

NEWSAGENTS & READERS

should kindly note that
the next issue of 'Pluck'
will be a Grand

DOUBLE
NUMBER.

PLUCK

THE MOOR-MEN.
A Powerful School Tale. By MICHAEL STORM.
THE POWER OF JU-JU.
A Thrilling Story of Adventure. By JACK NORTH.

1D



AT SOMETHING LIKE
FOURTEEN MILES AN
HOUR, MOSTYN AND
HIS CREW FLOUNDERED
DOWN THE GLIDE
HOPELESSLY.
(See "The Moor-Men," by
Michael Storm.)

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 £250. He calls a meeting in the hall, and Arthur Talbot is 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 Green, 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 he 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, and therefore he must remain at the school. The doctor interviews Talbot, and therefore he knows anything about the attack upon Seth Black, or whether he had anything to do with flinging him into the river. "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—" (Now go on with the story.)

Talbot remains at St. Kit's.

"I will answer it," said Talbot, with a bitter smile. "I did not harm Seth Black. Even if I had hated him intensely, even if I had been threatened by him, the mere possibility that he was my father would have prevented me from raising my hand against him."

"I was sure of it. I—"

"But, as a matter of fact, Black had ceased his demands, and was anxious to help me to get right at the school, and to remain here—at least, so he had told me at our last meeting. I never saw him on the bridge at all. My first sight of him was in the water, where he had been hurled by the man he met there secretly."

"I know it. I believe you—I believe you! It has been suggested to me—"

"By Squire Lacy?" asked Talbot, with quick intuition.

The Head did not reply.

Arthur Talbot burst into a laugh. It seemed grimly humorous that the man who had attempted Seth Black's life should have put this idea into the doctor's head.

"I hardly expected that," said Talbot. "However, I assure you on that point. I saved Seth Black's life, but I was not the one to put it in danger."

The doctor held out his hand.

"Forgive me, my boy, for allowing the thought to cross my mind for a moment. You would forgive me freely if you knew the misery it has caused me."

Talbot's face softened. But he did not take the outstretched hand.

"I cannot take your hand, sir, while you believe me guilty of a theft," he said quietly. "Don't think me ungrateful. But for you I should have grown up a beggar and an outcast. I owe everything to you. But—"

The Head looked him straight in the eyes.

"You are right, Arthur. But I do not believe you to be guilty of that theft."

Talbot gave a joyful start.

"Doctor!"

"It is true. I have been shaken in my faith in you. I admit it, but—I cannot believe you guilty."

Arthur Talbot gripped the doctor's hand.

"Thank you, sir, for those words. They will at least be a comfort to me, wherever I may go. Upon my soul and honour, I am innocent!"

"I believe you—I believe you. Heaven grant that we may be able to prove it. But now you will remain?"

Talbot shook his head.

"Impossible. The school believes me guilty. Hardly half a dozen boys have faith in me. I cannot remain as a pariah—as an outcast, cut by the school, sent to Coventry."

"You will live it down."

"A thing like that cannot be lived down," said Talbot quietly. "There is only one thing that can make it possible for me to remain at St. Kit's, and that is the discovery of the

rascal who robbed your desk and placed the notes in my study."

"That may come."

"I hope so. But, in the meantime, I cannot stay here."

"I will be frank with you, Talbot. You must remain. I have answered for you to Squire Lacy," said the Head.

Talbot started violently.

"What do you mean? Does Squire Lacy wish me to remain?"

"He insists upon it."

"How? Why?"

"Because he cannot regard you as clear of suspicion until Black recovers and gives the name of his assailant," said the Head gravely. "It is his duty as a magistrate, Arthur. If I had not promised for you, he would have spoken to Inspector Legge, and you would have been detained on suspicion."

"So Squire Lacy wishes me to remain at St. Kit's," Talbot spoke almost dazedly.

What had caused so sudden and complete a change in the squire's plans? What could possibly be the squire's motive for this? He had plotted and schemed with Eldred Lacy to drive Talbot from the school; now he had interfered in order to keep him there. What was the solution of this riddle?

"You will remain, Talbot?"

"If you have answered for me, I must remain," said Arthur. "At least, until Seth Black recovers himself sufficiently to denounce his assailant. I confess that I cannot in the least fathom Squire Lacy's motive."

"His duty as a magistrate."

Talbot smiled.

"Well, I shall remain, then, for the present."

The Head drew a deep breath of relief.

"And I hope, Talbot, that in the interval something will come to light to prove your innocence," he said. "Mind, I come to light to prove your innocence. I shall say so plainly to the whole firmly believe in it now. I shall say so plainly to the whole school. Arthur, my lad, you have always been brave and steadfast; you can face this as you have faced other difficulties."

"I will try to, sir."

"You will find your position painful, I know. But there are already some of the boys who believe in you, and my declaration will carry weight."

"Undoubtedly."

"For the rest, you must be patient."

After a few more words, Arthur Talbot quitted the Head's study. He had plenty of food for reflection. The squire's change of plan was a surprise. It was useless to tell the Head anything of what had been discovered until he had definite proofs to give. His suspicion of the squire would be unuttered until Seth Black was in a state to confirm it.

The Sixth Form were coming out of their classroom, and Talbot met them a minute after leaving the doctor's study. He was the recipient of many curious stares.

The First Recruit.

"No, sir."

"Have you had a pin in your hand during the last few minutes?"

"No, sir."

"Once and for all, did you stick a pin into Nugent?" exclaimed Mr. Slaney, taking up a cane.

"I—I—I—"

"You did, Blane?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then what do you mean by telling me that you had not had a pin in your hand, Blane?" said the Form master, in a voice of thunder.

"It was true, sir. It's fixed in my boot."

There was another joyous giggle from the class.

"Ah!" said Mr. Slaney, smiling grimly. "It's fixed in your boot, is it, Blane? Come out here, sir! You need not trouble to remove that pin, Blane. Leave it exactly where it is, and come out here at once."

Blane reluctantly obeyed.

"Now, sir, show me the boot in which that pin is fixed."

Blane, standing awkwardly on one leg, held up his right foot for the inspection of the Form master.

Mr. Slaney inspected it.

"Ah, admirable," he said—"so admirable that you had better let the whole class see it, Blane, as an instruction to them. In short, you will kindly stand in that attitude until the end of the lesson. If you put your right foot down to the floor, Blane, I shall cane you severely. Your clever handiwork will be on view for ten minutes."

Mr. Slaney turned to the class again.

Blane was as red as a turkey-cock. His utterly ridiculous aspect, standing there on his left leg, with his right held high in the air, tickled the Fourth Form immensely.

Suppressed giggles broke out time and again during the remainder of the lesson, while the unfortunate joker stood on one leg, twisting and squirming with the fatigue caused by that unusual attitude.

For ten long minutes the ordeal lasted.

Whenever Blane ventured to allow his elevated leg to sink towards the floor, he found the eagle eye of Mr. Slaney upon him, and it came up to a level again as if moved by a spring.

When five minutes had ticked off the class-room clock, Blane ventured an appeal.

"Please, sir—"

Mr. Slaney whisked round.

"Did you interrupt me, Blane?"

"Please, sir, may I change legs now?"

"No, you may not."

And the ordeal continued.

Blane was aching in every limb by the time the clock indicated the time to dismiss. Never had any junior at St. Kit's been gladder at the end of a lesson.

Mr. Slaney made the class a sign to dismiss, and the boys rose to file out. He turned a grim glance upon Blane.

"Blane, you may put your foot down now."

With a gasp of relief Blane allowed his right boot to clump on the floor. The next moment he was clasping his right leg with his hands, and wriggling in a most absurd manner.

"What is the matter with you, Blane?"

"If you please, sir, it's the cramp—the pins and needles, sir."

"Indeed! I hope this will be a lesson to you, Blane. Do you think you are likely to affix a pin to your boot in the class-room again?"

"N-no, sir."

"You are quite sure?"

"Yes, sir—oh, yes, sir!" gasped Blane.

"Then you may go."

The junior skipped out of the class-room after the rest of the Form. He found scant sympathy among his Form fellows.

"Hallo!" said Hooper. "You did look funny, Blane, standing there like a moulting old hen on one leg—you did really."

Blane shoved him aside with a considerable degree of roughness, and hobbled on after Pat Nugent. The leg was still very stiff and crampy.

"Nugent, you beast, I'll wring your neck for that!"

Pat walked on without a word, out into the close. Blane grasped him by the shoulder and swung him round, and thrust his red, excited face full into the calm countenance of the imperturbable Irish lad.

"Nugent, you beast, I'll—"

Pat, still without a word, put his hands on the excited junior's chest, and gave him a shove that made him sit down suddenly in the close. As Blane sat there gasping, Pat Nugent walked away, still without a word.

Pat Nugent came into the end study with a bag of oranges under his arm, from the school shop. He was returning with satisfaction.

"Sure, and I told ye that this Form would get sick of the Coventry before we did," he remarked. "And it's true! My belief is that if we stick it out long enough, they will come round to our way of thinking."

Blagden nodded.

"I believe you. Chuck us an orange. I— Oh, you and I didn't say chuck it at me!"

The orange plumped up on Blaggy's nose.

"Never mind," said Pat cheerfully. "You've got it, and that's the chief thing. Here you are, Greene, old lad!"

"I've noticed," said Blagden, "that some of the Form are already saying that Talbot may be innocent after all. That's due to us."

"About everything the Fourth Form does with any sense in it is due to us," Pat remarked modestly. "But, as you say, they are showing signs of coming round. Trimble is too much of a bully to make his party fond of him. My idea all along was, that if we stuck it out, we should get a party in the Fourth to back us up, and that would be the beginning of the end, as they say in the novels. Anyway, the Coventry worries them more than it does us."

"You're right! Hallo, what's that fearful row?"

There was a sound of scuffling and exclaiming in the corridor, then a bump against the door of the end study.

Faintly from the outer side of the door could be heard the voice of Harris, a junior of the Lower Fourth.

"Look here, Trimble, I shall go in if I want to."

"No, you won't!"

"I shall!"

"You know they're in Coventry, young Harris," said the captain of the Upper Fourth. "Lucky for you I caught you in time! Now you'll get off with a clump; but if you had gone into the end study, you'd have had a dormitory licking!"

"I'm not going to—"

"You're not going into that study. Come along!"

"I won't!"

"Yes, you will! Come on!"

There was a yelp of pain, and a sound of dragging feet. Trimble, the captain of the Upper Fourth, was evidently removing Harris by main force.

Pat had sprung to his feet.

"That's the first recruit," he grinned. "Sure, and what did I tell ye? Ain't I a giddy prophet, kid?"

"You are," said Blagden. "But what are we going to do—interfere?"

"Arrah, rather! Trimble has no right to come down like that on a visitor to our study. Follow your uncle."

Pat tore open the door and dashed out into the corridor. Trimble had held of Harris by the ears, and was dragging him along, with many protests and woeful sounds from Harris.

Pat Nugent did not speak to Trimble.

Even in a moment of excitement he did not forget the cast-iron rules the end study had laid down for themselves.

He dashed along the passage, gripped Trimble by his ears, and with a powerful twist forced him to release his captive.

Blagden seized Harris by the arm, and ran him into the study.

Pat shoved the captain of the Upper Fourth against the wall, and left him gasping there, and followed the recruit into the end study in a leisurely manner.

Harris stood rubbing his ears, which were very red after Trimble's rough handling of them.

"I say, you chaps," he said hurriedly, "I came here to—"

Trimble burst into the study. He was red with rage, and for the moment quite reckless. He rushed straight at Harris, who promptly dodged behind Pat Nugent.

"Let me get at that mongrel!" roared Trimble.

Pat did not speak.

"Let me get at him!"

As Pat neither spoke nor moved, Trimble seized hold of him to shove him aside. Pat gave a grip for grip, and the next moment Trimble was on the floor. Pat sat on his chest.

The lanky captain of the Upper Fourth wriggled and kicked. Quietly, silently, solemnly, Pat squeezed his orange over Trimble's face, and rammed what remained of it into his open mouth. Trimble gasped and spluttered.

"Lemme getup! I'll skin you!"

Pat glanced at his chin.

In solemn silence they seized Trimble, and yanked him out of the study, and plumped him down into the passage, none too gently. Then they retired into the study. Pat shaking a warning finger at the bully of the Upper Fourth as he closed the door.

"It's such a—such a—silly place at night, Trimble!"
 "All the better for us, silly!"
 "Yes; but I'm—I'm—"
 "You're afraid of ghosts, I suppose? You wish you hadn't said a word to me about the money, I suppose?"
 "Oh, no, no—no, not that! Only I—I—" said Trimble contemptuously. "Yes, I know. Well, it's too late to think of that now. You're in for it, and you've got to come and guide me, and the cash is ours. It will be rather a joke on Lacy when he goes for it."
 There was a sound of faint footsteps receding down the passage. In the gloom the chums of the Lower Fourth stood silent, breathless. Not till Trimble and Cleeve were quite gone did Pat make a movement or a sound.
 "You heard that?" he whispered tremulously. "What do you make of it?"
 "Blessed if I know!" muttered Magden. "They expect to find some money in the old chapel—some cash hidden there by Lacy, from what I can make out."
 "Yes, that's it. Don't you understand— Think. There was cash as well as banknotes stolen from the doctor's desk. The notes were found in Talbot's study, but the money has not turned up yet."
 "My only hat!"

"The money was hidden somewhere. We already knew that Lacy had fixed this on Talbot. He had the money in the old chapel, I suppose, for safety. Cleeve has got wind of it, and told Trimble, because he dare not go there alone."

"My Aunt Maria Jane."
 "They're going to collar it now. Come on!"

"Are you going to follow them?"
 "Yes," said Pat grimly; "and catch them in the act."
 "I'm on!"

And the juniors hurried swiftly but silently downstairs. Trimble and Cleeve were gone, but it was easy to find the unfastened window by which they had left the house.

In a minute more the chums were in the open air. Pat Nugent looked keenly round him; the two were nowhere to be seen. In the close starlight glimmered faintly, and the shadows were thick round the old buildings.

"Come on!" whispered Pat. "They're in the old chapel now."

The chums hurried towards the ruined chapel. The clink of a falling stone caught their ears. Keeping in the shadows, they caught sight of two forms at the entrance of the old crypt. Pat nudged his companions.

"It's the crypt, lads. Look!"

(Another fine instalment next Saturday.)

Your Editor's Corner.

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

A BIG PROGRAMME!
 Our next issue of "Pluck" will be the GRAND CHRISTMAS DOUBLE NUMBER, and I have pleasure in announcing that it will contain Three Extra Long Complete Stories.

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