

THE SCAMP OF WYCLIFFE.

PLUCK

THE SCAMP OF WYCLIFFE.

A Splendid School Tale. By JACK NORTH.

DOGGED!

A Thrilling Complete Story of a Great National Secret.

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LONG, COMPLETE SCHOOL TALE.

NO. 161 VOL. 6. NEW SERIES

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. 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. For a whole day Seth Black lies unconscious in one of the bed-rooms. In the night the three chums, by shadowing Trimble and Cleeve, are instrumental in recovering the doctor's stolen money; and it is so proved that Arthur Talbot is no thief. Squire Lacy breaks into the school, and is almost successful in silencing Seth Black for ever. He is frustrated by Talbot, and in endeavouring to escape meets with a terrible accident. At last Seth Black recovers consciousness, and asks for Talbot, who tells him that Squire Lacy will be dead by the morning. (Now go on with the story.)

Seth Black Speaks Out.

"Dead! What do you mean?" exclaimed Seth Black. "He has met with an—an accident. He fell from a window."

"And he is dying!"

"He cannot live many hours longer."

The ruffian was silent for a few moments.

"Then all is safe. But tell me, where was he? What was he doing? What window did he fall from? One in this 'ere school?"

Arthur Talbot nodded. A gleam of comprehension darted into the eyes of the ruffian.

"I understand, Master Talbot. He was coming here—coming here to make sure that I never woke up to tell what happened on the bridge."

Talbot did not speak, but Black needed no confirmation of his suspicion. His sunken eyes were blazing.

"And who stopped him? How was he stopped?"

"I suspected," said Talbot slowly. "I was on the watch."

"You saved my life a second time."

"I suppose so."

"You—you are sure he's past doing harm? He's as cunning as Satan. You don't know him as I do," said Seth Black anxiously.

"It is quite certain. His limbs are shattered. The fall was a terrible one. The doctor says he cannot live out the night."

"Then all is safe. You will come into your own now, and—"

The nurse touched Talbot upon the arm. He understood, and nodded.

"I must go now," he said gently. "I will come and see you again if you wish."

"Let the police know. Let them come and hear what I have to say!" said the ruffian eagerly. "I sha'n't feel safe until all is told."

"Very well. They will be here as soon as they know you are able to speak."

"Thank you, Master Talbot! You've been good to me—better than I deserve. I—I've been a 'ound," said Seth Black, with the first traces of feeling Talbot had ever seen.

"I've been a 'ound, Master Talbot, and you have saved my life arter what I did! But I tell you it will make a difference to me. I'm going to turn over a new leaf when I get out of this. I've had my lesson, Master Talbot."

"I am glad to hear you say so," said Arthur; and he pressed the man's hand ere he left him.

Seth Black sank back upon his pillow. In the hard, brutal face there was a change not wrought only by illness, there was a change of the spirit. He had, as he declared, had his lesson.

Arthur Talbot walked away with a wrinkle of thought on his brow, a far-away expression in his eyes. Black knew his secret. He had not learned it yet, but he would learn it. He would know what his true name was; what his father was.

The boy's heart beat at the thought. The secret of the silver box was about to be revealed.

"Talbot, old fellow"—he looked up at the sound of Brooke's voice—"I'm jolly glad!" said Brooke, for about the twentieth time that day. "It's ripping to have all that cleared away, Talbot, and the truth known. When I think that I was fool enough to doubt you for a moment—"

Talbot made a gesture.

"Don't speak of that, Brooke."

"I won't. Whenever I think of it I want someone to kick me hard—I do, really."

Arthur smiled.

"But I'm glad I came round before the truth came out publicly," said Brooke. "If I had waited for your innocence to be proved before I stood by you I should never have dared to look you in the face again."

"You stood by me when the whole college was against me," said Talbot. "That is enough for me to remember, Brooke. That's all I think about now."

"It's jolly good of you to say so. There's one thing, I'm not captain of St. Kit's any longer."

"Why's that?" said Talbot quickly.

"I'm going to resign."

"Resign the captaincy! Why?"

"Because it's above my weight," said Brooke cheerfully. "Because it belongs to you."

Arthur Talbot shook his head.

"Don't do anything of the kind, Brooke. I admit that I felt it keenly, giving up the captaincy of the school; but that's all over now. You are captain, and you are a good one. I shall back you up for all I'm worth."

"I know you would, Talbot; all the same, I'm going to resign. I should have done it already but for what's going on in the house." Brooke nodded his head in the direction of the Squire of Lynwood's room, and Talbot understood.

"Can't have any bother about an election now, of course. I shall post up my resignation next week."

"But—"

"And I fancy you will be re-elected unanimously," said Brooke. "Not a word, old chap; I've made up my mind."

And so it had to be settled.

Strange News.

"Where is he?" It was a low, faint voice from the sick-bed—the voice of the Squire of Lynwood, strangely changed. The deep, powerful tones of Rupert Lacy had sunk to a faint, tremulous mutter.

Death was stretching out its icy hand for the Squire of Lynwood. Rupert Lacy had come to the end of his life's road, and, in dull pain and despair, was looking into the darkness beyond.

He had staked everything upon that last throw of the

NEXT SATURDAY: "ONE OF THE BEST," A Splendid Love, Complete School Tale, by H. Clarke Hook.

AND "THE SECRET SPELL!" A Thrilling Story of the Adventures of a Clerk, by Norman Collier.

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die, and he had lost. The game was up. But even in those last dark hours the squire's courage did not forsake him. He could look at the terrible reality with an unflinching glance.

Of little enough weight seemed now the passions that had assayed him. What was name and wealth and position to a man about to plunge for ever into the Unknown?

"Where is he?"

"You want to see someone?"

"Yes. Send him to me."

"His brother, undoubtedly," said the physician, in a low voice. "He is in no fit state to talk, but it is useless to deny him anything. He cannot survive the night."

Five minutes later Eldred Lacy entered the room. The prefect was looking pale and worn. The day had been a day of misery and humiliation to him. His guilt was known throughout the school, and it was only the squire's precarious state that had saved him from a public expulsion.

He had kept mainly to his own room, but when he left it not a soul spoke to him. Even his own special cronies, Haywood and Dunn, who had backed him up in everything against Talbot, showed that they had to draw a line somewhere. They had no word for him, and Eldred Lacy had been made to feel his loneliness and shame to the very full.

His brother's condition, too, was a blow to him. So far as he knew, he would succeed to the estates of Lynwood; but, to do the perfect justice, he was not thinking of that now. His elder brother had been a kind one to him, and in this terrible hour the prefect found an unsuspected depth of regard in his own cold heart.

He came quietly to the bedside. The squire looked round. The expression of his face showed that it was not Eldred he had wished to see. At the same time, he was glad to see his brother.

"Eldred?"

"You wanted to see me, Rupert?"

"No—yes—it is no matter. Yes, I wish to speak to you, Eldred, my poor fellow. Sit down, and listen to what I have to tell you."

Eldred took a seat beside the bed.

"You need not retire," said the squire, as the doctor made a movement. "There is nothing in my affairs that will not be known soon to the whole world, and I wish, too, to be able to testify that Eldred knew nothing."

The physician nodded, and resumed his seat.

"I came here last night," said the squire, in a low, clear voice, "to finish the work I began on the bridge the other night—to silence Seth Black."

Eldred's lips twitched. He had known that perfectly well, but he understood that his brother, who had forced him to complicity in the terrible plot, wished to shield him now.

(Another fine instalment next Saturday.)

Your Editor's Corner.

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

"ONE OF THE BEST"

Our old friend, H. Clarke Hook, author of the popular tales of "Specs, the Twins & Co.," is contributing the long, complete school tale to our next issue. Mind you got it.

"THE SECRET SPELL"

by Norman Collier, is the title of the second long, complete story.

This tale deals with a very fascinating subject, and will follow the strange adventures of the young back boys who figures prominently in

"THE SECRET SPELL"

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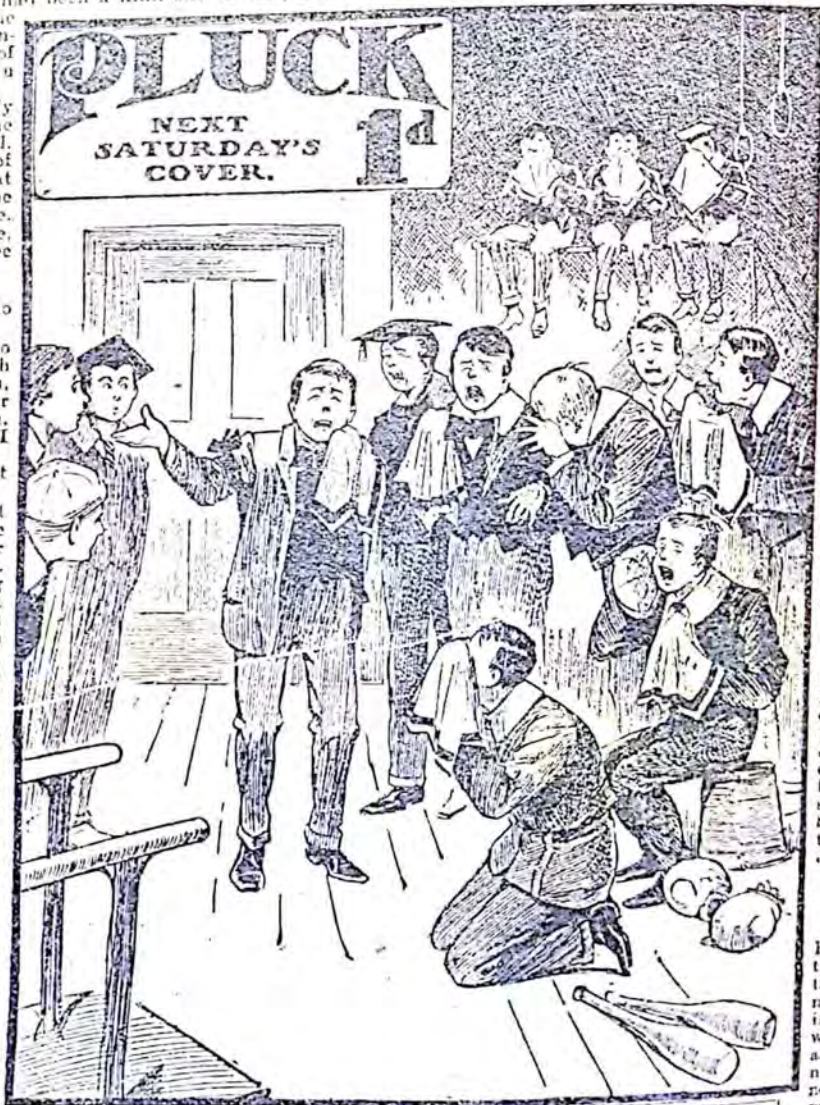
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YOUR EDITOR



This picture depicts an amusing incident in "One of the Best," by H. Clarke Hook, one of the two complete tales in next Saturday's *PLUCK*. Price 1d.