

NEW SCHOOL TALE

YOU CAN START NOW.



THE RIVALS OF ST KIT'S

By Charles Hamilton

BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

The day PAT NUGENT, a young Irish boy, arrives at ST. KIT'S, an election is taking place for the captaincy of the school—ELDRED LACY and ARTHUR TALBOT being the two candidates. PAT is soon spotted by a crowd of juniors, and to stop him from giving his vote he is thrown into a cupboard in LACY'S study. He goes to sleep, and on waking up he hears voices—the voices of ELDRED LACY and his brother, RUPERT LACY, the Squire of LYNWOOD: "You must ruin and disgrace ARTHUR TALBOT, and drive him from the school. He is a menace to me—to both of us. But ruined, disgraced, driven forth into poverty and obscurity, I shall no longer fear him!"

PAT is eventually released from the cupboard, and after the election, which is decided in favour of TALBOT, becomes great chums with BLAGDEN and GREENE. These three friends take an instinctive dislike to ELDRED LACY, and continually get bullied by him. One day a curious meeting of the two LACYS and a strange tramp, whose name is BLACK, takes place in a lane not far from the school. A few days later this man, Black, stops ARTHUR TALBOT and tells him he is his father, and that he is coming up to the school to claim him.

A Cruel Blow!

"You must not come up to the school!" gasped Talbot.

"Who says I mustn't?" sneered Black.

"Man," cried Talbot, in an agony, "if this horrible tale is true—if you are indeed my father, you cannot want to shame me before all the school!"

"Yes, I said you'd be ashamed of your old father! I ain't good enough to show to them swells, of course!"

"You—you don't understand. You must not go to St. Kit's. Man, be reasonable. I—I beg you not to go to the school. Give me time to think."

"Changed your tune, ain't you?" sneered Black. "Still, I don't want to be hard on you. Maybe I won't show you up at the school, if you behave decent. I'm hard up. There's no law agin a boy helpin' his old father, that I know of."

Talbot drew a breath of relief.

"You are welcome to all I have!" he gasped. And he felt in his pockets, and turned out every coin there, without counting them, into the hands of the ruffian.

"Good enough! I'll let you off, for all you've been so lucky—for a bit, at any rate."

"Oh, Heaven help me!"

Talbot leaned heavily upon the stile. His face was colourless, and thick beads of perspiration were on his clammy brow. In that ten minutes he seemed to have aged as many years.

"That's all right, so far," said Black. "I'll let you off for a bit. But I've got to see you again. I'm an affectionate bloke, I am, and I hain't seen my dear boy for so long, you know. When shall I see you again—hey?"

"I—I don't know—I—"

"This here tin won't last me long. I shall want some more. Of course, I'm always willing to come and share with you up at St. Kit's!"

"For mercy's sake—"

Talbot seemed utterly crushed. The horrible revelation had come so suddenly, he had had no time to prepare for it. His whole life seemed to be shattered by this discovery. He longed to get away, to be quiet, to have time to think it out.

"I'll see you when you like," he said wearily. "I—I must think! I—I will write to you if you like."

"O.K. Name of Seth Black, at the Dragon Inn."

"I will remember."

Talbot turned, and went blindly up the lane. All the spring was gone out of his step, and he walked with drooping head.

Seth Black watched him with eyes twinkling with spiteful satisfaction till he disappeared from sight. Then his glance turned towards the board fence on the other side of the lane, behind which Lacy had concealed himself.

"You can come out!"

"Are you satisfied now?" said Black, with a leer.

"Yes, yes; more than satisfied! It's true, then—you are really his father!"

"Don't you believe it?"

"It does not seem possible."

"Hain't I proved it?" demanded Black. "He's satisfied, anyway."

"Well, yes; it looks like it. By Jove, this is a stroke of luck I never dreamed of! He's captain of St. Kit's! My hat, I'll have him down, right down in the dust, before long!" Lacy laughed aloud in his satisfaction. "So far he had won all along the line. I'll change all that!"

"You're a pleasant young gentleman, you are!" said Black admiringly. "Your friends must be proud of you, I don't think!"

"Mind your own business! I must go now. We mustn't be seen together. Where can I see you to fix matters up, about showing him up, and to bring you the tin?"

"You can come to the Dragon."

"Right! It may be some days before I can get the money; but as soon as I have it I'll come. My hat, it's my turn now, and no mistake!"

With a nod to the ruffian Lacy strode away towards the school. Nearly at the gates he overtook Talbot. The captain of St. Kit's was walking slowly, and with his head bent down, seemed to be buried in gloomy reflection.

"Hallo, Talbot!" said the prefect. "Anything the matter?"

Talbot looked up with a start.

"No; nothing," he said.

"You look ill."

"I am all right."

"Sure?" said Lacy. "You look as white as a sheet. Had a shock of any kind?"

"I am all right," said Talbot.

Lacy walked on. Never had he seen that look in Talbot's face before. The rival he hated seemed to be utterly crushed beneath the weight of the misfortune that had fallen upon him. But in Eldred Lacy's heart there was no mercy and no relenting.

A True Chin.

"Can it be true. Can it?" Talbot muttered the words feverishly between dry, burning lips. "Can it be true?"

He had reached his study; how, he hardly knew, for he was like one in a dream, scarcely conscious of his movements. Now he paced the room, to and fro, to and fro, with tireless steps, his face colourless, his eyes burning, his hands clenched.

Could it be true? Was that man, that brutal, disreputable ruffian, indeed his father?

Was the secret of his birth revealed at last, and in such a manner? Seth Black his father! He the son of that unclean, unscrupulous brute!

Could it be?

NEXT SATURDAY: "MR. CRAWFORD'S DOUBLE."

A School Tale dealing with

Bribe & Co. By H. Clarke Hook.

ASD

"THE PATAGONIAN STAR."

A Complete Tale of

Captain Frank Perrett, Detective

IN "PLUCK" I!

There was a knock at the study door, but in his absorption Talbot did not notice it. It was repeated, and then the door opened.

Brooke, of the Sixth, stood in the doorway, looking in amazement at the captain of the school. Brooke was Talbot's closest chum, and his look immediately became concerned at the sight of the captain's worn, white face.

"Talbot, in goodness' name, what is the matter?"

He came quickly into the study, and closed the door.

Talbot turned towards his chum with a red flush in his cheeks.

"It's—it's nothing, Brooke," he stammered.

Brooke shook his head.

"It's no good telling me that, Talbot," he replied.

"You're in trouble. Can't you tell me what it is? If you don't want to, I'll clear; but perhaps I could help you out. You know I'd do anything I could."

The yearning was strong in Talbot's heart to confide in someone—to ask and obtain counsel in this terrible hour of trial.

There was the doctor, but Talbot shrank from speaking to him, and bringing upon him the trouble that overwhelmed himself.

He looked at Brooke hesitatingly. The Sixth-Former looked him straight in the eyes.

"You can rely on me, can't you, Talbot?" he asked quietly.

"Yes," said Talbot slowly. "But this—this—"

"I know it's something out of the common, to cut you up like that," said Brooke. "But whatever it is, you know I'm your friend."

"You might not be after you know."

Brooke stared at him in amazement.

"What do you mean, Talbot? You don't think this, whatever it is—and I haven't the faintest idea—would make any difference to our friendship, do you?"

"It might."

"Nonsense! You haven't done anything to be ashamed of, old man; I'm jolly sure of that. And I don't see what else could—"

"Suppose a horrible disgrace were to fall upon me," said Talbot, with a shudder—"not my own fault, you understand, but a disgrace all the same—"

"Then you could depend upon me to stand by you."

"I believe you, Brooke. But—"

"If you'd rather not tell me, don't," said Brooke. "I don't want to force your confidence. But if I could help you in any way, I want you to be sure that you could rely on me."

(Another long instalment of this school tale next Saturday.)

Your Editor's Corner.

All letters should be addressed, "The Editor, PLUCK, 2, Carmelite House, Carmelite Street, London."

"MR. CRAWFORD'S DOUBLE"

is the title of next Saturday's special long, complete school tale. It will deal with the doings and adventures of

SPECS, THE TWINS & CO.,

by H. Clarke Hook.

"Mr. Crawford's Double" is a tale full of fun and adventure, and a little seriousness. Don't fail to read it.

The second long, complete tale, entitled

"THE PATAGONIAN STAR,"

will deal with the thrilling adventures of Captain Frank Ferrett, detective. I am sure "The Patagonian Star" is the best story that has been written of this popular character.

Next Saturday's PLUCK will also contain an extra grand long instalment of Charles Hamilton's school tale,

"THE RIVALS OF ST. KIT'S."

That odd halfpenny! Do you know what to do with it? Do you know how you can best spend it? In any case, let me tell you this: There is a new story book just out, and the price of it is just one halfpenny!

One halfpenny is not easily spent—that is, not unless it is backed up with some more of its kind. And if you want to get real good value for that odd halfpenny, you cannot do better than exchange it for the paper I have in mind—"The Gem."

The Editor of "The Gem" says, on the first page of this week's issue, "A Story for Everyone, and Every Story a Gem," a remark which is not only apt, but true.

On sale Friday, April 5th, two more new additions to "The Boys' Friend" 3d. Library.

The titles of these two numbers are:

No. 15, "THE DRUDGE OF DRAYCOTT SCHOOL,"

a splendid, complete tale of school life; and

No. 16, "THE SILVER DWARF," a tale of Nelson Lee, Detective, by Maxwell Scott.

YOUR EDITOR.

ORDER IN ADVANCE!

PLUCK

A LONG,
COMPLETE SCHOOL TALE
EVERY SATURDAY.

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The above is a small reproduction of the cover of next Saturday's PLUCK, 32 pages. Price 1d.