

Grand Long, Complete Tale.

DICK THE DECOY



A Splendid Long, Complete Yarn.

BY A NEW WRITER.

THE 1st CHAPTER.

A Difficult Case—Dick Gives His Advice—Off to Milford—A Meeting of Old Friends—Dick Commences His Investigations.

"DICK!"

"Yes, sir!"

"It's a difficult problem we have to face this time."

For the last half hour Mr. Redfern had been pacing his office gloomily, his forehead deeply lined by the intensity of his thought.

Now, as he started to speak, Dick Graham, a smart youth of sixteen years of age, glanced up quickly from a bundle of papers that lay before him.

"Surely it's hardly time to give up hope yet, sir?" he said, smiling. "It's not like the firm of Redfern and Co., the smart private-detective agency, to give up the battle without a struggle."

"On the contrary," replied the elder man, "I had no idea of any such thing. But for all that, I must own at present I don't see where to begin. It seems incomprehensible that so large a sum as £30,000 could be stolen from the Milford Bank only last night, and still no clue be left by which the robbers could be traced."

"But how can we be sure that's the case?" inquired Dick quickly.

"Why, bless me," answered Mr. Redfern, "haven't I just received a telegram telling me so?"

"And you're satisfied to leave that part of the investigation with the police?"

"I think, Dick, you overlook the fact that Inspector Grey, who is in charge of the case, is an old school chum of mine, and a man in whom I have perfect confidence."

"But how can you be sure he undertook the whole of the search himself? Excuse me, sir, if I put too many questions, only you seemed to ask my advice."

Mr. Redfern stopped still for a moment, as if in doubt. Then quickly turning to the pegs near by, he started to take down his hat and coat.

"You're right, my lad," he said shortly. "I won't lose another minute. You might call me a cab, while I get ready to take the next train to Milford. Well, what is it you have on your mind? Speak up, and don't be afraid."

"Oh, nothing, sir!" responded the lad, half ashamed of himself for allowing his thoughts to be so easily read. "I only thought you might have wanted me to accompany you."

Then, seeing the look of uncertainty on Mr. Redfern's face, he hastened to add: "I have an idea I could make myself of use in many ways were I to go with you."

"I'm afraid I can't spare you from the office, my boy," replied Mr. Redfern. "Who else is there whom I should feel comfortable in leaving in charge during my absence? Besides, I have to be back by this afternoon over that affair of the Red Hill murder."

"Isn't that every reason why you should take someone with you to pursue investigations after your return, if necessary?" inquired Dick, suddenly brightening up.

"Very well, I suppose you're right, as usual," allowed Mr. Redfern. "Get ready at once, while I tell Rowlands to see to the office while I am gone."

It was a fine sunny morning. The two men got into the cab that stood waiting for them outside, and a brisk drive of ten minutes brought them to the railway-station.

No sooner had the cab drawn up than they alighted and hurried to the booking-office.

As luck would have it, they just succeeded in catching the express, and in another five minutes were comfortably seated in a first-class compartment, and well on their journey.

"Here we are," said Dick, as he turned over the pages of "The Daily Mail." "It seems a pretty full account, too."

Then Mr. Redfern and his clerk began to digest the details of the robbery in so far as they were generally known.

At length the detective squashed the paper he was reading into a bundle, and tossed it on to the rack.

"Very interesting as an account," he remarked drily, "but from our point of view, no help in the least."

"There isn't too much to be made from it," assented Dick cautiously. "So far, all I've tumbled to is that it seems to be the work of a gang—that probably only one or two men actually entered the bank buildings, and that the gang is now probably in hiding, somewhere near the scene of the burglary."

"I'm afraid you'll have to learn not to jump at conclusions," was all Mr. Redfern's comment

when he had heard the young man out. "Try not to lose your head, Dick. It's what so many young fellows are apt to do at the start, only to get well set down for their pains."

A further run of half an hour brought them to the station of Milford, a fairly large town situated some five miles from the east coast of Yorkshire. There a neat little police dogcart was waiting for them. In it they were soon driven to the bank itself.

It was a strange scene that here met their gaze.

Already the people were flocking from miles around to have a look at the buildings that had been broken into.

They swarmed before the doors like a cluster of bees, and it was as much as a strong patrol of police could do to keep even the slightest order.

Scarcely had they arrived, when a cheery shout caused Mr. Redfern to turn round sharply, to find himself face to face with a stalwart police-inspector with iron-grey hair, and the bearing of a soldier.

"Tom Redfern!" he exclaimed. "My old friend, and arrived just when your services are most needed."

"Why, Gordon Grey, old man! I'm delighted at meeting you again after all these years! And to think of coming across you once more as a full-blown police-inspector!"

The two men shook hands cordially. For the moment it seemed as if they had entirely forgotten the grave business that brought them together in the pleasure of their reunion, but only for a moment.

"Come," said Inspector Grey, "I see they've managed to clear a way for us. We'd better get into the building at once."

They walked past the double line of police-officers who had by this time formed a pathway for them through the crowd, and soon the three were safely inside the great oaken doors of the bank.

"And who is the young man you have brought with you?"

"This is Dick Graham, my confidential clerk," answered Mr. Redfern. "Dick, allow me to introduce you to Inspector Gordon Grey, one of the smartest detectives in the force."

"Delighted to meet you, sir," said Dick, as he shook hands with the inspector. "I only hope I may be of some use to you in this business."

"As to that," said Grey, smiling somewhat dubiously, "you look full young for detective work as yet. Wait a few years, my lad, and I've no doubt you will be almost as smart a detective as your employer."

Then, turning once more to Mr. Redfern, he continued: "Now, I suppose, Tom, you'll be wanting to know how much the police have discovered so far?"

"Precisely," replied Mr. Redfern. "That's what I've come here for."

"In that case it won't take me long to put you in possession of the facts," said Gordon Grey, with an ironical smile. "So far, we've found out absolutely nothing."

"Nothing?"

"We've searched the bank high and low from garret to cellar, but no clue of any sort can we find."

Up to this point Dick had listened in silence. Now he put his first question.

"Would you mind telling me, sir, whether it was you personally, or some other of the police officers who made the investigation?" he inquired of the inspector.

"I can't say I went over all the ground my-

self," replied Grey. "Perhaps, after all, you're right, my lad, and I've been somewhat careless in not doing so."

"Then would you mind letting me examine the room by which the burglars entered?" asked Dick excitedly. "I've a great wish to go over it myself."

"That is quite unnecessary," interposed Mr. Redfern. "I feel quite confident that it was thoroughly examined when first the police took charge of the premises."

"Still," persisted Dick, "if Inspector Grey doesn't mind, it can't do much harm, at any rate."

"Nonsense!" broke in Mr. Redfern. "Dick, you are overstepping your privileges. I declare I begin to feel sorry I ever consented to let you accompany me."

Inspector Grey put his hand kindly on the lad's shoulder.

"Follow me," he said. "It's no trouble to take you to the scene of the burglary."

Walking to a door in the further end of the room, he threw it open and led the way to the manager's private office.

THE 2nd CHAPTER.

A Couple of Finds—Some Smart Deductions—A Council of War—Dick Suggests a Plan—The Inspector Starts on a Secret Mission.

AS soon as Dick got inside he walked to the window and commenced a minute examination of it, even to the broken fragments which lay strewn on the floor.

Ten minutes passed. The other men had almost forgotten the lad's presence, when a sharp exclamation from Dick called their attention.



With a snap the wire parted in the middle, and Dick was sent hurtling through space to the ground below.

They looked up to see the lad holding in his hand a single thread of grey wool.

"I am afraid my clerk is making an ass of himself!" said Mr. Redfern to his friend, in an undertone. "I blame myself severely for bringing him down."

"I'm not so sure," responded Grey. "Perhaps young Graham is on the wrong scent, but he seems to have a system, and I've never seen a lad throw his whole soul more into the work. You mark my words, Redfern, he'll make a great detective yet."

Another quarter of an hour elapsed. Both the men were now beginning to get tired of waiting.

"Bother the boy!" exclaimed Mr. Redfern. "I must put a stop to this farce, once and for all! Dick—"

But at that moment a low, indrawn whistle arrested the words on his lips. Dick's hand was at the moment placed in the window-sash, but even while the elder detective watched he withdrew it.

In the palm lay a small oblong piece of metal. "Hallo! what have you there?" cried Grey, as the two men ran forward to ascertain the nature of the find.

"A file," replied Dick, as he examined it closely; "or rather a part of a file, for one half is broken off."

"So your search, after all, has been by no means unrewarded, Dick," rejoined Mr. Redfern. "Of course, it isn't likely the find will be of any great importance. Still, it's quite possible it may come in handy as evidence."

But it was clear from the lad's manner that he attached much more importance to it than did his employer.

"But the strand of grey wool," he said, as he

picked it up from the table. "I have an idea there are a good many things to be deduced from that and the file."

"Indeed!" said Inspector Grey. "Fire away, Mr. Graham, and let us have your reasoning. It'll be interesting, at any rate."

"Then," said Dick, "I think the leader of the gang must be a burly ruffian; certainly less than six feet in height. He walks with a slight limp, is very powerfully built, has grey hair, and boasts a peculiarly evil countenance. Also, he is left-handed, and lost the use of his right eye. At the time the burglary was committed he was dressed in a suit of grey cloth. It was he himself who made entrance through the window while his comrades waited outside and took from him the lion as he handed it to them."

"By Jove!" gasped the police-inspector. "This is marvellous! You have described minutely Ripper Ralph, the leader of the great Leicester band of burglars!"

"Dick my boy," added Detective Redfern, "I feel I owe you an apology for ever doubting the value of your services. But how ever have you found all this out?"

"It's simple enough," said Dick modestly. "As to the clothes worn by Ripper Ralph, of course, it was easy to make a guess at them from the fragment of wool. You will see looking at the file carefully, in the first place, that there is some grey fluff corresponding to the wool found on the floor, embedded between the teeth. This, of course, settles the question as to the suit the burglar wore, as also the ownership of the file."

"Then, as to the bullion being handed through the window to accomplices outside, of course, it is obvious that if he climbed out of it himself there would have been almost as much broken glass found on the outside of the window as there is inside. But this is not the case."

"Splendid!" ejaculated the inspector, and his breath.

But Dick proceeded, seemingly quite unconscious of the great compliment that had been paid him.

"The long sweep with which the file was used, as seen from examination of the teeth, shows that the possessor was a powerful man and an extremely tall one. He was obviously left-handed, for had he been right-handed the instrument would have been used in the reverse direction."

"Your reasoning is extremely clever," said Mr. Redfern. "But the thing I can't understand is, how on earth did you know the fellow had lost his right eye?"

"That," assented Dick, "was a little more difficult. You see, if one eye is weaker than the other, a person's judgment of distances is always err on the side on which his sight is weakest. A file in regular use by a man whose perfect eyesight will wear most in the middle. When, therefore, I see that nearly all the teeth on this one shows towards the right-hand end, it naturally forms the conclusion that the owner's right eye is either almost or completely useless."

When Dick had finished speaking, the three men sat silent for some few moments. Inspector Grey was the first to speak.

"I feel I owe you a debt of gratitude, Mr. Graham," he said. "Never before, in the whole course of my professional career, have I had the pleasure of witnessing such a marvellous piece of deduction. Then it follows that the robbers cannot as yet have got far away?"

"Precisely," assented Dick.

"The country all around is being closely watched," continued Inspector Grey. "Under these conditions it would be quite impossible to remove the gold in anything like so short a time as they have as yet had at their disposal. The question now becomes, where are we to look for them?"

"Surely there must be some place in the vicinity which is known to be the resort of criminal characters?" urged Dick.

"As far as that goes," replied the inspector, "There is the Three Stars Inn, on the borders of Milford Marshes, but I have had it watched and feel pretty confident that the bullion has not been removed there, nor is Ripper Ralph anywhere in the vicinity."

Mr. Redfern got up from his seat.

"Dick," he said, turning to the young detective, "as you know, I have a serious case which calls me back to town. If you care to undertake this investigation for me I have every confidence in leaving you in charge of it. What do you say?"

"Thank you, sir, with all my heart," replied Dick.

"Very well," said Mr. Redfern. "Then will be off at once. Of course, you understand if you should find yourself unable to tackle the difficulty, you have only to wire to me."

"And I for my part will lend Mr. Graham the assistance in my power," said Gordon Grey, as the three strolled to the front entrance together.

"Then, good-bye, my lad," said the detective as he finally took his leave, and in a few moments he had started on his way to the railway station.

No sooner were Dick and the inspector alone than the former began speaking in a low voice.

"I want you to let me put an idea of mine into execution," he said. "I have formed a plan by which, I believe, I shall be able to proceed in tracking the villains to their lair. It's a bit risky, but I believe I can carry it off successfully."

"Well, Dick," said the inspector, "it doesn't sound too promising, but let's hear it at any rate."

As he spoke Inspector Grey led the way

ANOTHER PHIL KENYON STORY NEXT WEEK!

DICK THE DECOY.

(Continued from the previous page.)

horse's back, and soon he was being borne along at a smart pace.

How long the journey lasted he could not tell. It seemed like an eternity as he was jolted along, the cords which bound him biting deeper and deeper into his flesh.

The pain was terrible; indeed, nothing but his immense courage and indomitable will kept him alive during those awful hours.

At last the party came to a halt. He felt himself lifted from the horse's back, and then led blindfold along a rough path which sloped steeply downwards.

Then at last the bandage was removed from his face, and he was once more able to take in his surroundings. And, as he did so, a short gasp escaped him.

He was standing on a rough, wooden platform in the centre of a large subterranean cave.

All around, ranged against the wall, were long, narrow benches, on which sat the robbers. In the four corners of the great vault were piled boxes, sacks, and packages of all descriptions, which evidently contained the spoils of the marauders.

At the further end of the room, seated on a similar platform, and surrounded by six other members of the gang, sat the ringleader. One glance at him was sufficient to show Dick that this was none other than Ripper Ralph himself. Not only was his right eye missing, but, in addition, a horrible red scar seamed his whole face from forehead to mouth, giving to it a truly ghastly appearance.

"So, young fellow, you have dared set yourself up where even the police have failed?" cried Ripper Ralph, in a hoarsely discordant voice. "You thought the information as to our whereabouts you somehow managed to stumble upon, would enable you to place them on our scent. Now you're going to be taught your error. You are now in the secret tribunal hall of the band. That, for an outsider, is in itself a crime worthy of death. Still, you need have no reason to complain of injustice. I will put it to the court. What shall be the punishment of this wretched detective?"

As one man the six robbers rose from their seats to give their reply. And the voices of the six were as one as they shouted the single word "Death!"

When they had spoken, the ringleader turned to Dick again.

"The verdict you have heard," he said mockingly. "There is nothing further to be said. Indeed, I do not intend to waste words with you. It devolves on me, as chief of the band, to kill you, and since it is now some time since I have tried my hand as a marksman, I will make you the occasion of a little revolver practice. Gaolers, lead forth the prisoner to execution."

"You scurvy bound!" exclaimed Dick. "If only I had a horse-whip handy!"

But before he could utter another word he was seized, blindfolded, and dragged out of the judgment hall, and once more up the sloping path into the still night air.

When the bandage was removed once more, Dick found himself standing in a clear space surrounded by tall trees, while scattered all around his feet were fragments of broken branches.

Dimly outlined between the tree trunks he could just discern the crumbling walls of the great, ruined castle.

But standing around in a circle, thus completely hemming him in, were the robbers, altogether some twenty-five in number.

Opposite him, and but three paces distant, stood Ripper Ralph, revolver in hand. But something else he noticed, and the sight filled him with renewed hope.

Not twenty yards from where he stood was a horse tethered to the trunk of a tree. At the same time he noticed that several of the ruffians standing on guard were in a state of more or less complete intoxication.

Just then, with a short laugh, Ripper Ralph commenced to speak.

"Now then, my fine fellow, say your prayers if you know any, and be quick about it. It's your last chance. You can take my word for it that in less than half a minute you will be in kingdom come!"

"Rot!" cried Dick. "That's where you make a great mistake. On the other hand, it is you and the rest of your drunken gang who will be safely lodged in police cells before many hours are past. Go on! Fire off your popgun!"

For an instant Ripper Ralph stood motionless, paralysed at his prisoner's audacity.

The next, and before he had time to re-

cover himself, Dick had seized a log of wood which was lying near by, and, with unerring aim, dashed it full in the villain's face.

Down went Ripper Ralph, sprawling on the ground, his revolver flying from his nerveless grasp. Instantly all was commotion.

Then, like a flash of lightning, Dick, making a furious charge, bowled over one of the intoxicated guardsmen, and, before anyone realised what was happening, the young detective had loosed the thoroughbred, mounted its back and was galloping away for dear life.

Soon he emerged from the clump of trees and galloped like the wind across green fields and pathways, over hedges and ditches.

Already he was out of sight of the robbers. Deliberately he reined in his steed. Could he be mad that he should do anything so foolhardy?

For perhaps ten minutes he remained thus, keeping at a slow trot. Then a shout coming to his ears warned him that his pursuers had caught sight of him. Instantly he was off again at top speed.

The night was resplendent with stars, while far away towards the east the full moon was already rising. Rapidly locating the Pole Star, he set his course in an easterly direction.

He knew enough of the country to be aware that the chase lay along open fields and pastures terminating in a long, deep valley which ran down to the seashore some thirty miles distant.

At first he had been gaining rapidly on his pursuers, but now his pace was beginning to flag. Suddenly, with a thrill of horror, he awoke to the fact that the horse he was riding was already pretty nearly worn out after a

stant. The next he had balanced himself, and was running along on the single wire at full speed. For Dick was a clever wire-walker.

Would it hold? As Dick formed the question in his mind, he caught his breath sharply. He knew that every step he took increased the strain on the wire, until by the time he was midway between two telegraph-poles, the tension would be enormous.

For an instant his heart seemed to stop beating as he reached the fatal point. The next moment it was safely passed, and, almost as soon, he arrived at the second telegraph-pole.

Again the swing off, again the same moment of terrible anxiety, and the third pole was reached. And then on again for the third desperate attempt.

At last only three poles separated him from the seashore. But at this point what he had dreaded occurred. With a snap, the wire parted in the middle, and he was sent hurtling through space to the ground below.

There was a slight shock as his feet touched the soil, but nothing more. By the greatest good fortune, the ground on which he had fallen was soft and spongy.

With a dash, Dick gained the beach and rushed towards a small, light boat which was drawn up on to it. Next moment he had pushed it into the water, and sent himself and the little craft skimming far out on the still little bay. But, as he looked back, the moonlight revealed the presence of another and larger boat moored not ten yards from where his had been.

Already his pursuers were jumping into it, and soon, with a hoarse yell, they had started once more in pursuit.

Dick rowed for all he was worth. Some little

of the ruffians was manœuvred. Then, forming a sort of procession, the police led their captives up to the top of the cliff, where a conveyance was ready and waiting to take them to the police-station.

"My heartiest congratulations, Dick. Your scheme has worked to perfection!" cried Inspector Gordon Gray, as he came up and shook our hero by the hand.

"It would all have been of no use but for you, sir," replied Dick modestly. "Had you not arranged the boats as you did, and at the same time so successfully ambushed the police behind the rocks, I should not be here now. There's no time to be lost if you wish to catch the remainder of the gang. They are hiding in the dungeons of the old castle on the hill, some thirty miles inland."

"That must be Chilhurst Castle," exclaimed Inspector Gordon Gray excitedly. "I have long had my doubts as to whether it would be advisable to explore the dungeons underneath the ruins. I will see that a detachment of police is sent immediately to capture the remainder of the gang."

Almost as soon as he had formed the resolution, the inspector suited the action to the word.

When a strong body of police had been despatched for the purpose, he turned to Dick once more.

"Why, you're wounded!" he cried, as he caught sight of the blood on his arm.

"It is nothing," replied Dick carelessly. "Only a little flesh wound."

But his face was white from loss of blood. This would not do for the kindhearted inspector, who insisted on binding up the injured man with his own hands. Then, when this was done,

they got into a carriage which was drawn up in readiness for them, and drove back to town. It was now nearly half-past six o'clock in the morning, and Dick was glad enough of the good news which awaited him at the inspector's house on his return.

And afterwards, no sooner had he got into bed in the great bedroom which the kind police officer had set at his disposal, than he closed his eyes, utterly wearied out with the excitement of the day. Nor did he wake till many hours had gone by.

At last, when he had dreamed once more and come down almost the first person to greet him was Mr. Redfern.

Dick caught sight of him as he entered the inspector's private study. His employer was standing with his back to the fire, and the young detective advanced and approached him, and soon their hands were clasped in cordial salutation.

"Dick, my lad," exclaimed Mr. Redfern, "you have fulfilled more than fulfilled, the trust I reposed in you. Of course, you will be news to you that the rest of the gang were captured last night in the caves under Chilhurst Castle. But I have better news for you even than that. As you doubtless know, there has been a reward of a thousand pounds offered for their capture. This your smartness has earned for the time. In consideration of it, I have decided to make you junior partner in the business. That is one condition."

"And what is that?" inquired Dick breathlessly.

"That you solemnly promise never again to risk your life in such a hare-brained way as you did last night. Will you agree?"

"As I have done my duty up to now, I hope I shall do it in the future," replied Dick.

"And quite right, too, Mr. Graham," chimed in Inspector Gordon Gray, who had just entered the room. "I am glad to see that last night's ordeal has not knocked a single ounce of the spirit out of you. But now come, for, if I take not, our morning meal is awaiting us."

And arm in arm the three comrades went to breakfast.

THE END.

(Three grand long, complete yarns appear next Saturday. Be sure you get "The Boys' Friend" on Tuesday next. You will be sorry if you miss it.)

"BRITAIN AT BAY."

This Grand Story appears in

"PLUCK"

NOW ON SALE.

3 Long, Complete Stories. Price 1d.



Suddenly, without the slightest warning, a cloth was thrown over Dick's face, while he felt his hands being firmly tied behind his back.

long day's exertion. Still, there was nothing for it but to trust to luck that it would carry him the distance.

On, on he went for something over an hour. Then there was a stumble. He pulled the reins smartly, and once more the good steed found its legs, and they were off again.

Another quarter of an hour, then another stumble.

Again some smart manipulation of the reins narrowly averted a catastrophe. But Dick knew the horse was done for.

And still behind him he could hear approaching ever nearer and nearer the thud, thud, of pursuing hoofs.

He was now leaving the region of flat, cultivated land, and entering a quiet valley flanked on either side by low hills. At last a sudden bend in the road disclosed the sea, some five miles distant, and shimmering peacefully in the moonlight.

"Surely I can't be beaten now!" gasped Dick. And, even as the words escaped him, the horse staggered and fell.

Quick as thought, he leapt to one side, under cover of one of the thick bushes that lined the roadway. From here he was able to watch his pursuers as they clattered past.

There were eight of them. Even as he watched, one of the horses went down, crushing its rider beneath it. Dick saw the rest stop for a moment; then, darting along behind the bushes, he ran on towards the beach.

Suddenly a brilliant idea struck him. By the side of the roadway, and right in the shadow of the hills, ran a single telegraph-line.

To swarm up the post was the work of an in-

stant. The next he had balanced himself, and was running along on the single wire at full speed. For Dick was a clever wire-walker.

It was towards this the young detective directed his course.

Already he was nearing it when the silence was broken by the sharp crack of a revolver. The villains were firing on him. Still he rowed on, hoping against hope that the movement of the boat would cause them to miss their aim.

He had almost reached the mouth of the tunnel when another report sounded, and Dick's left ear dropped from his nerveless hand and fell with a splash into the water.

Almost at the instant, the lad divested himself of his coat, and, with a plunge, had dived from the little craft. Already he was swimming in the still water. Soon he was beneath the circle of stone formed by the natural archway.

But the larger boat was now almost upon him. Dick gave a glance ahead. All in front was quiet as the grave. Then, putting forth all his remaining strength in one last powerful stroke, he shot out into the moonlit cove beyond.

But the chase was over. Already he was overtaken. With a cry of triumph, Ripper Ralph leant over the side of the pursuing boat, and caught the young detective by the neck.

"Got you at last!" he cried.

And even as he did so, another voice broke the stillness of the night.

"No. Got you this time, Ripper Ralph!" And at the same instant, from behind the surrounding rocks sprang up a score of armed constables.

There was a sharp tussle, but it lasted scarcely a minute. By the end of that time, every one