

Grand School and Adventure Stories ⁱⁿ this Number.

PLUCK

RIVAL CAPTAINS.

A Tale of the Fifth at Wycliffe School. By JACK NORTH.

NAT THE TRACKER.

A Thrilling Story of Adventure.

1D



"CATCH, YOU FELLOWS!" SHOUTED PADDY, AS HE HURLED THE GUY WELL OUT BEYOND THE STRUGGLING MASS OF HITTITES.



THE RIVALS OF ST KIT'S

BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

When Pat Nugent arrives at St. Kit's, an election is taking place for the captaincy of the school between Arthur Talbot and Eldred Lacy. Talbot gains the victory, but afterwards resigns his position on account of a mean plot instigated by Eldred Lacy and his brother, who is Squire of Lynwood. Soon after the election for the position of captain, which Talbot has vacated, draws near, and Talbot's chum Brooke, who opposes Lacy, is elected captain of St. Kit's. One morning the Head discovers he has been robbed of £80. He calls a meeting in the hall, and Arthur Talbot is openly accused of the theft. His study is searched, and the notes are found hidden beneath the carpet; but Arthur declares he is innocent. He is sent to Coventry by the whole school except Nugent, Blagden, and Greene, three chums, who believe in his innocence, and who are determined to stand by him. However, Arthur Talbot decides to run away from St. Kit's. He leaves the school by night, and as he is passing over the bridge which spans the river he hears a splash, followed by a weak cry for help. The cry is from the lips of Seth Black, a tramp who has been bribed by Squire Lacy to claim Talbot as his son. When Lacy hears that Arthur is going to leave the school he knows that Black will be a hindrance to his plans, so on the night that Arthur leaves St. Kit's the Squire attacks Black on the river-bank, and then throws him into the water. Arthur Talbot, however, eventually saves Black from drowning and takes him to the school. The next morning the Squire of Lynwood rides up to St. Kit's to see the Head. During their conversation the Squire hints to Dr. Kent, that, with regard to the attack upon Seth Black, suspicion rests upon Talbot. "I am sorry for him, but he must remain. You understand, doctor, that I do not wish to be hard upon him, but it would not be consistent with my duty as a magistrate to allow him to go with so grave a suspicion against him," said Squire Lacy. (Now go on with the story.)

Brothers.

"You—you will interfere!" cried the Head. Squire Lacy looked very grave and concerned, but very inflexible.

"Consider for a moment, my dear Dr. Kent. Terrible as the thought is, it seems only too likely that Talbot is guilty of this rash act. By the time Black can speak he will be cleared if he is innocent, and can go where he pleases. But if Black should speak, and denounce him, what would our position be, having allowed him to escape scot-free?"

The Head did not reply.

It was pretty plain from his looks that he would, even in case of Talbot's guilt, willingly have allowed him to escape the consequences of his action. But he could hardly say so to a magistrate of the county.

The squire knew perfectly well what was passing in the unhappy doctor's mind.

"You see, I could not possibly lend myself to anything of the kind," he went on. "Unless it is clearly understood that Talbot remains at the school, doctor, I am afraid it will be my duty to speak to Inspector Legge on the matter."

The Head shuddered.

"Oh, no, no, no!"

"I am very unwilling to do so. But can you answer for Talbot?"

"Yes—yes! He shall remain at the school."

"You answer for him, and take the responsibility?"

"Yes—yes!"

"That is satisfactory," said the squire. "I hope—I trust—that Talbot will be cleared of all suspicion. But, in case of the reverse, I could not consent to his being allowed to depart. If you answer for him, I am satisfied."

"I answer for him," said the doctor heavily.

The squire took his hat.

"I came here to speak on a matter connected with the Dunraven Scholarship," he remarked. "At such a time, however, I will not trouble you with that. Good-day, sir!"

He shook hands with the doctor, and left the study. But he did not leave the school. He knew his way well to his brother's study, and he went there in the hope of finding Eldred Lacy. He found him. Lacy was not in the classroom, as was usual at that time of the morning.

The prefect had pleaded illness that morning, and, indeed, he looked far from himself. His face was white, his brow wrinkled, his eyes heavy and restless.

He gave a start as the squire came in. For a moment he seemed to shrink away from him, and Rupert Lacy snapped his teeth as he observed the involuntary movement.

"What is the matter with you, Eldred?"

"Nothing!"

"You look ill."

"Only—only a bit of a headache."

"I want to speak to you, but I will not risk it here. Get leave from the Head to come over to Lynwood."

"Very well."

"Mind, I want to see you soon—at once! Much may depend upon it."

The squire turned to the door again. As he laid his fingers on the handle, Lacy started forward.

"Rupert, I—I—"

The squire looked back.

"Well, what is it?"

"I discovered a little while ago who—who—"

"What are you stammering about?"

"Who it was that was brought in here last night," said Lacy. "Of course, you know that Talbot returned, and that he brought in a man he had saved from drowning in the river?"

"Yes; I know that."

"The man was Seth Black."

"I have just learned it."

Lacy gave him a searching glance.

"You have only just learned it?"

"Why not?"

"Rupert! Talbot found him in the water just after ten—I heard what he said to the police—and at ten—at ten o'clock you—"

"Go on!"

"You were to meet him on the bridge."

"Well?"

"You told me to have no fear—that he would not meddle with the affair of Talbot—that you would answer for it."

"I was right, it seems. He has not meddled, and though now it suits my plans better for Talbot to remain at the school, there is nothing to fear from Seth Black."

"But did you—did you—"

Eldred Lacy broke off; he could not get out the words. The squire eyed him coldly.

"Did I what, Eldred? You are talking in riddles."

"Did you— Oh, you understand!"

"What if I did?"

"Oh, Rupert!" Lacy sank into his chair, white as death.

"Good heavens!"

The squire took a rapid step towards him, and gripped him by the shoulder.

"Pull yourself together!" he said roughly. "This is not the time for playing! Ask me no questions, and I'll tell you no lies. This is a game for life or death, and we are in it together to the end. Mind, I shall expect you in an hour!"

The prefect nodded without speaking. Rupert Lacy left the study, and in a few minutes more he was astride his horse, and cantering along the road to Lynwood.

NEXT SATURDAY:

"THE MOOR HUNT,"
A Powerful Long, Complete
by Michael Storm

AND

"THE POWER OF JU-JU,"
A Story of Thrilling Adventure,
by Jack North

IN "PLUCK." 1d.

Talbot interviews the Head!

Arthur Talbot tapped at the door of the doctor's study, and entered.

He had come to say good-bye.

There was some bitterness in Talbot's breast; he thought that the doctor might have had more faith in him.

But every bitter thought vanished as he saw the Head.

Dr. Kent was seated in his chair, and his elbows were on the table, his face bowed into his hands.

He looked up as Talbot entered, and showed a face with the stain of tears upon it—a face that seemed to have grown old and haggard.

Talbot stepped quickly forward.

"Doctor!"

"Arthur—Arthur!"

For a moment he could not go on. The words died in his throat.

Talbot gazed at him in amazement. He saw that there was something more here than the matter of the stolen bank-notes, though he could not guess what had happened since he saw the Head last.

"What is the matter, doctor?"

"I—I—" The Head pulled himself together. "Talbot, answer this question to me. Did you—did you do Seth Black harm last night?"

Talbot's look showed his wonder.

"I pulled him out of the water."

"But who hurled him in?"

Talbot was silent.

"You know?"

"I believe I know," said Talbot quietly. "But I have no proof, and so I shall not mention the name of the man I suspect. You would not credit such a suspicion."

The Head looked at him searchingly.

"Arthur, you hated this man—you had reason to hate him."

"No doubt."

"You did not believe that he was your father?"

"No!" said Talbot firmly.

"Did he—did he meet you on the bridge? Did he make any demands there—such as he had been accustomed to make? Did you quarrel?"

Talbot's face grew more amazed, and suddenly the meaning of the halting sentences dawned upon him. His face went pale and hard.

"Did I fling the man into the river?" he asked.

"Is that what you mean, sir?"

"Talbot!"

"Am I an attempted assassin as well as a thief?" said the lad bitterly. "It is a question I never expected you to ask of me, sir."

"Arthur, my boy—"

(Another fine instalment next Saturday.)

Your Editor's Corner.

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

"THE MOOR MEN."

Michael Storm, author of "Brooks of the Lower Fourth," will contribute to our next issue, a powerful tale of school life at Ravenscar.

While telling you about this I must also mention that I shall be glad to receive postcard criticisms of

"THE MOOR MEN."

Our second long, complete will deal with some thrilling adventures in deepest Africa, and I am sure that you will be as pleased with Jack North's tale of adventure as his school stories.

By the way, I shall have some important announcements to make next Saturday concerning the

CHRISTMAS DOUBLE NUMBER OF "PLUCK."

OUT TO-DAY.

You can now obtain the three new additions to "The Boys' Friend" 3d. Complete Library.

These are the ones to ask for:

No. 30:

"TOM MERRY & CO.,"

a splendid and absolutely new tale of school life and adventure, by Martin Clifford.

No. 31:

"THE RIVAL FORTS,"

a thrilling tale of the service

NEXT SATURDAY'S COVER.

of the Hudson Bay Company, by Murray Graydon.

No. 32:

"WOLVES OF THE DEEP,"

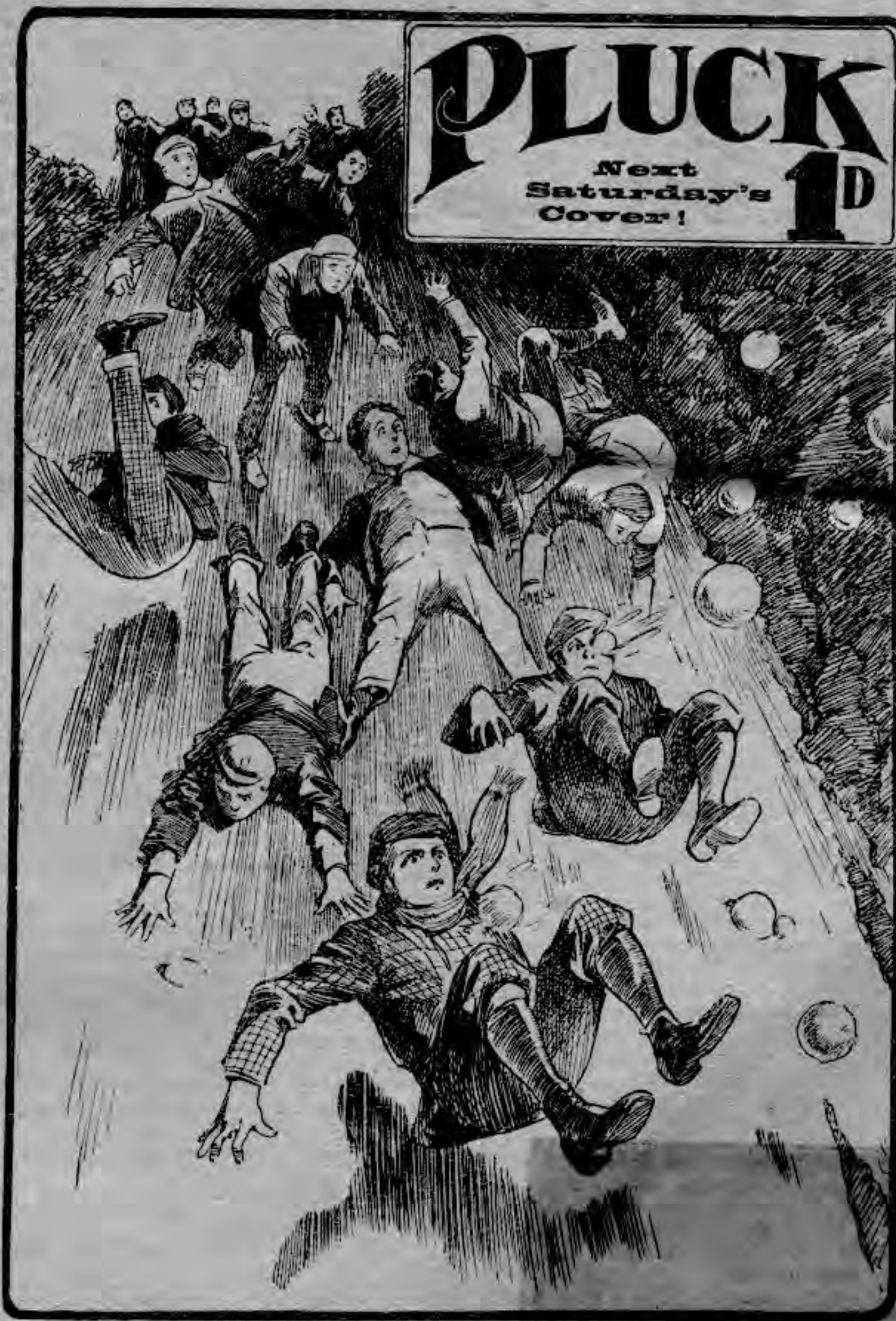
a stirring story of a great conspiracy, introducing Ferrers Lord and Ching-Lung, by Sidney Drew.

The covers of these three splendid books are beautifully printed in colours.

Buy them to-day. Price threepence each.

Tom Merry—the schoolboy you will like—is again in the "Gem" Library. Now on sale. Price one halfpenny. You should read about Tom

Merry.
YOUR EDITOR



This picture depicts an incident in "The Moor Men," by Michael Storm, one of the two complete tales in next Saturday's PLUCK. Price 1d.