

THE BOY VENTRILOQUIST!

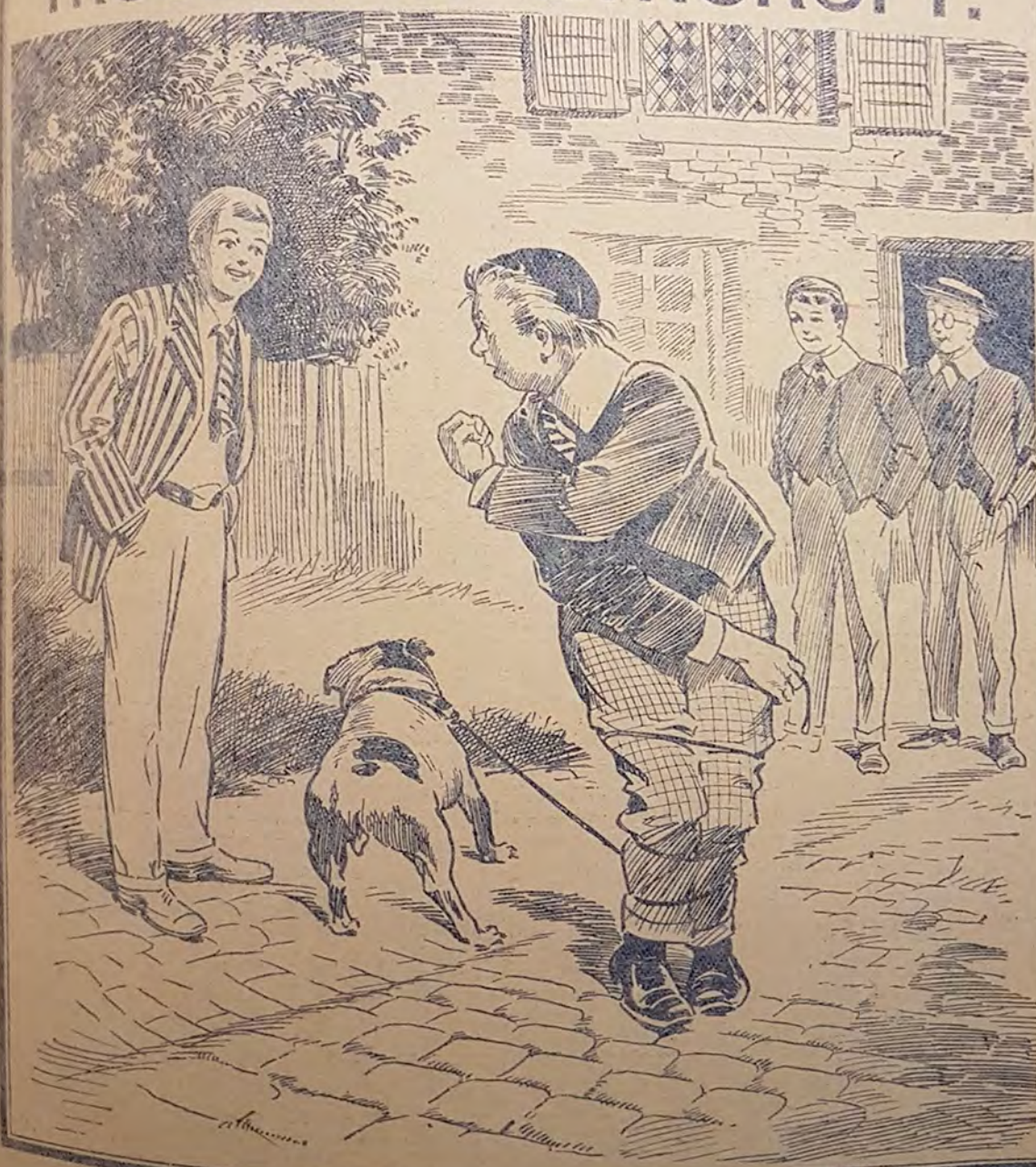
PLUCK

A GRAND STORY

1^d

BY H. CLARKE HOOK.

TROUBLE AT LYNCROFT.



NO. 129, NEW SERIES.

THE GERMAN BOY WAS FAIRLY TIED UP!



The Meeting of the Fourth.

"Rot, I call it!"
That was Pye's opinion, and he did not hesitate to express it, in season and out of season. He referred to the Form meeting called by Fisher, the captain of the Fourth. The juniors were crowding towards the selected spot, all eager to know what it was all about, anyway, as Sugden put it.

There were many who agreed with Pye, at least verbally. All the same, they were curious. The meeting might be "rot," and what the captain of the Fourth had to say might be "rotten." But there was no doubt whatever that the Fourth were very curious to hear it, all the same.

"Hallo, here's Fishy!"
Fisher and Locke came walking up, as calmly as though nothing unusual were on the tapis. A score of voices hailed them.

"Hallo! You're late!"
"What do you mean by keeping the Form waiting, Fisher?"

"Rats!" said Fisher cheerfully. "There's five striking." The strokes from the clock tower verified his words.

"Just in time," said Locke. "Are they all here? I think pretty nearly all the Form has turned up."

"Not because we're curious," said Pye. "Don't think anything of that sort. We don't care a rap about the matter, in point of fact!"

"Certainly not," said Sugden. "We've come along out of good nature."

"In my opinion," Pye added, "it's all rot!"
Fisher laughed.

"Well, if you're not curious, you can travel off," he remarked. "I've only a few remarks to make, and they're intended for the sensible members of the Fourth, anyway."

"If you mean to say that I'm not a sensible member of the Fourth—"

"Oh, cheere it! It's time to get to business. Everybody here?"

"Nearly all, I think, excepting the new fellow Lawrence," said Morgan.

"He must be here!" exclaimed Fisher. "That's important!"

"Blessed if I can see what there is important about a chap who's only been two or three days at St. Winifred's."

"What you can't see, Pye, would fill a landscape," said Locke. "The new fellow ought to be here. Hallo, here he comes!"

Clive Lawrence was seen approaching, his arm linked in that of Murphy of the Fourth.

"Hallo!" sang out Pye. "You're wanted!"

"Well, here I am," said Clive cheerily.

"Sure, and here he is," said Murphy. "I've brought him along, and—"

"Now, gentlemen of the Fourth Form," said Fisher, "I've got a few words to say to you on an important subject—"

NEXT SATURDAY: "RIVAL VENTRILOQUISTS." A Splendid Tale of Speech, Ventriloquism, & Co., by S. Clarke Mack.

READ THIS FIRST.
Clive Lawrence, a new boy at St. Winifred's, put into the Fourth Form, which is at present drawn with the Fifth. The leaders of the Fourth are Fisher and Locke, Clive's study-mates, and Courtney, a bully, takes Clive for "dag," and sends him on an errand to the July Gardens, a public-house in the village. Clive arrives at his destination, and is shown into a back room to wait for a Mr. Mapper. He overhears a quarrel between Mapper and a German, whom he afterwards recognises as Herr Stoesel, the German master at St. Winifred's. Clive returns to Fisher. The two agree to meet in a glove fight, and Clive knocks Fisher out. Fisher then calls a meeting of the Fourth Form, to discuss "a subject of great importance to the Form." What this important subject is, however, he refuses to disclose beforehand.
(Now go on with the story.)

"Hear, hear!"
"It's a subject of great importance to the Form, and to St. Winifred's generally, as the Fourth is properly considered the cock Form of the school."

"Bravo!"
"Go it, Fishy! Ain't he a giddy orator?" said Pye.

"For some time I have filled the honourable position of captain of the Fourth Form at St. Winifred's," said Fisher, looking round.

"Rats!" said Pye promptly. "You know perfectly well that for all last term it was I who filled the honourable position of captain of the—"

"Shut up, Pye!"
"I sha'n't shut up. I'm not going to—"

"You are going, and jolly sharp, if you don't close it," said Locke. "What do you mean by interrupting your Form captain?"

"Captain rats! I—"

"Order! Order!"
"Well, go on, Fishy!" said Pye. "But do stop making those wild statements, which compels dutiful and sensible persons to interrupt you."

"Order!"
"For a long time," repeated Fisher, with great emphasis and eyeing Pye wrathfully—"for a long time I have continued to hold the honourable position of captain of the Fourth Form at St. Winifred's—"

"Hear, hear!"
"I have always been proud of that position, and have done my best to do well by the Form, and to keep our end up against the rotters of the Fifth."

"So you have, Fishy!"
"Good old Fishy!"

"But a new day has dawned," said Fisher, whose eyes now began to suspect of having made up his speech before hand, and learned it by heart. "Another day has dawned, and other tong other mers!"

"What?"
"Other tong other mers!"

"What the dickens does he mean by tong?" asked Pye. "Is that Latin, Fishy?"

"Ass! It's French!"
"And what does it mean? What are you grinning at?"

Lawrence? Do you know? Is it something up against me?" demanded Sugden.

"Ha, ha!"
"What is it, you new rotter?"

"Autres temps, autres mœurs," grinned Clive. "It means, my good Sugden, times change and things change with 'em, and it's only a more or less appropriate remark to make on the present occasion."

"I don't believe it means anything of the sort," said Sugden. "I know French a jolly sight better than you do."

"For valour."

A Thrilling Tale of a Soldier's Deeds, by the Author of "Pearl Island."

IN "PLUCK!"

"Oh, cheer up, Pye!"

"Well, that's all," said Fisher, looking round. "If I'm elected Form captain again, Lawrence backs me up. If he is elected, I back him up. In any case, we're shoulder to shoulder against the Fifth. And that's all."

"Good old Fishy!"

"He's a jolly good sort," said Sugden, "though he does sling bad French at us sometimes. I'm almost inclined to vote for old Fishy."

Fisher, Lawrence, and Locke walked away arm in arm, and the meeting dispersed. In whatever way the election should go, there was no doubt upon one point—the three juniors of Study No. 7 were—and would remain—firm chums.

Kendal of the Fifth.

"There's something on in the Fourth," Keene remarked to his chum Kendal, in a thoughtful sort of way.

"Is there?" said Kendal indifferently.

"Yes. Things seem to be livening up this term," Keene went on. "It's due to a great extent to that new youngster, Clive Lawrence. He seems to be what the Fourth have been waiting for, and I hear he's going to be their Form captain."

"H'm! He's a bit different from Fisher's style," said Kendal, showing more interest in the matter. "Last term we didn't have much difficulty in keeping the Fourth in their place. They were always bucking against proper authority, but we kept them pretty well sat upon. Fishy wasn't up to our form, but—"

"But this term things have started rather differently," Keene remarked, a little ruefully. "It's due to that new kid more than anything else."

"Yes, we shall have to teach him a lesson."

"Well, we've tried that, but it doesn't seem to have panned out very well so far, does it?" Keene remarked.

"Oh, rats! What is there on among those youngsters now?" asked Kendal, changing the subject. "Anything particular?"

"They're holding a meeting in the Fourth Form room. They've had a meeting behind the chapel to-day, and now they're holding another."

"They seem to be pretty fond of holding meetings."

"It's something up against the Fifth, you may be pretty sure of that," said Keene emphatically. "That new chap Lawrence is in it."

"Better look into it, perhaps."

"Good! But how? They're not likely to let us attend one of their Form meetings."

"I suppose we can walk into the room if we like."

"We shall get jolly well ragged if we do."

"We can have some of the fellows hanging about in the passage in case there's a row. We ought to see what these youngsters are up to, anyway. As seniors, it's our duty to keep order in the lower Forms."

Keene grinned.

"Oh, all right, if you like! Let's go along."

The two Fifth-Formers made their way to the door of the Fourth Form room. It was closed, and a loud noise of voices and feet within showed that the room was occupied. Kendal tried the door.

"Why, the young rascals have had the cheek to lock it!" he exclaimed.

"By Jove! Have they?"

"Well, it won't open," said Kendal, shaking the door, and then kicking on the panels. "Here, I say, you kids, open this door!"

"Oh, they won't open it!"

"I'll make a row till they do."

Kendal kicked and thumped on the door. A voice was heard proceeding from the region of the keyhole.

"Hallo, there! Who's that?"

"It's me," said Kendal.

"Who's me?"

"Kendal, of the Fifth."

"Well, Kendal of the Fifth, you'd better go back to your class-room and learn some of the simple elements of English grammar. When a gentleman in the Fourth Form asks you who it is next time, you should say 'It is I—'"

"You cheeky young rotter—"

"Anything else?"

"You young rascal—"

"Finished?"

"I'll wring your neck if you don't open the door!"

"And what will you do if I do open it?"

"I'll wipe up the floor with you!" shouted Kendal.

"Not good enough," was the reply. "The door's not going to be opened."

Kendal thumped on the upper panels and kicked on the lower ones.

ANSWERS
ONE PENNY.
Every Tuesday.

NEXT SATURDAY:

RIVAL VENTRILOQUISTS.
A Splendid Tale of Spies, Ventri-lo-quists, & Co.,
by B. Clarke Hook.

AND

FOR VALOUR.
A Thrilling Tale of a Soldier's Bravery.
by the Author of "Pearl Island."

IN "PLUCK," 1d.

"Open this door, you young rascals!"

"Hush!"

And there was no further reply, undisturbed to the angry Fifth-Formers. They kicked and thumped, all they heard a master's step in the passage, and then they scuttled off, and the Fourth Form were left to hold their meeting undisturbed. The meeting was quite noisy enough to drown any sounds made by Lancel and Keene at the door, as a matter of fact.

Nearly the whole of the Fourth Form were there, and they were all talking at once, most of them raising their voices to be heard above the rest, and so the effect was a great deal like that of a Babel.

"Order!" shouted Clive Lawrence, mounting upon the master's desk and banging it with a cane. "Order! Silence!"

The buzz continued unabated.

"Order!" roared Fisher. "If anybody speaks again I'll knock his head together—I mean, I'll knock their heads together. Shut up!"

"Order!" shouted Locke.

"Oh, rats to you!" said Pye. "I'm captain of the Form, and as captain of the Form I give the chaps permission to jabber as much as they like."

"Order!"

"Oh, shut up, some of you!" exclaimed Sargen. "We may as well get to business, you know. Shut up!"

"Gentlemen of the Fourth Form—"

"Hear, hear!"

"The election to the honourable post of captain of the Fourth Form at St. Winifred's will now take place."

"Hurrah!"

"There are two candidates," continued Clive Lawrence. "One of them is myself—"

"Bravo!"

"The other is a gentleman you all know well—Herbert Fisher—"

"Good old Fishy!"

"You are now requested to shut your heads—"

"Hear, hear!"

"And proceed to the election. Gentlemen voting for Herbert Fisher, Esquire, will kindly step over to the left. Gentlemen voting for your humble servant will have the kindness to step to the right."

"Right-to!"

"Then if necessary we will have a count of heads," said Clive Lawrence. "Now divide!"

"Vide! Vide!" shouted Locke.

The Fourth-Formers began to separate. Most of them had made up their minds how they would vote, and they crowded to one side or the other. Some who were not yet decided remained hesitating.

But there was little doubt as to which side would show the majority. The persuading of the new boy had taken place immediately, while only a dozen moved to the left for Fisher.

Five or six remained hesitating in the middle of the room. Fisher's face looked grim for a moment, but then for a moment. However the undecided ones voted, the majority would be with Clive Lawrence, there was no doubt about that.

But it was only for a moment or two that Fisher frowned. Then he met Clive Lawrence's eyes with a smile.

"You'll have it, Lawrence."

"Looks like it," said Clive. He drew nearer to Fisher, and went on in a lower tone: "I say, Fishy, I don't care much about being Form captain."

Fisher laughed.

"Yes, you do," he said cheerfully.

Clive Lawrence coloured.

"Well, yes, I wasn't putting it quite exactly," he admitted. "I do care about it, and I should awfully like to be Form captain, but I don't want to take your place. If I've ever said anything about it, it was only joking; I never really wanted to shift you. And I'll stand out now if you like."

"I know you would," said Fisher, pressing his arm. "I know you would, Lawrence, but I don't want you to do anything of the sort. As a matter of fact, Lawrence, I'd rather you had the job."

Clive stared.

"Honest?"

"Yes, honest. Keenall is a bit too much for my weight, as a matter of fact, and I've kept out of it against him this term as the Form expected me to do. You have given the Fifth Form a good knock in a few days that I put them in a wobbly term, and that's a fact."

"Oh, no—"

"Yes, it is. I came rather rough at first," said Fisher, frankly.

"But I felt that it would come to this. If you had shown any sign of crowing over me, though, I can tell you that I should have fought against it with all my might and main."

"I don't think I'm the chap to crow over you."

"I know you're not—now, but I admit I expected it at first. You didn't do it—and I was wrong—and I back you up from this moment."

Clive immediately held out his hand. Fisher grasped it, and they shook hands, the laughing and crowing among the voters crossed over.

The majority was with Clive Lawrence, and a bang went.

(Another day must meet next week.)



Next Saturday's two long, complete stories: "Rival Ventriloquists," a splendid tale of Specs & Co.; and "For Valour," the story of a soldier's bravery. Please order your copy of "Pluck" in advance. Price One Penny.