

Maurice Merriman & Cedric Wolfe in this issue.

PLUCK

JACK'S DEGRADATION.
A Tale of School Life. By Maurice Merriman.

CRANK'S CASTLE.
A Story of a Strange Creation.

1^D



BEFORE THE RUFFIAN COULD RISE, JACK FLUNG THE TABLE OVER HIM, AND JUMPED ON IT,
BY WAY OF ADDING WEIGHT. (See page 192.)
NO. 141. VOL. 6. NEW SERIES.

NEW SCHOOL TALE.

THE RIVALS OF ST. KIT'S.

Pat Nugent's Indignation!

"Lucky we two were together," said Dunn. "He might have suspected us." "Quite possibly. But I don't think suspicion is likely to fall upon the wrong party."

"You mean—?" "I mean, what was Talbot doing in the Head's study? We have only his word for it that he had only just gone there. I don't see why we should believe him. A chap who would steal would lie!"

"But Talbot—it seems impossible—"

"It seemed impossible that he should be one of the fellows who go to the Dragon, and yet we saw him coming out of that low hole with our own eyes."

"That's true."

"And I know he gives money to that precious father of his."

One of the fellows saw him give Black a sovereign in the lane, and told me about it."

"How! That's where the money goes!"

"Yes; I expect the ruffian has threatened to come and give him another showing - up before the school if he doesn't shell out. He wouldn't like to ask the Head; or perhaps Black asked for more than the Head would have given him if he had asked."

"Very likely."

"So Talbot took it. That's what he was doing in the study. No wonder he looked queer when he came out and suddenly met us."

"My hat, old chap! It looks black against him."

"One thing's certain," said Haywood, between his teeth. "We've stood a lot from Talbot. It was all very well for him to ride the high horse, and give us chaps lectures, while he was supposed to be a straight, decent fellow. If he's a thief, that makes matters worse. And if he's a thief, Dunn, the Head's not going to hush matters up. All St. Kit's is going to know it. That's flat!"

Dunn grinned. "It will be a fall for his pride, and no mistake."

"Well, he ought to be kicked out of the school, you know, with that father of his. I'm pretty sure he's a thief, and the Sixth will know all about it in an hour,

the whole school before the afternoon. Now, I'd better go along."

Dunn went back to the Sixth room, his heart beating with excitement. Many of the fellows noticed his looks, and whispered inquiries. Dunn freely confided to them all the known facts, and some unknown ones, in whispers. In a few minutes the Sixth Form all knew that the doctor suspected Talbot of breaking open his desk, and robbing it—for that was the impression Dunn gave them.

The doctor was in truth far from suspecting anything of the kind. It had not even crossed his mind yet.

Haywood went on to the Fourth Form room, and found Talbot there.

"The Head wants to see you in his study, Talbot," he said. "He says I'm to look after the Fourth while you're gone."

Tom nodded, and left the Fourth Form room. The juniors looked discontented.

"Oh, hang it," said Pat Nugent to Blagden, "we don't want that spalpeen here."

"You are talking, Nugent," said Haywood. "Take fifty lines."

Pat made a grimace.

"Isn't Talbot coming back?" he asked.

"No," said Haywood, with a sour smile. "He isn't. He's been stealing something out of the doctor's desk, and he'll very likely be arrested. Now, get on with your work."

Pat's eyes blazed, and he sprang to his feet.

"Did you say Talbot had stolen something?"

"Yes; sit down."

"I won't sit down!" howled Pat. "You dare to call Talbot a thief! You liar—liar—liar!"

He shouted out the words fairly in Haywood's face, as the senior advanced furiously towards him. But it was not only Pat the senior had to deal with.

"It's a lie!" shouted Blagden, jumping up.

And in a moment the whole of the Fourth were on their feet, howling at Haywood till he was nearly deafened.

"It's a lie—it's a lie!"

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NEXT SATURDAY'S COVER!

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This picture depicts an exciting incident from "The Brothers of Borden," by Jack North, one of the two complete tales for next Saturday's PLUCK. Price 1d.

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