

PLUCK

GRAND SCHOOL TALE.

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THRILLING DETECTIVE STORY.

"LYNCROFT'S VENTRILOQUIST."



New School Tale.

A SPLENDID SCHOOL TALE

By MARTIN CLIFFORD, Author of
THE TALES OF TOM MERRY.

The Secret of St Winifred's



READ THIS FIRST.

Clive Lawrence, a new boy at St. Winifred's, is put into the Fourth Form, which is at daggers drawn with the Fifth. The leaders of the Fourth are Fisher and Locke, Clive's study-mates, and those of the Fifth are Kendal and Keene. Courtney, a bully, takes Clive for "fag," and sends him on an errand to the Jolly Seaman, a public-house in the village. Clive arrives at his destination, and is shown into a back room to wait for a Mr. Napper. He falls asleep before the fire, and is awakened by the sound of voices. Concealed as he is by the high-backed chair, he overhears a plot between Napper and a German to get possession of the clue to a hidden treasure, which Trelawny, the Captain of St. Winifred's, holds. Having discharged his errand, Clive returns to the School. That evening he hears that Kendal and Keene intend to visit the Fourth-Form dormitory in order to "put him through it." In due course the Fifth-Formers arrive. (Now go on with the story.)

Tossed in the Blanket.

Kendal and Keene looked about them, and then strode directly towards Clive Lawrence, who was sitting on his bed.

Clive Lawrence did not move as the Fifth-Formers came towards him. He had his jacket and waistcoat off, and his boots, but was otherwise dressed. His perfect coolness rather surprised Kendal and Keene.

"Now, then, kid, up with you!" said Kendal.

"Eh? What's the idea?"

"We are going to put you through it."

"Through what?"

"Oh, the usual," grinned Kendal. "Haven't any of those kids told you what a new chap has to go through? We're keeping up the good old customs. Have you ever been tossed in a blanket, Lawrence?"

"No, I haven't had that pleasure."

"Then it's time you had. That's how we're going to start."

"I see. You think you are going to toss me in a blanket."

"I know we are. Jump off that bed."

Clive Lawrence did not stir.

"Do you hear me?" thundered Kendal.

"Oh, yes, quite well, thank you. I'm not deaf."

"Then why don't you get off that bed?"

"I'm very comfy here, thank you."

"I'll soon have you off. Get a blanket, Benyon."

"Take it off his own bed," said Keene. "He can make the bed afterwards when he wants to turn in, as a punishment for his beastly cheek."

"Good idea! Now, kid, off you come!"

Kendal laid his hand upon Clive's shoulder to jerk him off the bed.

In a twinkling Clive's right came up, and Kendal's hand was knocked away, and the captain of the Fifth gave a grunt, as he caught his wrist in his left hand and rubbed it. He was feeling hurt.

"You young scoundrel!" he roared. "What do you mean?"

"I think you might be able to guess," said Clive calmly.

"As a member of the Fourth Form at St. Winifred's, I object to have the horrid paws of a Fifth-Former laid on my person. After the touch of a Fifth Form rotter a chap requires washing with sanitary soap, and you can't expect me to take all that trouble. Therefore, hands off!"

Kendal turned red, as a snigger went through the dormitory. The Fourth-Formers were all sitting up in bed, looking on at the scene with great interest. It was pretty plain that the Fifth Form captain would not get much change out of the new boy.

"Look here, Lawrence," said Kendal, breathing rather

hard, "I don't want to have to hurt you, my kid, but you're going the right way to get a thundering good hiding."

"Curious coincidence," said Clive blandly, "so are you."

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled Pye.

Kendal wasted no more breath in words. He simply went for Clive Lawrence, to drag him off the bed. Then something happened.

Kendal did not know exactly what, but he knew what the result was. The result was that he sat down suddenly in the dormitory and bumped his head against Fisher's bed.

Fisher put out a foot and shoved the Fifth-Former away, none too gently.

"What the dickens do you mean by bumping your fat head against my bed?" he demanded indignantly.

Kendal staggered to his feet, with a helping hand from Keene. He was a little dazed, and the dormitory was sniggering from end to end. The captain of the Fifth looked inclined to go for Fisher, but Keene pulled him by the arm.

"Stick to business, Kendy; that new bounder is our game."

"Right you are!" said Kendal. "I'll teach that pig to keep his trotters to himself another time. Collar that young beast!"

Kendal and Keene and Benyon rushed at Clive together. The new boy sprang to his feet.

"Here, one at a time!" he exclaimed. "Fair play's a jewel."

"Rats! This isn't a fight," said Keene. "This is a dormitory initiation, and a chap who resists must expect to be handled rather roughly."

"Oh, I don't care," said Clive; "come on!"

They came on. Clive hit out, and Keene bumped on the floor, and then the new boy jumped over the bed in time to escape the clutches of Kendal and Benyon.

"Rescue, Fourth!" he shouted. "Are you going to lie there like pigs and let the Fifth bully us in our own quarters?"

There was a restless movement among the Fourth-Formers. The general inclination was to chime in and help Clive, but they looked to Fisher, their accustomed leader, for guidance.

And Fisher preserved a grim silence. He had made up his mind, and he was sticking to it. He was as much inclined as anybody to go for the Fifth and shove them out of the dormitory; but he had said that the new boy should go through the usual initiation, and he meant to keep his word. As a matter of fact, Fisher's back was up. He foresaw that if the new boy went on as he had started, the leadership of the Form was in danger of changing hands. And Fisher could be very obstinate when he liked.

Fisher sat up in bed, looking on, his face grim. If he had made a movement to go to Clive's rescue, the Form would have followed him to a man; but he did not.

NEXT SATURDAY:

"THE SCHEMER."

A Splendid Long, Complete School Tale,
By Jack North.

AND

"AWAY IN THE ROCKIES."

A Thrilling, Complete Tale of Adventure,
By Brian Kingston.

IN "PLUCK," 10.

Clive had only himself to depend on, as he quickly saw; but he was game.

Kendal and Benyon were scrambling over the bed after him, and the other Fifth-Formers were rushing to surround him.

They were upon him like so many cats in a minute, and, in spite of his desperate resistance, he was collared and captured.

He struggled in the grip of a dozen hands vainly. He was dragged before Kendal, who grinned at him triumphantly.

"You've got to go through it, kid, you see," he remarked. "It's no good making a bother. You can't get out of it."

Clive did not reply; he was breathing hard, and was evidently prepared for another tussle at the first opportunity.

"Got that blanket, Keene?"

"Yes; here you are."

"Take the corners, four of you. Now, Lawrence, if you wriggle when you are in the blanket, you'll come a cropper, and you'll be sorry, that's all."

Four stalwart Fifth-Formers took the corners of the blanket. Clive was tossed into it, and as he fell there, they lifted the blanket from the floor.

"Keep still, Lawrence!" called out Locke anxiously. "If you wriggle you'll fall. Keep still, old chap, and it's not so bad."

The advice was too good not to be taken.

Clive had never been tossed in a blanket before, but he had sense enough to know that once he was in the process of being tossed, it was time to keep quiet. If he moved he would almost certainly miss the blanket in coming down, and go with a crash to the floor, and broken bones might be the result, or at best a variety of big bruises.

He lay quite still in the blanket, therefore, as the Fifth-Formers lifted it, and swung it to send him up.

"Up with him!" shouted Kendal.

Up went the swinging blanket, and Clive was shot from it towards the ceiling.

He went up about six feet, and then came down again, caught skilfully in the blanket by the tossers.

Except for a creepy feeling of sickness when he fell, the experience was not so bad; but the Fifth-Formers were not done with him yet.

"Six tosses is the number," said Kendal. "Mind, it goes on unless he touches the ceiling. Don't be afraid, Lawrence, we won't let you fall unless you wriggle."

"I'm not afraid," said Clive scornfully, "I—"

He had no time to finish. The blanket was swinging up again, and again he shot towards the ceiling.

This time he went higher, and came down into the blanket with a bump that nearly tore it from the hands of those who held the corners.

"Careful there!" said Kendal. "Get a good grip. If we broke his neck it would lead to a lot of bother, to say nothing of the funeral expenses. Up he goes!"

Up went Clive, and up, and up again. Very close to the ceiling he went, and the dormitory and the white beds seemed to swim round him.

He was standing it well. Not a sound left his lips, and it was evident that he was not in the least afraid. And as he was not afraid, there was little to fear. It is usually the fear and anxiety of the victim that leads to accidents in such cases. Clive, lad as he was, had a nerve like iron.

Up again, for the sixth time, and this time he touched the ceiling. With an utterly helpless feeling, unable to save himself even if he were to be killed by the contact, he struck the ceiling—not hard enough to hurt. His nose and his chest touched it with a gentle tap, and then he came down again.

He was caught in the blanket, and they rolled him out on the floor, as the ordeal was over. There was a sort of unwilling admiration in the face of Kendal.

"By Jove, the kid's got pluck!" he exclaimed. "You stuck that out well, Lawrence."

"Thank you for nothing," said Clive, rising to his feet rather dizzily. "I'll see if you stick it out as well when your turn comes."

"My turn! What do you mean? Who's going to toss me in a blanket?"

"I am, before I've been at St. Winifred's a week," said Clive Lawrence firmly. "What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, you know. It's your turn to-night, but I'll give you your own medicine back."

Kendal burst into a laugh.

"Well, if you can ever get a chance of tossing me in a blanket, kid, I'm your man. Just at present you are the giddy victim. Form up there, kids, for the gauntlet!"

"Right-ho! Send him along."

The Fifth-Formers formed up readily enough in a double row. Most of them had brought caps or knotted towels for

the game, and it was certain that the fellow who ran the gauntlet between those two rows of grinning Fifth-Formers would have a warm time in doing it. Kendal pushed Clive Lawrence forward.

"There you are, kid! Start!"

Kicked Out!

"Start!"

But Clive Lawrence did not start. He swung round, and in a twinkling Kendal was grasped by the shoulders and sent spinning into the midst of the waiting Fifth-Formers.

It was done so quickly that some of them, imagining that it was Clive, brought down their weapons, and Kendal yelled as he received a shower of blows.

"Stop it!" he yelled. "Fools! Idiots! Hold on!"

Keene dragged his unfortunate leader out.

"What did you let him do that for, Kendy?" he demanded.

"You ass!" howled Kendal. "Do you think I let him do it on purpose? He took me by surprise, the beast. Collar him! We'll see if he won't run the gauntlet."

Clive retreated, his eyes flashing and his fists clenched, as several Fifth-Formers advanced towards him.

"Better take it quietly, kid," said Benyon, who was the fattest and most good-natured fellow in the Fifth. "Come on, now!"

"Not if I can help it."

Kendal laughed.

"Well, you can't help it," he said. "Collar him!"

They rushed at Clive. He hit out, and two Fifth-Formers rolled on the floor of the dormitory before he was collared.

But the odds were too great. Collared he was, and dragged towards the impatient row of fellows, whose hands went up again, ready for business.

"Start him!"

"Send him along there!"

"Kick him through!"

Kendal and Keene dragged the junior to the spot, and sent him spinning between the two rows of Fifth-Formers.

Down came caps and knotted handkerchiefs and towels in a shower of blows upon the junior. He reeled, and then ran. Once in for it, the best thing to do was to get through the ordeal as quickly as possible; and that was what Clive did.

On the football field Clive could put up a good run, but he had never run so fast towards the enemy's goal as he now ran, while the weapons came bumping upon him.

Right through he went, headlong, and came out at the other end of the line, gasping for breath and very dazed, but game as ever.

He reeled to a bed and sat down, breathless and exhausted.

"Good fun!" grinned Kendal. "I must say the kid has pluck. You're getting through it nicely, Lawrence."

"I'll put you through the same when my turn comes!" gasped Clive.

"Ha, ha, ha! I'm willing to wait until then. When is it coming off?"

"Within a week."

"Ha, ha, ha! I'll put a sovereign on that, if you like, against a trousers button!"

"No betting allowed in this dormitory," said Pye.

"Keep your beastly habits for your own quarters, Kendal!"

"Do you want some of the new kid's medicine?" said Kendal threateningly.

"Oh, rats to you!" said Pye cheerfully.

Keene pulled Kendal by the arm.

"Let him alone, Kendy. We haven't finished with Lawrence."

"True! Now, Lawrence, we're going to give you your choice between two treats, out of sheer generosity. Will you have your eyebrows shaved off with a pocket-knife—"

"No, I won't!"

"Or have your head anointed with a nice mixture of soot and water and treacle?"

"Nor that either, if I can help it."

"Oh, you can't help it! Take your choice."

"I say, that's not playing the game!" exclaimed Pye.

"That's an improvement on the old rules. You've no right to carry the rules further than usual."

Kendal glared at him.

"Are you going to interfere?"

"Yes, I am!" said Pye, jumping out of bed. "Hark at him, chaps! He's going for Lawrence like this—not because it's the custom of the school, but just because Lawrence did well for the Fourth Form, and made the Fifth look silly."

"That's so!" exclaimed Locke; and he got out of bed, too. "That's the solid truth, and I don't think the Fourth ought to stand it. The usual initiation is all right, but it's got to stop there."

"Got to?" said Kendal fiercely.
 "Yes, got to!" repeated Locke. "What do you say, Fishy, old chap?"
 Fisher looked undecided.
 "Oh, he's got no backbone!" said Pye. "Talk about leading the Fifth! He's more likely to lead a set of Second Form fags. Bah!"
 "You shut up, Pye!"
 "Shan't shut up! If you had any grit in you, you'd be going for the Fifth."
 "The new chap's got to be kept in his place."
 "That's it; you're jealous of him."
 "Who says I'm jealous of him?" howled Fisher, jumping out of bed.
 "Well, it looks like it," said Pye. "I'm going to stand by him for one."
 "So am I," said Locke.
 "And I!" "And I!" "And I!"
 A score of voices shouted the words out. Now that the lead had been taken, the rest were willing—more than willing—to follow.
 Clive's eyes flashed.
 "Come on!" he cried. "We've had enough of this. Let's kick them out of the dormitory!"
 "Bravo!"
 The idea of kicking the Fifth Form out of the dormitory appeared very strongly to the juniors. And there was no doubt that they could do it, by sheer weight of numbers, if the whole Form stood together to do it.

Fisher hesitated, but finally he joined in. The Fifth Formers were looking rather dubious now. Kendal had dragged a quantity of soot down the chimney into a wash-basin, and was mixing it up with water. A Fifth-Former who had brought in a jar of cheap treacle for this laudable purpose, emptied it into the basin. The sticky mess, mixed up with a slipper, was intended to "anoint" the head of Clive Lawrence. Kendal looked up from the mixing rather uneasily, as he saw the Fourth-Formers pouring from their beds and gathering round Clive. Fisher's adhesion to the cause had decided the most timid. The whole Form was up now, and the Fifth looked serious.

"Look here, you kids, keep out of this!" exclaimed Kendal. "It's nothing to do with you."

"Nothing at all," said Keene. "Get back to bed, you young fools!"

"Rats!" said Locke. "Are you going out, or are you waiting to be kicked out?"

(Another long instalment of this splendid School Tale next week. Please order your copy of PLUCK in advance.)

Your Editor's Corner

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

"THE SCHEMER."

Paddy makes a mistake—a bad one—and Tranter, who is anything but a clever rogue, makes another, far-reaching and disastrous in its consequences.

This is the gist of our next Saturday's long, complete school tale, by Jack North; but need I add that there are many interesting incidents, in which figure the Brothers of Borden in their endeavour to uphold the honour of Wycliffe.

"AWAY IN THE ROCKIES."

This, our second complete, an extra long one, tells of some startling and thrilling adventures. When I say startling, I am using the term advisedly and without any desire to convey an exaggerated impression.

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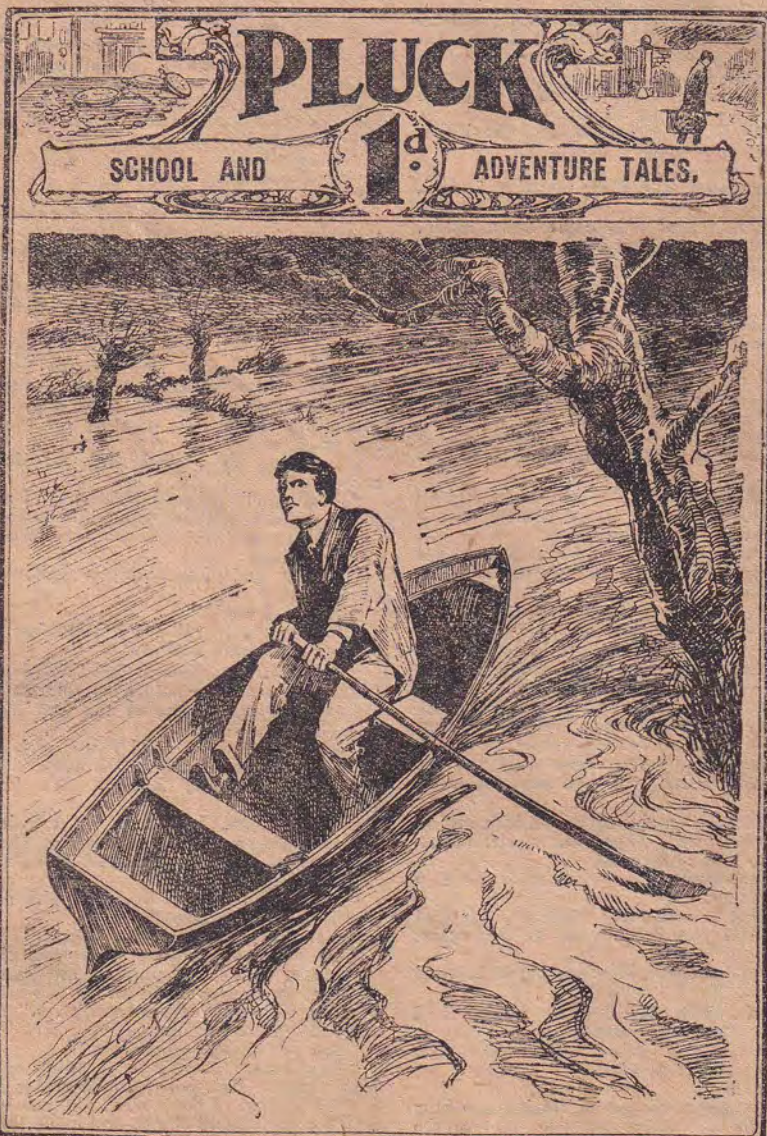
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