

Complete Tales for All!



"THE WILD MAN OF PRINGLE ISLAND."

**A POWERFUL
SCHOOL TALE.**

NO. 173. VOL. 6. NEW SERIES.

NEW SCHOOL TALE.

Only for a second or so did he watch her coming along under full steam, great clouds of black smoke pouring out of her funnels, then he swung round and faced Mayne.

"Come aboard!" he ordered, and his voice was almost fierce. "That's a cruiser coming up, and it's ten to one that she's going to search us."

"But what can we do?" Mayne wailed.

"Sink this old tub!" John Smith answered sharply.

"Pull out the plugs from the holes that half-filled her with water yesterday, pump water into her, instead of out, and"—he touched the cannon for a moment—"we can blow a hole through her with this. The officers on the cruiser will only think that it is a distress signal."

"Come aboard!"

Every man in the boat towing behind knew that they were in bad straits, and that it would go hard with them if the cruiser came up and found the contraband aboard. Mayne himself set the example of tugging in the slack of the tow-rope, and inside a few seconds he and his men came tumbling on to the deck.

"Hoist the ensign upside down!" Mackay yelled.

And when no one obeyed, all being too busy with other tasks, he performed the work himself. It was a good idea to fly the signal of distress, for then—

Boom! The whole of the old tramp steamer shook, as if her timbers would spring apart as the signal-cannon was discharged in her forehold, and John Smith soon saw that his plan had taken effect. The old boat began to settle rapidly, so fast, indeed, that it did not seem certain that the cruiser would come up before she sank.

An answering gun sounded on the cruiser. They had taken the report for a signal of distress.

"To the boat!" John Smith shouted. "They'll have to waste time picking us up."

Most of the men went tumbling down into the boat, but Mayne, a curiously-strong look of determination on his face, stood hesitating by the rope that led down to it.

"There is no time to lose," John Smith said sternly. "This old tub may founder at any moment."

"I am not coming!" Captain Mayne answered simply.

For a moment John Smith allowed a look of surprise to cross his face, then the truth entered his brain, and he gripped the man sharply by the arm.

"I am not a policeman," he said quickly. "I have accomplished what I promised to do—the Government will never know that the Milan carried a cargo of contraband—and that is enough for me."

Captain Mayne hesitated no longer, but dropped into the boat. Out went the oars, and the sailors pulled rapidly away from the sinking tramp. The cruiser was no more than a mile away.

A couple of hundred yards were covered, then the cruiser, her decks lined with men, came to a full stop, and a gang-way splashed down. Five minutes later the tramp's boat was alongside, and her crew went clambering up on to the deck of the cruiser.

The commander of the cruiser, a suspicious expression on his face, came hurrying forward.

"What craft?" he demanded sharply.

"Milan, fra London, in ballast," Captain Mackay answered shortly.

The naval officer swung round sharply, and as he did so the old tramp swung her nose upwards, lay like that for a second, then disappeared beneath the waves.

"I had orders to search her," he said sharply. "We received information that contraband was being carried to Morocco, and we were detailed to examine every tramp sailing in that direction."

"Ah'm thinkin' ye'll be findin' it a wee trifle deeficult," Mackay remarked, with a grin.

John Smith stepped forward, for he was afraid that Captain Mackay might go too far.

"May I ask where we shall be landed, captain?" he inquired. "Let me introduce myself. I am John Smith, of Daring & Co. You may remember me in connection with the theft of charts from your flagship."

The naval officer's face cleared, and he held out a hand to the famous detective.

"We shall be in Gibraltar to-night," he said civilly.

The next morning John Smith cabled from Gibraltar to Mr. Warner.

"All's well," was his brief message.

"And I think he will understand," he muttered, "th Daring & Co. have not failed."

THE END.

(Two long, complete stories again next Saturday, entitled "A Leader of Eight," a school story, and "Jim Lee the Virginian," a tale of adventure.)

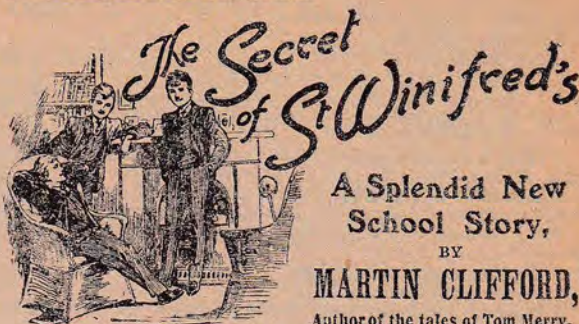
NEXT SATURDAY:

"A LEADER OF EIGHT,"
A Splendid Long, Complete School Tale,
by Lewis Hockley.

AND

"JIM LEE, THE VIRGINIAN,"
A Thrilling, Complete Tale of Adventure,
by Clabon Glover.

IN "PLUCK." 1d



READ THIS FIRST

The train containing the boys of St. Winifred's slowed down alongside Ferndale Station platform, "You bouncer! Why didn't you yell?" Locke, a Fourth-Former, shouted the question to Clive Lawrence—a new boy, but one in no way shy or constrained. "What was there to yell about?" asked Clive. Locke sniffed. "Oh, of course, you don't know; you're a new kid. We're at daggers drawn with the Fifth at St. Winnie's, and Kendal and Keene, who are standing over there, are the heads of the Fifth." Clive joins the party of Fourth-Formers, and they eventually get to the school by capturing the Sixth Form brake. Clive is told to share a study with Fisher and Locke. Courtney, a bully, takes Clive for "fag," and sends him on an errand to the Jolly Seaman, a public-house in the village. (Now go on with the story.)

Clive Finds Himself in Strange Quarters.

"You'll knock at the side door, and ask for Mr. Napper," said Courtney. "This note is to be given to him, and to no one else, mind."

"Very well," said Clive Lawrence quietly. "Give it me." "And there's a shilling for yourself, Lawrence, if you do the trick all right," said Courtney, handing him the note.

"I don't want your money," said Clive abruptly. "I wish I hadn't said I would go. I don't like this business at all."

Courtney's eyes gleamed, but he controlled his temper with an effort. He didn't want to quarrel with Clive Lawrence just then. It would keep.

"I assure you the affair is quite an innocent one, Lawrence. Anyway, you're going. Come to my study and tell me when you get in. Here's the key."

Clive Lawrence took the key, and left the senior. Courtney watched him go with an anxious shade upon his brow.

"Hang him!" he muttered. "Hang him! I couldn't trust Carter to go, or I should have been in the little rascal's power for the rest of the term. Lawrence is a different sort; he's an obstinate little brute, but he won't betray me, or make any use of what he may discover. I know character enough to be able to tell that. Hallo, Carne!"

"Has he gone?" asked Carne, joining the other.

"Yes. I think it will be all right."

"I hope so. Come in, or you'll be missed."

And the two Sixth-Formers entered the hall again.

Clive Lawrence slowly crossed the close in the dusky winter evening. The new boy at St. Winifred's was far from satisfied in his mind. He had given his word to Courtney, and he could not back out of it. He had to go through with the task the senior had set him, but he heartily wished now that he had refused at the start.

Two forms loomed up out of the gloom. Clive started, but the next moment he recognised Fisher and Locke.

"Hallo," exclaimed Locke, "we've been looking for you! Where are you going?"

"Come into the hall," said Fisher; "there's always a lot of fun on the first evening of term, and, besides, all the new kids will be wanted."

"I can't," said Clive.

The chums of the Fourth stared at him.

"Can't! What do you mean? Why can't you?"

"I'm fagging for Courtney."

"Fagging for Courtney! Why, it isn't ten minutes since he chose you for his fag! He's not losing any time, at all events," said Fisher.

"I don't see what fagging Lawrence is doing out here in the close," said Locke. "Tell us what you're driving at, kid."

"I'm going out for Courtney."

Fisher whistled.

"Breaking bounds, do you mean?"

"I suppose that's what you'd call it. I told Courtney I would do it, before I knew what it was he wanted," said Clive.

"Well, I suppose you wouldn't have had much choice anyway, if he told you to go," Locke remarked.

"Shouldn't I?" said Clive, with a flash in his eyes. "If I had known what he wanted, I shouldn't have agreed to go! I don't want to take his rotten messages to a beastly public-house!"

"Where are you going, then?"

"To the Jolly Seaman."

"What on earth does Courtney want you to go there for?"

"I'm taking a note."

"Well," said Fisher, with a deep breath, "I always thought Courtney was no class, but I never thought he'd get mixed up with that set at the Jolly Seaman."

"I say, you'll keep dark what I've told you?" said Clive. "Of course, I'm bound to keep the thing a secret, though I don't like it."

"Oh, that's all right! Fags never have secrets from one another," said Fisher. "But there would be a fearful row if Trelawney knew Courtney was sending a fag out at night, especially to a place like that. That's the sort of thing the captain is putting his foot down heavy upon, you know."

Clive looked decidedly troubled.

"Trelawney's been decent to me," he said. "It seems rotten to back up Courtney against the captain's wishes. But I've given my word."

"Oh, you've got to go!" said Fisher. "Just cut along and take the note, and buzz back as quick as you can. How were you going to get over the wall? You could never have managed it alone, kid."

"Courtney has given me a duplicate key to the masters' gate."

"My hat! Where did Courtney get it from, I wonder? Only Trelawney is supposed to have a key to that gate, beside the masters. Well, off you go, and we'll come down to the gate for you in about an hour's time. It'll take you about that to get to the Jolly Seaman and back. It's a jolly good walk."

"Thanks, you fellows! I wish I hadn't to go; but it's no use thinking about that now."

They accompanied Clive to the gate, and he let himself

out and locked the gate behind him. Fisher and Locke looked very thoughtful as they went back to the house.

"I say, it's rotten sending a new kid out like this!" said Fisher. "He may be inquired for; and he'd get into a fearful row then, for being out of bounds at night. Courtney wouldn't own up to save him."

"Catch him!" said Locke.

"Well, I say it's a beastly shame!"

"So it is—beastly! I say, the fun's starting! Let's get in!"

And they hurried indoors. Meanwhile, Clive Lawrence set his face towards the sea, and tramped down the long, dusky road, with its high hedges and shadowy trees.

St. Winifred's was very near the sea, on the beautiful Devonshire coast, and in stormy weather the boys could hear the roar of the surf on the distant rocks. It was quiet enough now, though very cold, and a mist was rolling in from the ocean.

Lights were gleaming from the windows of the Jolly Seaman as Clive Lawrence came in sight of it. The place was the rendezvous of the rough characters of Ferndale, and it was hinted that many of its habitués were smugglers, if not worse.

A shouting chorus rang from the lighted inn as Clive came up. But the side of the house, where he had been told to

go, was dark and quiet enough. He went to the side door and knocked.

There was no reply from within. He knocked again, louder than before, and then the door was opened by a shock-headed youth, who peered out at the boy.

"Who be ye?" was his question.

"Is Mr. Napper here?" asked Clive Lawrence.

"I dunno. Who be ye?"

"I have a note for Mr. Napper."

"Give 'un to me."

"I am to give it to no one but Mr. Napper."

The youth stared at Clive, and peered at him, and muttered something to himself. Then he receded into the gloom without a word, and the junior was left standing alone.

He waited for about three minutes, and was beginning to think of the advisability of making a fresh attack with the knocker, when a stout, red-faced man came to the door. Clive Lawrence did not need telling that this was the host of the Jolly Seaman.

"Well, my lad," he said, "who are you, and what do you want?"

"Never mind who I am, and I don't want anything!" replied Clive tartly.

"I have a note for Mr. Napper."

"Give it to me, then."

(A grand, long instalment of this splendid school story next Saturday. Please order your copy of "PLUCK" in advance. Price 1s.)

PLUCK

GRAND COMPLETE 1st SCHOOL TALE.



Owing to pressure of space, I have had to forgo my usual Chat. There will be two long, complete stories in next Saturday's PLUCK, entitled: "A Leader of Eight," a splendid school tale, by Lewis Hockley; and "Jim Lee, the Virginian," a grand adventure story. The picture above is a small reproduction of the one you must look out for on our next cover.

YOUR EDITOR.