a leafy lane, in the direction taken by Ragged Dick when he had left the school. They had, in fact, walked out to meet him on his way back after his interview with Sir Henry.

In the distance, across a field, they sighted Compton of the Remove suddenly; walking slowly, his hands in his pockets, his eyes on the ground. He was about a hundred yards from them; and buried in thought, he did not see them across the intervening meadows. And suddenly, as Bob was glancing at the distant junior, two rough-looking figures leaped from a hedge, and rushed on Ragged Dick.

The attack was so sudden, so unexpected, that Ragged Dick was taken quite by surprise. He went down in the dust, in the grasp of the two roughs, fairly under the eyes of the Famous Five, staring across the fields.

Bob Cherry leaped across a ditch into the field.

"Come on!" he shouted.

"Put it on!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

And the five juniors, running their hardest, fairly streaked across the meadows, towards the lane in which Ragged Dick was struggling in the grasp of his two assailants.

Ragged Dick was fighting hard, but he had no chance. He was down on his back in the dust, and a ruffianly knee was planted on his chest.

"Chuck it, kid," said the man who was kneeling on him. "We ain't going to hurt you!"

Dick struggled.

"You're not going to rob me, either, you rotter!" he panted. "Help!"

"Quiet, you young fool!" growled the man. "We ain't arter your watch and chain. You ain't going to be 'urt, but you've got to come with us, see?"

"Bring him along, Ike," said the other man impatiently.

Dick was dragged to his feet.

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He was breathless and dazed by the sudden attack; and with a powerful rough grasping either arm, he was helpless.

"What do you want with me?" he panted.

"I tell you you ain't going to be 'urt," said Ike surlily. "Nor you ain't going to be robbed. There's a gent wants to see you, and we're taking you to 'im, and that's all. We've been watching for you for more'n a week, and this 'ere is our first chance at you; and you can take it quiet, or you can 'ave a knock on the head, jest as you like; but you're coming."

"Get him through the hedge, Ike."

Dick opened his mouth to shout for help, and a rough hand was clapped over it at once.

"No, you don't!" grinned Ike.

The two roughs dragged the Greyfriars junior towards a gap in the hawthorn hedge along the lane.

Dick still resisted, but he was helpless.

The words of the kidnapper had astonished him, but like a flash it came into his mind what the explanation was. It was Roger Compton who had set these two ruffians to seize him; and he knew why Roger wanted to see him—he remembered what the wastrel had said in Compton Park.

Richard—the boy who had died abroad—had the birth-mark of the Comptons on his arm. What that mark was, Dick did not know; but Roger, of course, knew it well; and he had taken this means of obtaining proof that Compton of the Greyfriars Remove was an impostor.

Ragged Dick panted and struggled.

The imposture was soon to end; but he had promised Sir Henry to keep up appearances till Saturday, and then to leave Greyfriars quietly, without talk or comment—to save the old man all he could. But Roger, with proof of the imposture in his hands, would not delay to strike. The exposure, the terrible scandal of a substituted heir and a lawless trick, would ring through Greyfriars—ring through the whole county. It might even bring Sir Henry, lofty and proud as he was, within measurable distance of the law he had defied. It would place him, at least, to some extent, in the power of the scapegrace.

Dick fought hard for his liberty.

But the sinewy hands that grasped him were too strong for him; he was dragged through the gap in the hawthorns, into the adjoining meadow. Where the ruffians were taking him, he did not know; but he guessed that Roger Compton was lurking not far away. And he was helpless.

But as the three came through the gap there was an unexpected happening. Five Greyfriars juniors, crossing the meadow at a desperate run, reached the gap in the hedge almost at the same moment. Ragged Dick had been dragged into the field that Harry Wharton & Co. were crossing to his rescue!

Crash!

Bob Cherry butted fairly into Ike as he came up, and the rough staggered and fell, releasing Ragged Dick as he did so.

"Oh!" gasped Ike.

"Oh, my hat!" panted Bob, as he rolled over the rough.

"Give 'em socks!" roared Johnny Bull.

"The sockfulness is terrific!" panted Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, as his dusky fist crashed into a stubbly face.

Ragged Dick dragged himself free.

"Help!" he gasped.

"We're here, old man——"

"Pile in!"

"Give 'em beans!"

Dick leaned on the hedge, panting. The Famous Five did not need his aid.

Ike and his comrade were being knocked right and left by the five sturdy juniors, yelling and cursing frantically; and in a couple of minutes the two roughs bolted back through the gap in the hedge, and took to their heels.

"Going—going—gone!" gasped Nugent.

"The gonefulness is terrific."

"Ah serene, old man?" asked Harry Wharton, turning to Ragged Dick. "Did they get anything from you? If so, we'll jolly well get after them."

"No!" gasped Dick.

"Good!"

"A pair of footpads, I suppose," said Frank Nugent.

"Well, they got more than they bargained for this time," grinned Bob Cherry. "I've barked my knuckles on a jolly old nose! I'm sure the nose feels worse than my knuckles."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Lucky we came out to meet you, Compton," said the captain of the Remove. "You're not hurt?"

"No; only a bit winded!" gasped Dick. "It's all right! Thank you, you fellows, for chipping in."

"The second time we've had that giddy pleasure," chuckled Bob.

"Yes," said Dick, colouring a little.

"You've seen Sir Henry?" asked Wharton, as the juniors turned back towards Greyfriars. The two roughs had vanished across the fields in the distance.

"Yes," said Dick.

"And it's all settled?"

"I go home on Saturday for the weekend, and don't come back," said Ragged Dick.

"That's the best way," agreed Harry. "But we're jolly sorry to be losing you, old man."

"The sorrowfulness is terrific," said Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, shaking his dusky head.

Dick smiled faintly.

"I'm sorry enough to be going," he said. "But it's the only way out."

And the chums of the Remove walked back to the school with thoughtful faces.

THE ELEVENTH CHAPTER.

Roger Compton's Last Card!

"M R. ROGER COMPTON!"

Dr. Locke frowned.

He made Trotter a sign to show the visitor into his study; but his frown deepened as the scapegrace entered.

Dr. Locke was a scholastic old gentleman, who lived and moved and had his being in books. But even into his scholastic seclusion, something of Roger Compton's "juicy" reputation had penetrated. He had a profound contempt and dislike for the shady, dissolute, blackguardly man who was a disgrace to his old name, and he was very far from pleased to see him.

He rose, and fixed his eyes on the man, disregarding the hand Roger held out to him.

Roger shrugged his shoulders, as he let the disregarded hand fall to his side again.

"This is unexpected—very unexpected, sir!" said Dr. Locke icily. "I must ask you to be brief, Mr. Compton. I can imagine no reason why you should call upon me."

"The pleasure of seeing you, sir, is not my only reason," said Roger sarcastically.

"Quite so. If you have any business here, kindly state it."

"I have a young relative in this school—"

Dr. Locke raised his hand.

"If you desire to see him—"

"I do."

"Your desire cannot be acceded to. I have the very strict instructions of Sir Henry Compton that you are never to see or to address his grandson," said Dr. Locke. "These instructions have my own full approval. Your reputation is known to me, Mr. Compton."

"My reputation, whatever it may be, is not Sir Henry's only reason," said Roger, with a sneer.

"I have nothing to do with your family feuds, sir."

"The family feud is not the only reason, either. I presume, Dr. Locke, that you do not desire a scandal that would make the name of Greyfriars ring through the whole country—with your own name as a possible partner in a lawless conspiracy?"

Dr. Locke stared at him. His impression was that Roger Compton had been drinking.

"Calm yourself, Mr. Compton. I must warn you that if you make a scene here, you will regret it," he said.

"I am not here to make a scene, Dr. Locke. I am here to make an inquiry, which I have every right to make. Will you hear me?"

"You may proceed."

"You have received a boy into this school under the name of Richard Compton, of Compton Hall," said Roger. "You may have heard that young Richard was an invalid from birth, that his life was despaired of, that he lived for years in a nursing-home in the South of France—"

"I have heard all this."

"You cannot fail to have been surprised by his apparent restoration to perfect health."

"Surprised and pleased, sir."

"Pleased, no doubt, from your benevolent heart," said the scapegrace. "But in the circumstances you will scarcely expect me to be pleased, as the boy stands between me and the finest estate in Kent."

"I cannot discuss any such base considerations, Mr. Compton. I am surprised that even you should refer to such things."

"Let me explain. I have reason—good reason—to believe that Sir Henry's grandson died in the nursing-home in France, and that the death was concealed—"

"Sir Henry's grandson is now at Greyfriars, in the Lower Fourth Form," said the Head, with a stare of amazement.

"That is the point in dispute, sir. I dispute the boy's identity. I suspect—I have reason to suspect—that the boy Richard died abroad, and that Sir Henry substituted another in his place to keep me out of my inheritance."

"Absurd!"

"You cannot credit it?" sneered Roger.

"Not for a single instant."

"And what if I can prove it?"

"Nonsense!" said Dr. Locke disdainfully. "Mr. Compton, I am wasting time in listening to such a wild story, and my time is of value."

"I will go, Dr. Locke, if you choose, but I shall return, accompanied by a solicitor, possibly by a police constable," said Roger Compton. "It is for you to decide whether you will have a scene. I ask to be allowed to see the boy—in



Ragged Dick dragged himself free from the two rufflans. "Help!" he gasped. "We're here, old man!" "Pile in!" "Give 'em beans!" Harry Wharton & Co. fairly charged Ike and his companion. Dick leaned on the hedge panting. The Famous Five did not need his aid. (See Chapter 10.)

your presence, and in the presence of his Form master, if you wish. I will tell you why. Richard, if he lives, bears the birthmark of the Comptons, a hawk's head on his arm. I saw it in his infancy. His grandfather would not dare deny it. His nurse can be produced to swear to it, his doctor, servants—many people. The fact is established beyond doubt."

"What of it?"

"Let it be proved that this boy, whom you know as Richard Compton, bears that mark on his arm."

"Undoubtedly he does, if, as you say, Richard Compton was born with it," said Dr. Locke.

"Let it be seen, then," sneered the scapegrace. "Let me see it, and I will apologise to you, Dr. Locke, for wasting your valuable time; I will leave this place and never seek to see the boy again. If he is Richard Compton I have a right to know it—"

"He is Richard Compton."

"I have a right to the proof. Listen, sir! If he is the genuine heir of Compton Hall I am a ruined man. Sir Henry is my enemy, but if this boy is his grandson I can only beg from that hard old man money to help me flee across the seas to escape from my creditors. I make no secret of my position. For years I have lived on my expectations. The boy was never expected to live, and the usurers advanced me money. I am in debt so deep that when I come into the estate I must break the entail and sell almost all the lands, even the old house. All this I have had, and spent,

because the boy could not have lived. Can you imagine the feelings of the greedy moneylenders whose money I have spent when they know that not a shilling can be repaid?"

Roger's voice was husky and thick.

"Can you imagine it?" he rasped out. "Well, if this boy is the genuine heir I am so thoroughly ruined that I must flee from England, lucky if I even escape with my freedom. Do you understand? I must beg help from Sir Henry to enable me to run. But I do not believe that he is the true heir. I am assured that he is a substituted cheat. Let the matter be tested, here and now."

Dr. Locke hesitated.

The man's almost savage earnestness impressed him.

"If you refuse," went on Roger, "I am not powerless. I will spread far and wide my story of this cheat and imposture, I will gain legal powers to force an examination of the boy, as I would have done already had I not been crippled by want of money. But I will not be cheated of an estate. If you prefer war, and scandal, and disgrace, have your way; if you desire to see justice done, and to see the last of me, let the boy be called here and the Compton birthmark displayed in my sight. I repeat that if he has the hawk's head of the Comptons on his arm I shall cross the sea to-morrow morning, and never see England again."

Roger's eyes glittered at the Head.

"It shall be so, then," said the Head.

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"Your story is false and absurd—the imagining of a wicked and disappointed man, I am assured of that. But if the proof is so easy to come by you shall have it."

Dr. Locke rang his bell.

A minute later Trotter was sent to Mr. Quelch with the request that the Remove master would bring Compton of the Lower Fourth to the headmaster's study.

Roger Compton sat down to wait, a grin of anticipated triumph on his face. And the Head of Greyfriars, watching the cunning, evil, triumphant face, felt a throb of doubt.

THE TWELFTH CHAPTER.

The Proof!

"COMPTON!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Compton!"

Ragged Dick looked round.

He was strolling in the quadrangle with Harry Wharton, after classes, when Bob Cherry hailed him from the direction of the House.

"Wanted, old man!" bawled Bob.

"Right-ho!"

"Quelch wants you," said Bob, as Compton ran up. "Cut into the House. It's all right, I think—not a licking!"

Dick nodded and smiled, and ran into the House. Mr. Quelch was waiting for him there. He gave the boy a kind smile.

"Dr. Locke desires to see you, Compton," he said. "You will come with me to his study."

"Yes, sir," answered Dick.

He followed the Remove master down the long, wide corridor.

It did not even cross his mind whom he was to meet in the Head's study. It was Friday afternoon—his last day at Greyfriars, though, so far, only his friends knew that. On the morrow he was to go. He was thinking of that, and certainly he was not thinking of Roger Compton.

He followed the Remove master into the Head's study, and then he saw the scapegrace.

He started back a little.

Roger rose to his feet and fixed his evil, mocking eyes on the boy.

"This is the boy," he said.

"This is Sir Henry Compton's grandson!" said Dr. Locke coldly.

"That is what we shall prove. What does the boy himself say?" sneered Roger. "Has he learned his lesson so well as to lie without faltering? Boy, answer me! How long have you been called by the name of Compton?"

Ragged Dick looked at him steadily.

"I will not answer you, or speak to you, Mr. Compton," he said.

"You insolent young scoundrel!"

"Silence, sir!" exclaimed the Head sharply. "Compton is quite right. His grandfather has forbidden him to speak to you, and rightly so."

Roger gritted his teeth.

"I care nothing for that. Let him be silent if he chooses, but let me see the birthmark—if it exists."

Ragged Dick's heart almost stopped beating.

It had come to this, then! That ruffianly attempt to seize him in the fields and search him for the Compton mark had failed, owing to the prompt aid of the Famous Five. But Harry Wharton & Co. could not help him now.

He backed away, his face paling.

The evil grin of the scapegrace followed him.

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"He is afraid of the test!" grinned Roger.

"Compton, you have nothing to fear," said the Head gently. "This man will not be allowed to interfere with you in any way. You are under your Headmaster's protection."

"Thank you, sir," muttered Dick.

"This man—a relative of yours—has some wild belief that you are not in truth the grandson of Sir Henry Compton," went on the Head. "The idea is absurd—ridiculous! I know it, my boy!"

"Absurd indeed!" exclaimed Mr. Quelch.

Dick did not speak.

"But as it happens, he stands next in succession to the estates, and he threatens to cause a public investigation of his preposterous theory—he may or may not have the power to carry out his threat, but it is unnecessary that the matter should go so far," said Dr. Locke. "He states that a well-known birthmark exists on Richard Compton's arm—sufficient proof of his identity. He professes that he will be satisfied if he sees it. For the sake of ending his absurd suspicions, and closing a very unpleasant incident, Compton, I desire you to show your relative your arm, and thus satisfy him."

Dick did not move.

"Have you a mark on your arm, Compton?" asked Mr. Quelch, with a curious glance at the boy.

"Yes, sir."

Roger laughed scoffingly.

"A mark, perhaps—but is it the Compton birthmark? By gad, he claims to be a Compton, and he does not even know what the Compton birthmark is—his instructor has not told him that."

Dick breathed with difficulty.

"It was true—he did not know; not that the knowledge could have been of any service to him."

"The matter is easily settled," said the Head, with a glance of distaste and disgust at his unwelcome visitor. "Compton, remove your jacket!"

Dick stood quite still.

On the morrow, all would have been well; the gates of Greyfriars would have closed behind him for ever. The scheme would have been at an end. Sir Henry, disappointed, would at least have been saved from exposure as a deceiver and a trickster. But now—

"You hear me, Compton?" said the Head, raising his eyebrows a little.

"Yes, sir!" faltered Dick.

"Then do as I tell you!"

Ragged Dick cast a wild glance at the door. To obey the Head was to betray Sir Henry Compton.

Dr. Locke's face grew sterner. Roger was grinning like a scoffing demon, sure now, if he had not been sure before. Mr. Quelch was frowning. Ragged Dick's hesitation had startled them at first; but now that he persisted, a grim doubt came into the minds of both the masters; a doubt that Roger, wicked as he was, was right in this—that a fraud had been practised to cheat him of his inheritance. And as Ragged Dick, by an instinctive movement, stepped towards the door, the Remove master stepped before it, and placed his back to it grimly.

"We must know the truth of this," said Dr. Locke, and his face was very stern. "I cannot believe such a story—but we must know the truth. Compton, remove your jacket this instant!"

Slowly Dick peeled off the well-fitting Eton jacket.

"On what part of the arm is the mark, Mr. Compton?"

"Between the elbow and the shoulder—if it exists!"

"Roll up your sleeve, Compton, to the shoulder."

Dick did not stir.

He gave the Headmaster an almost hunted look; and then his wild glance turned to Mr. Quelch, standing immovable at the door, grim as fate. The wait was caught, as in a trap. Exposure, disgrace, obloquy, impended over his unhappy head.

"Do you understand what you are forcing me to suspect, Compton?" exclaimed the Head. "You are driving me to the belief that this story is well-founded. Bare your arm at once!"

Roger chuckled, like a triumphant gnome.

"I will help him!" he grinned.

He strode towards the boy and grasped him. Ragged Dick would have thrust him back, but the wastrel grasped him savagely, and with a wrench, tore the shirt sleeve from wrist to shoulder. The white, muscular arm of the junior was revealed.

Roger stared at it—and staggered back, with a furious oath. His face was white with rage and dismay.

"The birthmark!" he hissed. "The mark of the Comptons!"

Dark, on the white skin, was a strange mark—in shape like the head of a hawk. It was obviously a birthmark; and if it was a mark familiar to the eyes of Roger, it was a dumb-founding discovery to Ragged Dick.

He staggered against the wall, scarcely breathing. What did it mean—what could it mean?

Roger, in his rage and despair, struck his own forehead with his clenched fist.

"The game's up! A thousand curses on—"

"Silence, sir!" exclaimed the Head indignantly. "You have found, it seems, the birthmark you looked for, which proves that this boy is a Compton! You admit the falsity of your absurd suspicions! Silence, sir, and go!" And with a curse on his lips, Roger Compton went.

The Head gave Dick a kind glance.

"You may put on your jacket, Compton. You may go, my boy!"

Silently, dazedly, Ragged Dick obeyed. He went down the corridor like a fellow in a dream.

At the corner, the Famous Five were waiting for him, and Bob Cherry clapped him on the shoulder.

"Trouble?" he asked.

"No—oh, no!" stammered Ragged Dick.

(Continued on page 27.)

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IRONICAL! At one stage in his quest Ferrers Locke stands within a few feet of the men for whom the entire police force is looking, and is oblivious of the fact. But the luck changes!



The Sporting Detective!

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

Mistress and Maid.

FERRERS LOCKE gulped in the fresh air from the passage, and then, turning on his heel, he rushed back into the room. In a couple of strides he was at the window. The sash was flung up, and a rush of cool air fanned his brow. Next moment he grabbed Pyecroft and Drake by their collars and dragged them across the room. He held them up by the window the while they drank deeply of the pure air.

In less than a couple of minutes none of the party was the worse for his experience.

"Too certain of ourselves that time," said Locke ruefully. "I never knew Manners went in for chemistry to that extent. Wonder what our fate would have been had we inhaled much more of that beastly stuff?"

Pyecroft jerked his thumb towards the floor and grimaced.

"With the daisies," he grunted. "But what about Manners?"

"Yes, what about him, guv'nor?" said Drake, fingering his collar as though to allow his throat more room. "Phew! I can still taste that beastly muck he threw at us. We ought to be getting on his track."

Ferrers Locke nodded.

"Oh, you're as keen to get on his track as any of us now—eh, my lad?" he said, with a faint smile. "Bit of a surprise to you, I'll be bound, this revelation of his double life."

"You could have knocked me over with a feather," said Drake. "But there's no mistaking things now. Besides," he added, "the rotter as good as admitted his guilt."

"Come on, Mr. Locke!" Pyecroft's voice interrupted. "I'll collect this boodle together on the table, and then we'll set off on the trail of Mr. Blooming Monty Manners. Don't think much of his manners, anyway," he added, with a rather feeble attempt at humour.

"You'll notify the Yard, old man?" asked Locke. "Perhaps you'd better make certain that Manners and his brother don't—"

"His brother?"

Drake and Pyecroft echoed the words in unison, their faces expressive of the greatest surprise.

"His brother," said Locke firmly. "Old Mostyn, who, as I have already said, is no more old than Manners is

himself, is a half-brother of London's latest detective." There was a sardonic grin lurking in Locke's face as he uttered the last phrase. "His name is Mostyn Chambers."

"Yes, but—" began Pyecroft.

"There are no buts," smiled Locke; "and there's no time to waste. We've let enough minutes slip by as it is. Phone the Yard, Pyecroft!"

The inspector strode across to the telephone, and was soon in conversation with officials at Scotland Yard. In less than five minutes the news of Manners' bold break for liberty and his identity were being flashed along the wires all over England. It seemed improbable that any human being could slip through this telephonic cordon.

Special squads were soon roaming the suburbs, where they reckoned the wanted man would make for, whilst a force of plain-clothes men were sent to scour inner London. Even the Wireless Efficiency Company were persuaded to broadcast a message to the effect that Montague Manners, the famous cricketer-detective, was urgently wanted, and that anyone seeing him should notify the police. Little did the listening-in public know the true facts—little did they know how soon the idol they had built up of the famous amateur cricketer and detective was to be ruthlessly shattered.

And while the gigantic police system was falling into working order, Pyecroft, Locke, and Jack Drake were scouring the West End in a "borrowed" motor-car. It seemed a futile quest from their point of view, for they had nothing to work upon, but it was action, and action in such an emergency was necessary; it kept the interest alive.

"All we can do is to continue our stock question, 'Have you seen a Daimler car with the number A.Z. 98365?' and keep our eyes well peeled," said Locke, as Pyecroft swung the car into Wardoff Street.

"You don't think he'll make for the East End, do you, guv'nor?" said Drake, who had remained fairly silent up till now.

"I don't think so, my lad," said Locke. "I've never known Manners to show any interest in the slums; he's far too fastidious."

"I don't know," said Drake slowly. "Now that I see the real Manners, his fastidiousness disappears with the rest of

his charming character. Besides," he added, "he was telling me about a Chinese den in Limehouse that he once went to."

"Oh!" Ferrers Locke was interested. "Did he tell you where it was?"

Drake thought for a moment before he replied.

"Let me see. He called it the Lotus Flower—a dirty hole of a place overlooking the river."

"The Lotus Flower!" ejaculated Pyecroft, taking his attention from the steering-wheel. "Gee! It's a likely place. We've been waiting for some reason to raid it for months past. The Spaniard who runs the joint is confoundingly clever, and evidently well informed. We'll try it. Some of the Flying Squad are hanging about in that vicinity. They might have seen something."

"Owned by a Spaniard," chuckled Drake. "And he calls it the Lotus Flower. He ought to call it the Spanish Onion!"

Locke chuckled grimly at his assistant's humour, and then relapsed into silence.

And while the "borrowed" car was speeding towards the East End, two faces peered from a window in the West End—to be precise, the sitting-room in Monty Manners' flat at Jermyn Street.

And the faces were those of Monty Manners and Mostyn Chambers respectively.

"Phew! That was a near thing!" ejaculated Manners, withdrawing his head from the window, and helping himself to a stiff measure of spirit.

"Too darned near for my liking," said Mostyn. "But the game's up, old boy. I'll drop this servant gear and respectful talk. I've had enough of it."

"Respectful talk!" chuckled Manners. "I've never noticed any. Everyone I meet tells me that I ought to fire you for your cheek. Still, as you say, the game's finished. All we've got to do is to disappear, an' do that mighty quick."

"Any suggestions?" grinned Mostyn, tearing off his sideboard whiskers and iron-grey wig, and rubbing "wrinkles" from his parchment-coloured skin like chalk from a blackboard.

"Sure!" returned Monty, eyeing his late butler-valet critically. "But first let me express my pleasure at beholding my dear brother in the flesh, an' not in someone else's, as it were."

"Your half-brother," corrected Mostyn. "Even that confounded fellow Locke knew that."

"Jove! Wouldn't he have had several sorts of a fit if he had known that while he was talking to a brother in this room, and telling Pyecroft and Drake the heavy stuff, the two birds he wanted were within a wall's thickness of him!" chuckled Monty Manners.

"Ha, ha! That was funny. The poor fish naturally thought, when he heard the door slam and the car drive off, that we had flown," said Mostyn, with a grin. "He didn't know that we simply drove round to the back of the house and came up again via the fire emergency staircase."

"Too rich!" roared Manners, slapping his thigh in his appreciation of the situation. "You see, even real detectives are not infallible folk, Mostyn."

"Still, not many of our profession would have dared to play a trick like that," said Mostyn. "But the sheer daring of it ensured its success. All credit to you, Monty."

"Many thanks!" drawled the pseudo detective. "And now, instead of feasting your eyes in that valuable mirror yonder, what about getting some sort of disguise ready?"

Mostyn turned round suddenly.

"Not more disguise!" he exclaimed. "Lor! I've done nothing else but cover up these beautiful features of mine for this last seven years!"

He was a good-looking fellow, not unlike Montague Manners, but possessing features a little more marked than his half-brother. Tall and well-proportioned, as the reader already knows, he presented a fine picture of English manhood, his age being in the region of thirty years. It seemed hard to believe that he was the butler-valet, the Mostyn of old. In fact, it seemed hard to reconcile the fact that he and his half-brother, the famous cricketer, were two of the most daring and dangerous crooks in the metropolis.

And yet such they had proved themselves to be—such Ferrers Locke found them to be. Their mask of respectability gone now that the Baker Street detective had pierced their imposture, it remained for them to shake the dust of England from their feet.

"We were unfortunate to lose that lot of swag we brought from Sir Humphrey's place," said Monty Manners. "I could have kicked that fellow Pyecroft when I saw him go out with the stuff. Still, our secret store is safe. We'll touch that when the coast's clear. Lucky for us I cashed that cheque of Lord Thundersleigh's yesterday. Some premonition or other told me that I should want the money in a hurry."

"Thank heavens for that!" exclaimed Mostyn. "If we've got money the rest is not so difficult. What shall it be, old chap?"

"A bonnie Prince Charlie affair," drawled Manners.

"Don't follow."

"Evidently you're bad at geography," said Monty, with crushing sarcasm. "Know you, my dear fellow, that Prince Charlie escaped from the shores of Scotland in—"

"Petticoats!" ejaculated Mostyn, with a shudder. "Not for this child. That's one thing I draw the line at in my masquerades."

Monty threw up his hands.

"It's that or nothing," he said, rising to his feet. "We shall have every man-jack in the country looking for us. We're too well known to stick to our own attire. I have scorned Bonnie Prince Charlie for lowering himself when I've read my

history, but I respect him for his common-sense now. It's the only way."

Mostyn grimaced.

"Well, if you say so, old man, it's a go," he said reluctantly. "You're the brains of the firm. I'm still the butler-valet."

"You shall be my maid," grinned Monty.

With that light remark he strode across the room and disappeared into his own private den. Switching out the electric light in the sitting-room, Mostyn followed him.

When next the two scoundrels came into view they were totally transformed. Montague Manners now resembled a lady of fairly affluent circumstances, judging by the quality of her attire and a few stray pieces of jewellery that adorned "her." Her age might have been put down at forty something. Her hair was certainly bleached, but her voice was as near the feminine article as anyone could make it.

"I think we'll be off, Janet," he said, turning to the "maid."

And the maid, a hefty-looking maiden, clothed in a dead black costume, nodded and showed her teeth in a smile.

Five minutes later mistress and maid were speeding in their car to Croydon.

The Night-Fliers.

"STOP!"

Ferrers Locke startled his two companions by uttering that remark as the car turned into Limehouse Causeway.

"Eh?" ejaculated Pyecroft, in surprise.

"Stop!" reiterated Locke grimly.

"We're a trio of born fools!"

"Hum!"

Pyecroft did not take kindly to the description, but he plied the brakes and the car came to a standstill.

"It's just struck me that we were a trifle hasty in dashing away from Jermyn Street," said Locke.

"Personally, I thought we wasted a deal too much time," grunted the inspector.

"Suppose it never struck you that Manners and his brother could have slipped round the corner in their car, and waited for us to clear off out of sight before starting their travels?" drawled the private detective.

Pyecroft and Drake started.

"Never!" exclaimed the inspector. "They wouldn't have the nerve to do that. Criminology teaches us that a rogue is usually anxious to put a big distance between himself and his crime. That he returns to the scene later on is another matter."

"Those stereotyped theories are all very well in many cases," said Locke thoughtfully. "But we are dealing with a really brainy couple in Manners and his brother. Methinks we'll retrace our steps—"

"And if they happen to turn up at the Lotus Flower, your men can get into touch with us," broke in Drake. "We can shove a cordon round the place in about ten minutes, surely?"

"You're right," said the inspector slowly. "If you think that's a better plan, Mr. Locke, I'll turn the car round."

"I certainly do."

The car was turned round, and there began a speedy run back to the West End. Pyecroft calling a halt of merely five minutes' duration, during which time he phoned through to a station in the East End, and gave his orders to have the Lotus Flower surrounded. And while the inspector was busy on the phone, Locke

called up Scotland Yard, and advised the Chief Commissioner to despatch a squad of men to the Jermyn Street flat in advance of his own arrival there.

The drive back to Monty Manners' flat was done in record time. Locke found the C.I.D. men in attendance. With little time to question them, he raced up the stairs and into the sitting-room. One glance he gave the apartment, his keen eyes finally coming to rest upon the small sideboard. Then he chuckled.

"Three glasses," he muttered. "I was right in my surmise—"

"What surmise?" broke in Pyecroft, who had followed the private detective into the room.

"Why, that Manners and his brother slipped round the corner in their car until we were out of sight, and then had the audacity to return to this very room."

"This room?" ejaculated Pyecroft blankly.

For answer, Ferrers Locke pointed to the sideboard and the three glasses.

"How many glasses were there when we left the flat?" he asked.

"Can't say that I noticed," grunted the C.I.D. man. "I remember Manners and his cursed brother having a drink when they came in."

"Exactly," said Locke. "Two glasses were used, and yet there are now three."

Pyecroft started.

"Jove!" he exclaimed. "You're right. Why we might—"

"Have been in this room while Manners and Mostyn were in the next room," finished Locke grimly. "I could kick myself for this slip, Pyecroft," he added. "For it comes back to me now that there is an iron emergency staircase at the back of this flat. I have not the slightest doubt that Manners waltzed his car away to the back of this flat, left it there, and returned via the emergency staircase."

"But why should he do that?" queried Pyecroft blankly.

"For two or perhaps three reasons," said Locke calmly. "First, to see exactly in which direction we went when we gave chase; secondly, to effect a disguise; thirdly, to collect some of their swag, or, rather, the results of their swag. For it is usual," he added, "for crooks to store away a long stocking to meet such an emergency as has now arisen."

"Well, we can soon test the disguise part of your theory," grunted the C.I.D. man, "for I paid especial attention to Manners' wardrobe, and committed to memory practically all I saw there."

"Splendid!" exclaimed Locke. "Lead on, old man!"

The inspector stalked out of the sitting-room and made his way over to the largest bed-room. His jaw dropped as he entered the room, for the door of the wardrobe was open, and various articles of attire strewed the floor in its immediate vicinity.

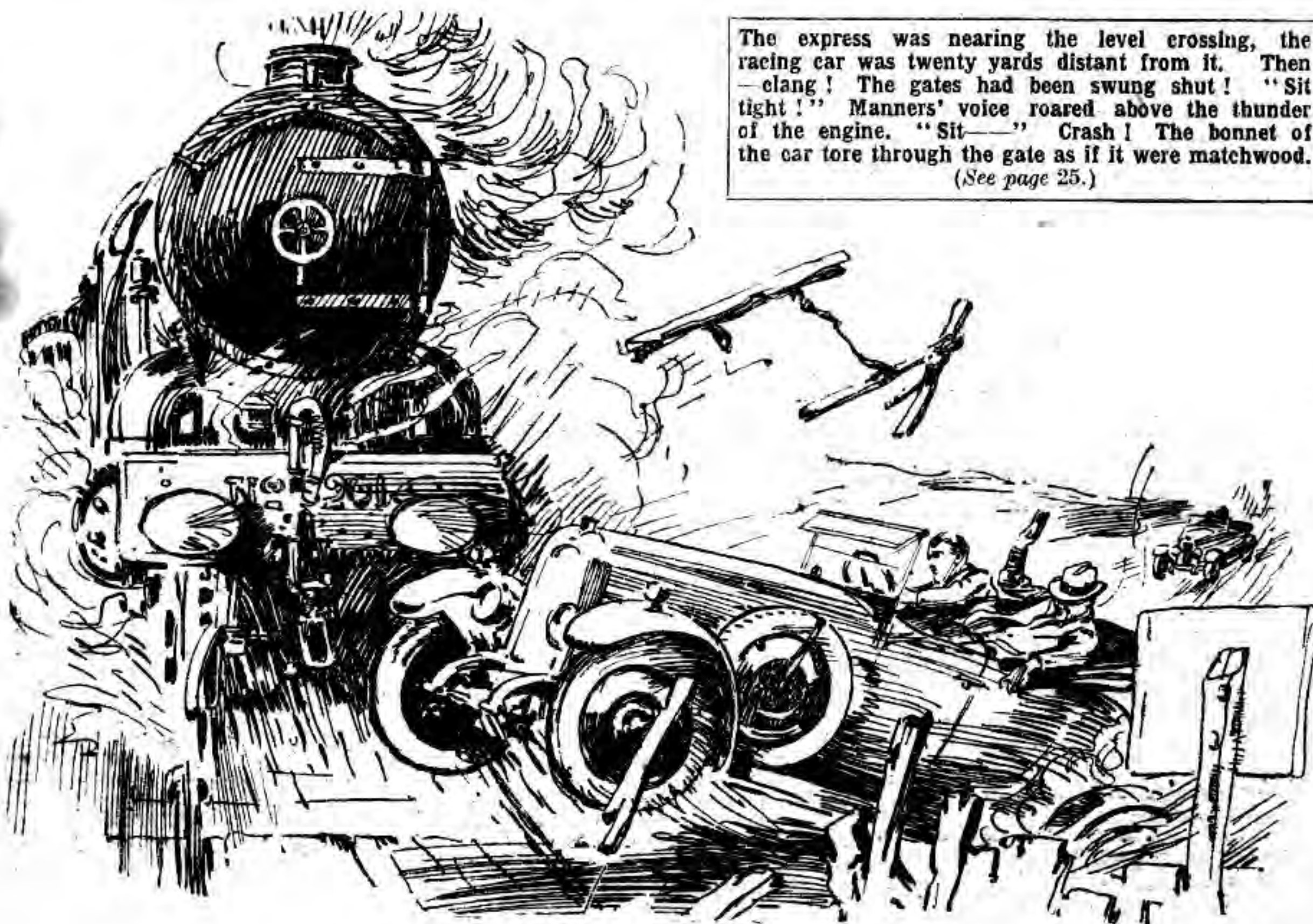
"You're right, Mr. Locke," he said apologetically. "The rogues have been back right enough. This room was not in this state when we last saw it."

"True," said Locke thoughtfully. "And now's a test for your memory. If you say you observed the various disguises in this wardrobe, kindly tell me what is now missing from it."

Pyecroft did not want any encouragement. He had already started to turn the garments over. Suddenly he jumped, a movement he followed up by slapping his thigh.

"Something bitten you?" inquired Locke, with the ghost of a smile twitching the corners of his lips.

"Female attire!" ejaculated the C.I.D. man challengingly. "I'd stake my life



The express was nearing the level crossing, the racing car was twenty yards distant from it. Then—clang! The gates had been swung shut! "Sit tight!" Manners' voice roared above the thunder of the engine. "Sit—!" Crash! The bonnet of the car tore through the gate as if it were matchwood. (See page 25.)

on it. There was a whole heap of feminine clobber here last time. There's only a pair of silk stockings left now."

"Good for you!" chuckled Locke. "I rather fancy you're right, too. Such disguises would fit well with the character of Monty Manners, for he is a born actor, and has astonishing tendencies to things feminine."

Pycroft could hardly restrain his excitement.

"Slinking off in a woman's get-up," he sniffed. "Gee! We'll nab 'em! Come on, Mr. Locke!"

But Locke made a detaining gesture of the hand.

"What's all the hurry?" he asked mildly. "Where are you rushing to?"

That obvious question pulled up the inspector with a jerk.

"H hadn't thought of that," he said, crimsoning.

"Now, listen here, Pycroft," said Locke. "Put yourself in the place of Manners. What would you do? Where would you make for?"

"The nearest, quickest, and safest way out of the country," said Pycroft, with little hesitation. "That's stereotyped theorising, I'll admit—"

"Quite true. And, in this case, undoubtedly right," smiled Locke. "And what is the nearest, quickest, and safest way out of this little island of ours?" he added.

"Aeroplane!" exclaimed Pycroft, without hesitation.

"Splendid! Then will you kindly phone through to Croydon aerodrome, and ask them to hold up two passengers, or would-be passengers, who want to leave by the earliest machine. Female passengers, of course. Perhaps a lady and her maid."

Pycroft was soon jerking the hooks of the transmitter in his eagerness and

impatience to be put through to Croydon aerodrome.

"Easy does it!"

Mostyn, alias Mrs. Wilberforce's maid Janet, spoke the words in the ear of his companion.

"Mrs. Wilberforce"—the name Manners had decided upon for his imposture—took a foot from the accelerator and glanced about her.

"So this is Croydon," she said in cultured tones that were distinctly feminine.

"And where is the aerodrome, Janet?"

"Oh, cut it out!" grunted "Janet."

"Time enough for that type of chin-wag when we get there. While I'm doing this part of the journey I'm plain Mostyn—savvy?"

"You always were," said Manners, with crushing sarcasm. "But, anyhow, old scout, we've done the miles without exciting suspicion. You must admit that it was a good wheeze of mine to alter the number plate of the car."

"Yes, I'll give you credit for having one of the craftiest brains in existence," grunted Mostyn. "And I'll be most enthusiastic about it when I'm a few thousand feet up."

"Still pessimistic," smiled Monty, turning into a new road that approached the aerodrome. "I tell you we shall do this moonlight flit off our heads."

The rascally pair had raced through the suburbs of London without encountering the slightest opposition. The fact that "Mrs. Wilberforce" was driving a car seemed to excite no suspicion in the breasts of the zealous policemen who were looking for number A Z 98365, late though the hour was for a lady to be driving about in a car.

"Here we are!" murmured Mostyn, indicating the row of lights ahead. "This is the booking-shed. Now, don't try to

overdo it," he added anxiously. "I believe there's a night mail to France due to leave within half an hour."

"Leave it to your uncle," smiled Monty in the darkness. "We've got the passports—we've got the cash."

The car came to a standstill, and one of the night-workers of the drome came over to the couple of wanted men and saluted. Inside three minutes he was leading them into the main office.

A grey-haired, middle-aged man was seated at the desk, and to him, with admirable coolness and cleverness, Monty Manners, in the guise of Mrs. Wilberforce, explained her business.

"You're just in time, madam," said the drome official. "Providing your passports are in order. There's a plane due to start within fifteen minutes," he added, consulting his watch.

"Oh, that's awfully good!" said madam, with evident relief. "Janet, the passports."

Janet did as she was bid. The official gave them more than a cursory glance; but he seemed satisfied, although at the back of his mind was a peculiar feeling of distrust. Why should a lady and her maid wish to travel at such an extraordinary hour? Never, in all the course of his experience at the aerodrome, had he booked lady passengers for a night trip. But everything seemed in order, and, with a forced smile, he handed back the passports and rose to his feet.

"You will excuse me a moment," he smiled. "I'll inform the pilot of his extra cargo. You're the only passengers on this trip," he added. "Very unusual for ladies to travel during the night by aeroplane."

"But we are in a hurry," said Mrs. Wilberforce. "My poor dear husband is lying dangerously ill, and is expecting me. My poor dear—"

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"Quite, quite, madam," said the official, in tones of complete surrender. "I can understand your anxiety. Ahem!"

He coughed loudly, and bowed himself out.

When his footsteps had died away, Mrs. Wilberforce turned to her maid.

"Easy as winking!"

"Easier than that," chuckled Mostyn. "But don't overdo it."

Manners was about to make another remark when suddenly the telephone bell whirled out its imperious summons. For a moment Manners and Mostyn eyed each other. Into their brains flashed the same thought. Supposing their escape had been traced? Suppose this was a police call?

"Answer it, for Heaven's sake!" whispered Mostyn. "I don't like the imperious note in that bell."

With great deliberation Manners lifted the receiver from the hook.

"Hallo, hallo! Is that Croydon aerodrome—"

Mrs. Wilberforce nearly collapsed as that familiar voice came through the wires, for the heavy tones were those of Inspector Pyecroft of the C.I.D. But the advantage was on the fleeing scoundrel's side, and in a cultured, feminine voice the reply went forth that it was Croydon aerodrome.

Mostyn, standing a few feet away, felt a cold bath of perspiration break out all over him. He knew by the expression on his companion's face that their plans had gone astray.

"Quick!" he muttered. "I can hear the agent fellow coming back."

Monty Manners, too, had heard the crunch of feet upon the gravel, and he was anxious to put a stop to his conversation—a very one-sided one—with Inspector Pyecroft.

"No, no!" he answered. "We have not seen any two people answering to that description here. Women—a lady and her maid, or, rather, two men disguised as such? No; they haven't turned up here. But we'll detain them if they do. You'll phone again in five minutes? Yes, yes. That will be all right. Good-bye."

With less feminine composure and gentleness the receiver was slammed down. Barely had the two scoundrels time to exchange a significant wink when the door of the office opened and the drome official put in an appearance. His glance at once went to the telephone.

"Ah, your phone bell went," smiled the bogus Mrs. Wilberforce, "and I took the liberty of answering it, as no one was about."

The official eyed his prospective passengers shrewdly, his elevated eyebrows asking for more information.

"You're not Croydon 75133, are you?"

"Oh, no! Were they bothering on the wrong number tack?" smiled the official. "They never seem to leave us alone for long?"

"Yes, some of these operators are a nuisance," went on Mrs. Wilberforce. "But, to change the subject, I really don't think I shall travel to-night, after all."

"You won't?" There was an amused smile on the face of the drome official. "Ah, you ladies are wise! Travelling at night, unless one is used to it, is a peculiar experience aboard an aeroplane."

You'll travel by the eight o'clock machine, I take it?"

"That will suit me much better," smiled Mrs. Wilberforce. "I don't think I have sufficient courage to tackle the journey now that it comes to starting. Still, the tickets will do for the eight o'clock machine, will they not?"

"Most assuredly," answered the official.

"In that case, we'll snatch a couple of hours' rest and come back," said Mrs. Wilberforce. "My bag, Janet."

Janet took the bag from the floor and moved to the doorway. The next few minutes seemed like an age to the two impostors. Would the official never stop talking? But at last they had reached the car. The engine was running. They were off again!

"Phew! That was a nasty shock," said Monty Manners, when the car had traversed a hundred yards. "That fellow Pyecroft is on our track. We can't stick in this get-up, that's certain."

"Well, I shall be pleased to discard it, for one," grumbled Mostyn. "I'd sooner be in my own clothes than these flouncing skirts any day. We'll dump them when we've gone another mile or so."

The car raced on in the direction of Portsmouth, and after the last London suburb had been left behind the two fugitives pulled up. Off came their outer attire in less time than it takes to tell. From the suitcase two gentlemen's suits were taken and donned.

Mrs. Wilberforce's costume, likewise that of her maid, were dumped in a particularly thick bramble-bush.

Again the car started up; again the identity-plate underwent a change in registration numbers. The second phase of the escape was under way.

The Chase!

"WELL?"

Ferrers Locke asked the question rather impatiently as Pyecroft jammed the receiver on the hook.

"They're not at Croydon yet," grunted the C.I.D. man. "I've given instructions that they are to be detained. The woman said—"

"The woman!"

Ferrers Locke jerked out the question with an aggressiveness that made Pyecroft and Jack Drake almost jump off the floor.

"The woman—the person who answered the call," snapped Pyecroft.

"I suppose you got on to the aerodrome all right?"

Locke's voice conveyed a slight eagerness.

"Of course I did!" exclaimed Pyecroft.

"But—Hallo! What the thump!"

For Ferrers Locke pushed past him unceremoniously and caught hold of the telephone instrument. Regardless of Pyecroft's snort of indignation, the private detective called for Croydon Aerodrome, and was soon on to his number.

His next words left Pyecroft and Drake gasping. All they remembered distinctly was Locke's repeated injunction to the person at the other end of the wire that he "must stop them." "Them" apparently being Monty Manners and his brother.

Down crashed the receiver—away went Locke for the door, gazing out a summons to Pyecroft and Drake to follow him.

They followed him dazedly.

A helter-skelter flight down the stairs, and the nose of the borrowed car was pointed S.E. The engine was soon running. Barely had Pyecroft and Drake

time to clamber into the car when the clutch slid in and they were off.

"Well, of all—" began Pyecroft.

"Fool!" snapped Locke, rather unjustly, as he knew himself the moment he had said it. "You were talking to Manners when you were on to the drome just now."

"I was?" ejaculated the C.I.D. man in blank astonishment.

"Yes, you were. The moment you said that your call was answered by a woman I was suspicious," said Locke. "I know the shifts at the Croydon drome, and I know for a positive fact that no woman is employed there at night."

"But—"

"The officer on duty tells me that two ladies were applying for a passage to France about three minutes before you rung up. He told me that he left them in his office for a few minutes, and while he was returning he heard the telephone bell ringing. But Mrs. Wilberforce—that's Manners' nom de plume apparently—calmly informed him that the exchange had connected a wrong number."

"Well, I'm jiggered!" gasped Pyecroft. "What bad luck! But where are we going now?"

"Portsmouth road," answered Locke, getting another five miles an hour out of the car. "The drome official said that Manners' car disappeared in that direction. We're not far behind them now, anyway."

"Then they're not flying across."

"Of course not!" snapped Locke. "Really, Pyecroft, you surely didn't expect Manners and Mostyn to hang about for a quarter of an hour, while the police got on their track, did you?"

"But as no one was suspicious at Croydon, it would have been perfectly safe for them to have waited until it was time for the machine to start," argued Pyecroft.

"Not a bit of it," said Locke. "Remember, you told Mrs. Wilberforce that you would ring up the drome again at intervals of five minutes. Well, then, the second call would of a certainty be answered by a proper official, and the whole flight nipped in the bud."

"I get you. This chap Manners is a slippery customer, an' no mistake," muttered the disgruntled inspector. "Hallo! We're at Brixton. I'll give the police the wire here. They can keep a look-out along the Portsmouth road ahead of us."

The car stopped for exactly five minutes, what time Pyecroft woke up the station-sergeant and issued his orders. Then the journey was recommenced. A full moon, riding high in the heavens, made the fast run pleasant enough, and lit up the road ahead for some considerable distance. Suddenly Drake, who had hitherto remained silent, moved in his seat.

"There's a car ahead!" he exclaimed excitedly. "And I can see that it contains two people. Put a spurt on, guv'nor!"

No need to urge the detective to do that. His own keen eyes had sighted that moving vehicle in front.

The gap between them gradually but surely diminished. The outline of the car in front and its occupants grew more distinct as the seconds ticked by.

"We're exciting ourselves for nothing," said Pyecroft, at length. "That car doesn't hold two fellows disguised as women—they're men right enough. Why, one's wearing a soft felt hat!"

"Don't get alarmed," smiled Locke. "I certainly didn't expect to be chasing two females. What purpose would it serve for Manners and Mostyn to

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remain in that get-up now that they know we're on their trail!"

"I suppose you're right," said the C.I.D. man dubiously. "Anyway, we shall see within the next half-hour, if we keep this pace up."

Locke bent over the steering-wheel, and relapsed into silence. He noted, with a grim smile of satisfaction, that he was still gaining on the car in front. Another ten minutes elapsed, and the gap had been appreciably lessened.

"We're right!" Drake's boyish voice shrilled out amid the rush of the wind. "I'd know Manners' back any day. That's him—the one without a hat. Look! The fellow by his side is turning round to have a look at us!"

"Mostyn!" exclaimed the inspector, peering intently ahead. "Hurrah! I'll eat humble-pie, Mr. Locke. We've got 'em cold!"

And so it seemed. There was no mistaking the identity of the occupants of the car in front now. And there was no attempt on their part now to conceal it.

The chase was nearing its end. Only three hundred yards separated the two cars. Locke and his companions saw Mostyn's head turn in their direction several times as if to gauge the progress they were making. Then suddenly something glittered in his hand as a shaft of moonlight settled on it.

Crack!

"Duck your heads!" roared Locke, suiting the action to the word.

Crack!

Two shots whistled over the heads of the pursuers.

"I can play at that game, too!" snarled Pyecroft.

And, without more ado, he dragged out his revolver and aimed three shots at the car in front. But where Mostyn was aiming to maim, or perhaps kill, the C.I.D. man contented himself with aiming at the tyres of the car in front.

Crack, crack, crack, crack!

A regular fusillade of shots was exchanged; but firing a revolver in a swiftly-moving car is a decidedly different proposition from firing at a stationary target.

Then, in addition to the crackle of the revolver-fire, came the piercing shriek of an approaching train.

"Jove!" exclaimed Locke. "We've got to make the level-crossing at Bentley, or we shall lose our quarry. There's a train coming up."

"I think there's more worry on the part of our friends," said Pyecroft quietly, "for if they don't get through they're for it. Look! He's opening out a bit more."

The car in front had widened the gap again by a matter of thirty yards. Evidently Manners and Mostyn knew how much depended on their getting to the level-crossing before the gates slammed home.

Would they do it?

Away to the right came a winding stream of lights. At their head, shrieking a warning, thundered the mighty engine of the two-thirty mail express. From its begrimed funnel great tongues of flame seemed to dance and play fantastic designs with the belching smoke.

It was a race between Monty Manners' car and the express. One glance and Locke knew that his car could never reach that level-crossing in time, for he was three hundred yards behind the fugitives.

On, on sped the Daimler car. It was a matter of touch and go. The gates of the crossing were still open; the train was still some safe distance away. But each second the rumble of the oncoming train ground out a warning to the fugitives in the car.

"We've got to make a bid for it," muttered Manners, his face pale and tense. "If they close those accursed gates I'm going to smash right through them. Are you game?"

"I'm with you," said Mostyn quietly, his eyes alternately shifting from the oncoming train to the open gates of the level-crossing. "The car'll stand it, anyway. I'm with you, old chap."

"Good lad!"

The Daimler sped on. Its occupants seemed to lose sight of the fact that behind them—only three hundred yards behind them—came the detectives. Manners knew that if he could beat them at the level-crossing his chances of escape were trebled. There would be a considerable delay for the pursuers, and it would take a little while for their car to develop racing speed again.

Shriek!

The express was nearing the crossing; the Daimler car was twenty yards' distant from it. Then—

Clang!

The gates had been swung shut!

"Sit tight!" Manners' voice roared above the thunder of the engine. "Sit tight!"

Crash!

The bonnet of the Daimler tore through the oaken gate as if it were matchwood. Strips of wood, stray nuts and bolts hurtled through the air. The

BAFFLING MYSTERY YARN THE VELDT TRAIL! STARTS NEXT MONDAY.

force of the impact shook the Daimler from front to back of axle, robbed it at least of ten miles an hour running speed. And it proved fatal.

The car and the "catcher" of the express met in full career. The rending of the lighter metal of the car, the splintering of the coachwork, the cries of the two fugitives were lost in the dull roaring of the engine as it swept on its grim path.

The two-thirty mail express had cheated the law of its victims. Monty Manners and Mostyn Chambers had paid the price of their lawlessness in full.

When Locke and his companions arrived on the scene Manners and his brother were beyond the need of any assistance.

Ferrers Locke Explains!

IT was a week later, and all England was ringing with the story of Montague Manners' double life, the story of Ferrers Locke's latest triumph, and the tragic end of one of the finest cricketers who had ever wielded willow.

Ferrers Locke was the guest of honour at Lord Thundersleigh's town house. Around the festive board were Sir Humphrey Dallas, Lord Justice Barling, Sir Ernest Paytree, the Chief Commissioner of Police, Inspector Pyecroft, and Jack Drake, and several notabilities in the Press world.

"And now, Mr. Locke," said Lord Thundersleigh, as coffee was served, "I would like to hear the full story from your own lips."

"Well, as you're so charming and hospitable a host, I dare not give you a refusal," said Ferrers Locke, lighting up a choice cigar. "It might prove a wearisome story, for it goes back to the time when Dr. Fourstanton, the notorious motor bandit, escaped from Parkhurst."

The Chief Commissioner grimaced and flushed a trifle. It was a sore point with him that Fourstanton had escaped the net of the law. Lord Barling grinned ruefully, for he, too, had occasion to regret that Fourstanton had never been caught.

"On that particular night," resumed Locke, "your lordship"—indicating Lord Barling—"was celebrating your sixtieth birthday. Now, it will be remembered that Montague Manners adopted the theory that Fourstanton was responsible for the full robbery that took place at your house. In actual fact, the robbery upstairs, my lord, was the work of Manners himself."

Lord Barling started a little, but the worst of the shock had reached him when he had learned of Manners' inglorious end.

"Manners' only clue on that occasion was the remnant of a cigar which he swore no one had smoked on that particular evening save Fourstanton. I have since discovered that Manners himself smoked such a cigar—that it was, in fact, his own cigar-end he picked up!"

"Go on!" said Lord Thundersleigh, with a nod.

The next stage of suspicion—suspicion when the chain had been forged with many similar links—takes place at Manners' flat in Jermyn Street, when, you will remember, he called me up on the phone and asked me to visit him. I have not the slightest hesitation in saying now that Manners was prepared to show me the loot he had recovered from your house, Lord Barling—"

"The loot he himself had stolen?" chipped in the Commissioner. "That was with the idea of diverting any lingering suspicion you might have had as to his own honesty?"

"Exactly," said Locke. "But his plans went astray a wee bit, for Fourstanton happened to come along at that time. Now, as Fourstanton had unjustly been given the credit of the robbery, he saw fit to help himself to the spoils to level the account, as it were. But of this Manners said nothing to me. That's where the cleverness of his criminal brain scored. I took too much on trust. I formed a friendship with him really against my instincts—instincts that told me he was a wrong 'un. But to the story."

"For a moment you must put yourself in Manners' position. He was a man enjoying the limelight, both as a cricketer and a detective. I was a keen detective, perhaps resenting the fact that he was so popular, and also, perhaps"—Locke smiled—"ready to prove to the world that I was a better man than he was. Manners' move, in the circumstances, was a decidedly clever one. He made a friend of me, pumped me as to this Dr. Fourstanton's methods, and finally invited me down to your place, Lord Thundersleigh, for a game of cricket."

"Well I remember it," said Lord Thundersleigh.

"His one idea at this time," continued Locke, "was to get me out of the way. I say it with all due modesty that Manners feared me. I was too dangerous a man for his risky game. Right, then! I receive a telephone call purporting to come from Dr. Fourstanton that sends me, hot haste, to London in Manners' car," he added impressively. "And Manners insisted that I should take his car. Why?" Locke gazed round upon his audience. "Because concealed in the dickey-seat of the car was an armed ruffian! In short, Mostyn, the obsequious butler, was my original captor."

"But how do you know that the car was not boarded during the journey?" put in Sir Ernest Paytree.

"Because I was travelling at forty to fifty miles an hour, and I didn't stop," explained the detective. "Obviously, then, my assailant was concealed in the car before I set out on the journey. And I discovered later that Mostyn, the butler, was conspicuous by his absence during that time. As you all know, I was taken to Babbledy Asylum and admitted on forged recommendations."

"Soon after, according to my reconstruction of the whole affair, your house, Sir Ernest, was burgled by Manners."

"By Manners!" exclaimed the baronet. "But he recovered all the stolen stuff for me?"

"Exactly," smiled Ferrers Locke. "That was his game. He knew the run of the house; he knew that one of your servants was an old lag, on whom, at a pinch, he could lay the blame; he knew he was capable of bringing off another laurel for his cap with little exertion. He found your stolen silver in the gardener's hut at the bottom of the garden—where he himself had put it—and he laid a deliberate trail with the oil from the silver crucible," he added. "I guarantee ninety people out of a hundred could carry that crucible of yours, hold it in what position they liked, and never leave

the trail that your burglar fellow, Sir Ernest, was supposed to have done."

"Of course, you never saw that trail of oil," said Sir Ernest Paytree. "You were in Babbledy Asylum all that time."

"But I heard about it from Pycroft here and my assistant, Drake," answered Locke.

"Then what was his motive," persisted Sir Ernest. "If he pinched my silver, what good did it do him if he returned it a few hours afterwards?"

"Why, he drew attention from Lord Thundersleigh's house to your house," said Locke.

"And, by gad," broke in his lordship, "that was the time my family ring was lifted!"

"Sure thing!" smiled Locke, taking a deep pull at his cigar. "This time it was Mostyn who played the burglar. While you were all passing at Sir Ernest's house Mostyn was calmly helping himself to that very valuable ring of yours."

"And the rascal knew where to find it," said his lordship, "because I had only been showing it to Manners that same day."

"And you must remember, too, that he counted on your offering a handsome reward for its recovery," continued the detective.

"But if Mostyn and Manners were working hand in glove like that, why did the latter take the trouble to hide it in the tower, drop clues about it, and then find it?"

"Because Manners—you must not lose sight of the fact—was supposed to be a detective. Every time he recovered any stolen loot he had to account for it. Each excursion of his was deliberately planned; clues were dropped that would only stand out when he was on the track, for he knew exactly where to look for them," said Locke. "Keep that well in mind. Remember, too, that he reaped a double glory every time. He not only claimed the rewards that were going begging, but he reaped the kudos from the Press, who boosted him right and left."

"Deuced cunning and clever!" said Lord Thundersleigh. "It almost seems incredible. And if I remember rightly, all the blame of these outrages were placed at Fourstanton's door."

"That's where Manners overreached himself," said Locke. "For no man can be in two places at one and the same time. You will recollect that the night your ring was stolen the thief who escaped was presumably Fourstanton. In point of fact, it was Mostyn, and he reached the tower a few minutes in front of Pycroft and Drake here, who were searching for me. But that was just a coincidence."

"Now we'll go back a bit. I was first called up, ostensibly from London, by Dr.

Fourstanton, and yet my assailant was in the car all the way from your Hampshire house, Lord Thundersleigh. He it was who staged the accident trick with Manners' own car; he it was who took me to Babbledy Asylum, and represented himself to be a Mr. Stanton, that name being used to give me the impression that Dr. Fourstanton was responsible for my incarceration."

"Then all the time these pair of scoundrels were working under cover of Dr. Fourstanton's name?" said the Chief Commissioner.

"You've got it. Actually there was no trunk call from London. I was phoned up by Mostyn, who was only a few rooms away from me, and, like a fool, I fell into the trap and raced to London. The moment I was out of the way, so the double robbery started."

"But why should Manners risk finding the ring for me once he had stolen it?" said Lord Thundersleigh. "Why didn't he dispose of it elsewhere?"

"Simple enough," smiled Locke. "He couldn't dispose of that ring without cutting it up. To do that would bring down the value of the ring by about half. Much easier for Manners to give it back to you for fifty thousand pounds and earn the distinction of being a great detective—see?"

"I follow. How terribly, fiendishly clever!"

"There's one point I haven't cottoned on to," said the Chief Commissioner slowly. "You say that Mostyn, Manners' partner, put you in the asylum. Then why the deuce did Manners take the trouble to get you out again?"

"Because I was too much of a handful for the asylum authorities," said Locke; "because the superintendent wrote to this man who called himself Stanton asking him to remove me within twenty-four hours."

"Which meant that if you had been moved your chance of freedom might have come, and your real identity proved," said Sir Ernest Paytree.

"You've hit it. So Manners gallantly rescues his own victim from a lunatic asylum by—ahem—clever detective work!" said Locke, a faint tremor passing over his face at recollection of the terrible time he had experienced in the asylum. "From there the story speeds up. I began to pay especial attention to the finger-prints I found on the papers of admittance to the asylum. At a later stage they were to compare very favourably with those of Mostyn, the butler. But meantime Manners and Mostyn break into Crossley Marchard's place in Regent Street. The finding of a cigarette-end led me to suspect what I instinctively

had always feared—that Manners was a double-dyed crook. I inquired of the agent who had the letting of the next-door premises—through which the two burglars made their entrance—whether Mr. Manners had ever been shown over the place. It turned out that he had. Next, I asked Mr. Marchard whether Mr. Manners was in the habit of visiting his shop pretty regularly. The answer came in the affirmative. The two clues coincided with the finding of the cigarette-end. On top of that I discovered how it was the thieves made the get-away. As you know, they raced across the roofs until they came to the chimneys of the Bandits' Club, and down the chimney that led to his own particular bed-room Manners dropped, followed by his butler."

"All very remarkable," said Lord Thundersleigh. "But how could Mostyn do all this? A man of sixty can't do monkey tricks like a young man. Climbing over roofs—"

"He was no more sixty than I am," said Locke. "I'll settle that little point now. Mostyn was Manners' half-brother—Mostyn Chambers—and to ensure the success of their partnership he had filled the role of Manners' butler-valet for seven years or more."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Lord Thundersleigh and Sir Humphrey Dallas together. "That explains a lot."

"Explains the familiarity that existed between them—eh?" said Locke. "But Manners was the brains of the concern; Mostyn was only his tool. However, to revert to the story. When I discovered that Manners was a member of the Bandits' Club all was plain as daylight. The past worked itself out beautifully. But I wanted real evidence. That was why I left the arrest until your reception night, Sir Humphrey. I knew Manners and his brother would not let a golden opportunity slip by. You see, up to that time Manners thought he had completely hoodwinked me. The ghost bizney put the finishing touch to the evidence, for the candle in the room behind the musicians' gallery bore Mostyn's finger-prints."

"It's marvellous how you worked it all out," said Sir Humphrey. "You're a wonder, Mr. Locke!"

"I wouldn't say that," said Locke gently. "And you mustn't forget that Pycroft and Drake here have had a lot to do with the case."

Drake and Pycroft blushed uncomfortably—or was it comfortably?

"Anyway, the world is well rid of a pair of rascals," said the Chief Commissioner. "All I want now to ensure a hearty night's
(Continued on page 27.)

TO AND FROM YOUR EDITOR!

NEXT WEEK'S FREE GIFTS!

MAGNETITES have a real treat in store—nothing less than **TWO SUPERB STAND-UP CUT-OUT ACTION PHOTOS** of J. B. Hobbs and H. Sutcliffe—the two famous All-England cricketers—which will be **GIVEN AWAY FREE WITH EVERY COPY** of NEXT WEEK'S "MAGNET"!

That's a bombshell of good news, isn't it? You'll go crazy with delight when you have these two magnificent free gifts in your hands. Real action photos, showing these first-class batsmen in play! Gee! They'll look simply top-hole on the mantelpiece of your den! Hold your breath! There's more good news to come!

THE NEXT SIX WEEKS!

That period will make history for the **MAGNET**, for each issue of this paper appearing during that time will be accompanied by two similar free gifts, showing the most famous cricketers of the present day. Bowlers, batsmen, wicket-keepers—they're all included in this magnificent set. I'll wager you are all keen to collect the lot. If you are not, it won't be your Editor's fault. I can't find sufficient words in my vocabulary of praise to describe these action photos; they are superb, magnificent, splendid, top-

hole! Why, the whole bang shoot of adjectives doesn't do them justice! You can get a better idea of what's coming to you by turning to page 2, where reproductions in miniature of next week's Bumper Free Gifts are shown. At the back of each action **STAND-UP PHOTO** is a description of the player, his record, etc. Nothing so good has ever been presented **FREE** to readers before. It's the opportunity of a lifetime, and, having said that, you do not require any further urging from me to order next week's **MAGNET** in good time.

AND STILL MORE GOOD NEWS!

Yes, it's a staggerer this week. The programme is simply brimming over with **41** items. Now, how does

TEN SHILLINGS A WEEK FOR A YEAR!

appeal to you? Foolish question, really! Why, with that amount of pocket-money per week you could do—Exactly! I know what you're thinking. Wait a moment!

FIVE SHILLINGS A WEEK FOR A YEAR!

That's another little surprise packet. These two magnificent prizes are offered in connection with a fascinating simple cricket competition which every one of you is capable of entering. But the prize list doesn't stop there. Not a bit of it! There are

FORTY MORE HANDSOME PRIZES!

that can be chosen, according to the fancy of the reader, from a long list of articles which includes Cricket Bats, Wireless Sets,

Model Engines, Tennis Rackets, Air-guns, and all those things dear to the heart of youth. Now, you can't afford to let this opportunity slip by. Look out, therefore, for the start of our simple

"FAMOUS CRICKETERS" COMPETITION!

I've not finished yet. By way of another surprise, I have cajoled Mr. Richards into writing a special series of Greyfriars yarns featuring Billy Bunter, and, what is more to the point, Bunter Court. I'm leaving you guessing at this stage. You'll find it all out for yourself next Monday when you read

"BILLY BUNTER'S BRAIN-WAVE!"

Then there's another good piece of news that mustn't be lost sight of—namely, the start of a powerful mystery serial, with Ferrers Locke, the eminent detective, well in the limelight. If you don't like

"THE VELDT TRAIL!"

I'll eat my hat! That's a go!

"CAMPING OUT!"

Harry Wharton & Co. have caught enthusiasm to make this number **TW** number of the year, for they have piled in with a special Supplement dealing with life under canvas. The result is distinctly good. Don't miss this treat.

Now, I've chinwagged a lot, and all I want to say before I ring off is that if Magnetites don't make sure of next week's issue of this grand old paper they'll have ample cause for regret. Till next Monday, then!

YOUR EDITOR.

THE SPORTING DETECTIVE!

(Continued from page 26.)

sleep is to go back and find that this remaining scoundrel, Fourstanton, has been rounded up."

"Then I can satisfy your wish," said Locke.

"You can?"

"I can," said Locke, with an easy smile. "For three days now I have had occasion to notice a gentleman who possesses a peculiar blood-red rash on his right hand—"

"The Fourstanton trade mark!" grunted the Chief Commissioner.

"The trade mark, as you say," continued Locke. "However, I've not worried myself unduly about him, although I knew his real identity the first time I saw that red rash. He's quite happy to stay where he is."

"Then where the deuce is he?" almost shrieked the Commissioner.

"In your office," said Locke. "He joined the Police Force three days after he escaped from gaol!"

"In m-my office?" stuttered the Chief Commissioner. "In—in the Force?"

"In your office," said Locke. "Now go home and ensure a good night's rest."

His remark broke the tension, and, incidentally, broke up the party. The Chief Commissioner was all for getting back to headquarters. Half an hour after he had gone Ferrers Locke was called to Lord Thundersleigh's telephone. There was a satisfied smile on his face as he replaced the receiver and turned to his lordship, Pyecroft, and Drake.

"Dr. Fourstanton is now on his way back to Parkhurst," he said simply.

"Then you were right?" stuttered Pyecroft blankly.

"Of course he was right!" said Drake enthusiastically.

"Not always," admonished Locke.

"But in one case at least he was right all the way along the line," said Lord Thundersleigh, a gleam of admiration in his eyes, "and that was in the case of the Sporting Detective!"

To which Pyecroft and Jack Drake accorded a hearty "Hear, hear!"

THE END.

(Don't forget—a brand-new serial starts next week, boys! And mind you bag the two wonderful Free Gifts that will accompany every copy of your favourite paper.)

A BOY'S CROSS-ROADS!

(Continued from page 20.)

"We saw that cad Roger Compton come out—he looked like a demon," said Harry Wharton. "Has he—"

"It's all right!"

"You look as if you've had a shock, old man!" said the captain of the Remove.

"I have—Heaven knows I have!" breathed Dick. "What does it mean—what can it mean?"

He moved on, still dazed, dumb-founded, trying to think it out—leaving Harry Wharton & Co. staring after him in astonishment. The mark of the Comptons—the unmistakable sign of the Compton race—so unmistakable that it had convinced the evil suspicious Roger—and he bore it, and had borne it from his birth! What could it mean? Who was Ragged Dick?

THE THIRTEENTH CHAPTER.

The Rightful Heir!

"IT'S the last time—help me to go, and see the last of me. I give in—I give in."

Sir Henry Compton stared at the cringing wretch before him, hard, cold, disdainful, but deeply surprised. Roger Compton looked like the wreck of himself—the sudden breaking of all his hopes had overwhelmed him. The dissolute, impudent adventurer had turned into the cringing wretch begging for alms, to flee and escape from hungry creditors, perhaps from worse. The crash he had long staved off, while he waited and hoped for the death of the boy Richard, had come at last, and the scapegrace was a broken man.

"I give in!" he repeated. "I've forced my way in here—it's for the last time! Help me to get away—I own up

beat! Beaten to the wide—beaten like a dog!"

He groaned.

"And what does this mean?" said Sir Henry grimly, sardonically. "The last time I saw you, you threatened me—"

"I believed it then," panted Roger wretchedly. "I believed that you had substituted a cheat for a dead grandson—I was sure of it! I believed it—I knew you capable of it."

"And you do not believe it now?"

"No!"

"And what has changed your belief?" asked Sir Henry, with grim irony. "The desire to raise a loan from me?"

Roger cringed.

"I know now that the boy is Richard! I own up beaten! Perhaps I was a fool to suspect a trick, but it looked like it—it looked like it! I take it all back—I ask your pardon and his. I am your kinsman—once the moneylenders know for certain that the boy lives, in good health, they will close in on me like wolves. And then—then—" He shivered. "There's more behind—a bill I've signed with another man's name. If I could have met it, well and good. But now—Henry Compton, will you see your kinsman hauled off to prison? A hundred pounds to help me escape, and you will never see me on this side of the sea again—I swear it!"

"You know now that the boy is Richard?"

"Yes, yes."

Sir Henry gazed at him hard.

"And you have come to me with this lie on your lips, for a hundred pounds?" he said, with bitter contempt.

"I tell you I've put it to the test," said Roger. "I swear I believed that he was a substitute—I swear it. I never dreamed that the Compton mark would be found on his arm. It could not be counterfeited, and I made him show me his arm in the presence of his headmaster."

(Continued overleaf.)

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