

St. Katie's Big Splash!

By MICHAEL POOLE



The greatest "jape" ever brought off by a schoolboy stands to the credit of Lincoln Beck. The full story of it, and of the amazing discovery it led to, is told here for the first time

THE FIRST CHAPTER

Linky's Brain-Wave

"It's a dull sort of day," said Lincoln Beck; "been a dull term. Nothing ever seems to happen at St. Katie's. S'pose there are schools in this little country of yours where they sometimes have some fun? But St. Katie's—it's a dull show! Wake up, Kid, and tell us some more about the things you used to do when you were young, but daren't do now."

"My hat!" breathed Richard Dexter. "After all we've done for you. Oh, you pie-faced duffer! We've shown you—"

"Oh, I know you showed me how to play noughts and crosses," Lincoln Beck drawled. "Good game it is, too. Not quite so exciting as tiddley-winks. I used to play it in my cradle, and I've often thought since coming here— But it's a bit too hectic for you little lads. Let's play 'think of a number.' That's not too exciting for you, Jimmy? Roger wouldn't think I was trying to lead you astray?"

Jimmy Curtis had been reading a fairly hefty book, "Detective Dent's Last Scoop," and without a word he heaved it at Linky Beck so swiftly and surely that Lincoln hadn't a

chance to dodge. For one brief moment his gentle grin was blotted out as his face stopped "Detective Dent."

That ought to have closed Lincoln down for a time, but he didn't happen to be that sort. The grin was even more expansive when the book fell, and the next instant Linky had grabbed it and slung it nicely at Dickie Dexter, who, much to his surprise, received "Detective Dent" just about as nicely as Linky had done.

"Jimmy thought you'd like to read it, Kid," murmured Linky, just as Dexter's face was lost to view. "But, talking about games—"

"I'll show you one!" asserted the Kid, and he did a spring which would have been a credit to an untamed lion of the jungle. Linky was lying on the pleasant turf which fringed the playing-fields, and the Kid didn't give him a chance to get into fighting attitude. Jimmy Curtis also jumped in.

"Serag him, Kid!" he begged gently. "Make the little reptile wish he'd never left his cradle in America and come to play with the rough lads of St. Katie's!"

"It's excitement you want, is it, old son?" the Kid asked Linky as he shoved his knees into the middle of his back and grabbed the

hair of his head with great violence. "Here's a sample for you, my bonny boy. And there's more coming."

In the next few minutes there was quite a pleasant little scrap. But Lincoln didn't get any more than he'd asked for, and Washington Beck, his younger brother, merely gazed on and smiled.

Why on earth did Lincoln Beck want to start his giddy arguments on an afternoon such as this? It was one of those glorious, lazy summer days, not too hot, yet with scarcely a breeze moving the trees, and over all the fair countryside hung a quiet calm and peace. The sort of day when most fellows are content to sit about and dream pleasant dreams. Even the captain of the cricket eleven was lounging in the shade of the pavilion, sipping a lemon squash and smiling gently as he thought of the team he'd field next Wednesday.

Very few fellows were actually playing, and those that were handling the bat or trundling the ball weren't getting too frightfully excited about it. Jimmy Curtis had had a few knocks and then wandered to his chums, Dickie Dexter and the Beck brothers, colared the book Washy was pretending to read, and settled down for a real peaceful time. The Kid was content to do just as Washy Beck was doing—lie face downwards on the pleasant sward and lazily survey the scene.

And that's the time of day when Lincoln Beck must try and drag in a revised version of his old argument. He generally trotted it out about once a week, and it always had the same effect on the Kid and Jimmy Curtis.

Sometimes Linky would start the argument one way and sometimes another, but it always amounted to much about the same thing. St. Katie's was a mild, milk-and-watery sort of school; the lads hadn't any real grit in them; there was never any fun, or excitement, and everybody went in fear and trembling of Mr. Roger Blunt, the Head. But way back in New York, or Boston, or Chicago, or whatever city of the great American Republic Lincoln Beck happened to strike on, things were continually humming—especially when Linky happened to be knocking round.

Mind you, there was about one per cent truth in Linky's yarns. He'd been a fairly high-class pest to his family, and that was why, in the fulness of time, he had been dumped, with brother Washington, at St. Katie's School, where "Jolly Roger" Blunt undertook to tone them down.

And so far, Roger had made a pretty decent job of it. There had been little outbreaks and mild excitements, but on the whole, Lincoln Beck was beginning to fit in with the rest of the landscape quite nicely. With the aid of the Kid and Jimmy Curtis he'd begun to discover lots of ways of enjoying life without getting his name in the papers.

"Now, have you had enough excitement?" the Kid demanded when at last they let him go. "Can they beat that in America, Linky, or would you like us to put you through the hoop once more?"

"Gee!" Linky began to smooth his hair and re-arrange his clothing. "You little lads are full of fun, aren't you? Me? I'm not complaining, boys. But what I have said I have said. You're only children, but you may grow up some day. What you want at this little one-horse show of yours is something to boost it up."

"It's got along all right without your help, Linky," said the Kid, quite cheerfully. "Maybe it's needed something to tone it up lately—since you came. But I dare say it'll live you down in time."

"Shucks!" Lincoln just smiled on the Kid. "The little chap's gettin' quite bright, isn't he, Washy? But we'll brighten them up a bit more before we're through. We'll show them how to work a first-class stunt and give everybody a bit of the joy of life. I just got a little scheme now—"

"What is it?" demanded Curtis. "Look here, Linky! We've done our best for you, but if you try any more of your crack-pated stunts don't look to us to pull you out of the mess! I'm just warning you that Roger won't stand much more, either. It'll be you for the long, lone trail—and a granite-hearted father waiting with a horse-whip for you at the other end, my lad! I'm speaking just for your own good, you pie-faced chump!"

For Linky still went on grinning joyously as though he had suddenly remembered the joke of the century, and he folded up the newspaper he had been reading carefully, and shook his head pityingly at them.

"Shoo, little ones! You trust little Linky!" he murmured. "What would you say if your little playmate got a full day's holiday for you and then took you out for a little feed because his proud parent had pushed a wad of dollars in his hand and wanted him to be happy? And old Roger beamin' on me and saying what nice lads we are, and maybe getting our photos in the papers, with St. Katie's in the background—"

"My giddy aunt!" the Kid interrupted. "Don't you go trying any mad stunts which will drag the school in, Linky! Old Roger will stand a lot—and Jimmy and I can stand a lot—but we won't stand anything that's going to drag the old school into the papers, or our photographs! I know your giddy limit! Foolish Boy's Mad Joke at Famous School!"

You can cut it right out, Linky! This is where we put our foot down, isn't it, Jimmy?"

"It is," said Jimmy Curtis sternly. "Now, Linky, own up, and tell us what brain-wave has staggered that wood block of yours this time?"

"Dear lads! My little blue-eyed pets!" Linky murmured as he rose, and the smile on his face was one of the fadeless sort. "Forget it! You wouldn't understand! I'm not complaining. But just remember what little

Linky's promised you. A whole holiday from early morn till lights out, and maybe there'll be some sort of a celebration, but we can't guarantee that yet. But there'll be lots of fun for you, little ones, and your uncle Linky will see you don't go crying for food. And old St. Katie's'll get that little boost-up I'm telling you about. I owe Roger a good turn, and this'll about see him straight. You'll have to help me, Kid, when the newspaper men start crowding round me and asking what I think of jolly Roger. We must do him a bit of good. I reckon this is going to

be the Big Splash for Katie's—But not a word, little ones. You trust little Linky!"

"Jumping snakes!" Curtis was scrambling to his feet, but Linky had turned and left them. "Oh, my hat! What prize-ass scheme has he stuck on now?"

"You trust Linky!" Washington Beck began. "Linky's luck—"

But they felt they couldn't stand any more, and they laid hands on Washy

Beck there and then and bumped him with many hard bumps. If they couldn't keep the elder brother from being a first-class mug, at least they'd do their best to keep Washy on the straight path!

Only what they couldn't guess at was the particular asinine stunt Linky Beck was going to try. And although they weren't the lads to jib at any little scheme for brightening their lives, they knew just enough about Lincoln Beck to be a bit afraid that he'd probably over-step the mark. The Kid had



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a vague idea that it would be something in the way of setting fire to the school and then working the heroic rescue stunt, or some similar hare-brained notion.

Yet, of course, Linky had carried through one or two really brainy schemes, and it might be that he'd struck the real goods this time. In which case the Kid and Jimmy Curtis would most assuredly give him a helping hand.

But not a word could they drag from Linky, though the Kid, being a bit of a detective, did notice that he'd cut a whole column from the daily paper which he'd folded up so carefully that afternoon. After some little difficulty the Kid managed to get hold of a complete copy of the same paper and to discover the column which had interested Linky so much.

But there was nothing funny or suggestive of brain-waves in the column. On one side were various advertisements, chiefly about women's and children's shoes and odd household necessities. On the other side practically the whole column was occupied by the description of a ceremony which had been held to unveil a special memorial tablet to Sir George McLachan, who actually died about one hundred and forty years ago.

Still, the Kid read the report through very carefully. It might have had some interest for Linky because of the fact that this chap McLachan had been one of the pioneer lads in America in the reign of the first Georges, though he hadn't stayed in America for ever. He'd just founded one or two states and got a few odd towns going and made a tiny fortune, then wandered back to Britain to enjoy a happy old age.

Mind you, he'd done the job properly and even founded schools in these towns, because he reckoned he owed everything in life to his own education, and he was dead keen on the young getting it, too. Anyhow, some bright Americans had discovered that he'd been buried in this particular church, and they'd been putting up a first-class tablet just to let everybody know about it, too.

Only one little item struck the Kid's eye, but even that didn't seem to connect up with Linky in any way.

"That McLachan was a man of education and broad culture is certain," the paper said, "though nothing whatever can be discovered concerning his early years beyond the fact that his parents were of the fairly well-to-do middle class, and would doubtless be at some pains to ensure the education of their children. The family, apparently, moved from Holford House about the time when young George would be seven or eight years old, and nothing further is known of him until the times when he served under the Prince Eugene on the Continent. It is improbable that he attended either of the great universities, but more than likely he was a scholar for some years at one of the public schools, though there is a complete lack of evidence in the letters, etc., upon this point. In his 'Life' (written in 1845 by J. Tomlin), there is no more than a broad summary of McLachan's first twenty years. . . ."

All very interesting, no doubt, to folks who worry about that sort of thing, but where was the joke?

The Kid gave it up, and Jimmy Curtis gave it up, but they kept a sharp eye on Lincoln Beck, and just occasionally asked him a question about it, but Linky only grinned.

Then one late afternoon Jolly Roger came to their study, and with him were two tall, rather hatchet-faced, and solemn-looking men.

"Ah, Beck major!" Roger called to Linky. "I should like to see you for a few minutes. This is young Lincoln Beck, Mr. Hustlet. Mr. Hustlet and Mr. Mordenfelt belong to the Mayflower Society, Beck, and they are very interested in the letter you wrote to your father concerning Sir George McLachan. Most interested! You had better come with us, Beck."

They disappeared from the room, and not for a full hour did Lincoln Beck return. When he did, he entered the study with the biggest and broadest grin on his face that he'd ever dared wear since first he came to St. Katie's. And he began to sling around a few of his pet American phrases, which was a sure sign that Linky was pleased with himself.

"Say, where's your uncle Linky now, little ones? The fat-wads are coming down, and they'll be handing out the Fishers to your uncle!" he grinned. "Me? I'm an antiquarian and a student of history! And it'll be a gala day for you lads—and the limelight playing on Linky. Don't go overeating yourself this next week or two! Save it up for Linky's beanfeast, 'cos it's coming to you! And maybe a whole holiday, too. An' you'll see Roger giving me the glad eye, and the representatives of the Great American Republic patting my curly locks with their right hands while their left's finding the right way to slip the wads into my cash-pocket. Gee! You little lambs! When you want to know anything about brains—apply Lincoln Beck, Study 7. Yep!"

Which was all very bright and breezy, but didn't tell them exactly what game Linky had been trying on this time. They wanted to know badly, not because of the great things Linky was promising, mind you, but because they had horrible fears that whatever it was it was certain to come unstuck somewhere—and they wanted to be prepared.

But Linky still smiled and said: "You wait and see!" not knowing, of course, that a wiser man than Lincoln Beck had struck a packet of trouble through saying exactly the same thing long before Linky had left the Statue of Liberty behind him!

THE SECOND CHAPTER

An Historical Discovery

A lot of people had made the painful discovery at various times, that Lincoln Beck wasn't nearly so big a mug as he often looked. Jolly Roger found it out very quickly.

It would be difficult, however, to go into all the intricacies of the brain-wave which had absorbed Linky's mind ever since he read that bit in the papers about Sir George McLachan. They didn't know the school where the lad McLachan had been. Well, what was wrong with St. Katie's?

That was the beginning. Despite his apparent lack of interest in anything save matters of the moment, Lincoln was, like so many of his countrymen, profoundly attracted by the relics of by-gone days, and even the Kid had been surprised at Lincoln's awed enthusiasm over the old parts of St. Katie's.

For St. Katie's had laddled out instruction to the young for well over three hundred years. In the Head's study were the original "foundation and list of scholars," and many other historic manuscripts. Away up in the library one big cupboard held school registers which went back over two hundred years. Unfortunately, perhaps, they were far from being complete, which was probably the reason why successive headmasters had looked at them and then decided to leave them there. For many years past now the printed "Blue Book,"



Late one afternoon Jolly Roger came to their study, and with him were two tall, solemn-looking men. "Beck major!" called the Head. (See Chapter 1)

containing the full form lists, in order of merit, had served the part of register, and there were two or three copies of the "Blue Book" added each year. The cupboard was locked, but one could always obtain the key from the librarian to examine the Blue Books.

Probably ninety per cent of the boys at St. Katie's weren't even faintly interested in this cupboard. Occasionally a fellow in the Sixth might go there to get a Blue Book for eight or ten years ago, to find the exact year when old Jenkins (since famous as a county cricketer) was in the Sixth at St. Katie's, but it wasn't often one found many fellows in the library. On a bright summer afternoon—well, even a prize swot wouldn't have spent his time in the dull and musty atmosphere of the least-used room in St. Katie's.

But Lincoln Beck, armed with the key which Marsh, the librarian, had lent him, spent one or two afternoons there. No one saw him do it—but on the third afternoon he came away with two very ancient, thin books, with yellow, parchment colours, tucked under his coat, and the usual grin on his face.

No one saw the books and no one knew he had them—except a bright lad called Charlie Challinor. Charles was an assistant to the chief chemist in Dulchester, and in the matter of bright ideas and broad outlook he and Linky had much in common. Many little favours had Charles done for the bright lads of Study 7, because he knew a lot about chemistry and science, especially the little tricks one could play with chemical mixtures.

Observe Charles and Linky in the dispensing room of the chemist's shop one early closing day. Before them on the table is an open register of St. Katie's School, bearing the date 1710. Charles writes carefully on a yellowish sheet of paper and the ink he uses is a miserable rusty colour. Very carefully he compares what he has written with some of the writing in the register.

"No; not quite yellow enough, Linky!" Charles remarks. "We've got to get it absolutely exact or some of these lynx-eyed experts will spot it straight away!"

More experiments; more practising; Linky

looks up a book which Charles has borrowed from the library, "Life of Sir George McLachan," and there is some discussion. A full hour goes by before Charles at last draws the register towards him.

"Just there, I thought," says Linky. "Couldn't be better. Might have known somebody would want a blank line one day!"

It is done at last and both Charles and Linky stare at it intently.

"Jolly good!" says Linky. "Now this one! This is 1712, and I reckon——"

More discussion about forms and promotion in those far-off days. More practice efforts by Charles, till at last he writes: "McLachan, G. prep." right at the head of one of the form-lists in the second book. Charlie blots it very gently with slightly damp blotting, examines it and compares it, holds it near his eyes, gets a magnifying glass and studies it, touches it with the damp blotting again, then holds it from him proudly.

"There you are, Linky!" he says gloatingly. "If there's another chap in England or America who could have made a better job of that—I'll eat my hat!"

"You're a brick!" Lincoln says. "An eighteen-carat gold brick, old son. Not a word! You needn't eat your hat, laddie! I know something better than that. Try Shipton's rock cakes!"

"It's a poached egg on toast for me," says Charles. "I've been messing round with that ink since closing-time and didn't get any grub, so——"

"Charles, it's a mixed grill for you, my lad! You may know something about chemistry, but when it comes to the grub department—trust uncle Linky!"

The following day Lincoln replaced the registers, but he did not need to borrow the key this time because he'd found how to operate the lock with a pocket-knife. Later in the same day he wrote a kind, affectionate letter to his father, which brought pleasure to the heart of Mr. Cyrus Beck. Lincoln was always keen on giving other people happiness—if there was anything coming to him out of it!

"I was very interested to hear that you had been to the unveiling of the McLachan memorial tablet," wrote Linky, after mentioning a bit about the weather and how St. Katie's had beaten Teviot School at cricket. "I read the account in the papers, and it just struck me casually that maybe Sir George had been to St. Katie's. They've had a lot of famous people here at different times, and they've still got some of the old registers. Anyhow, I went and had a look at some of these and it's a funny thing, but there was a chap called G. McLachan at this school somewhere round about 1710. Of course it's probably not the same lad, or somebody would have been bound to know about it. But some of those expert chaps connected with your society might know if he came to St. Katie's. Nobody seems to know about him here—at least, my friends never heard of him, and he isn't on the roll of famous men in the drawing-hall."

Within an hour of getting that letter Mr. Cyrus Beck was busy! If someone had given Mr. Beck a cheque for a couple of thousand pounds he'd probably have been bored, but he was positively thrilled at the idea that he might have a hand in adding to the history of the famous Sir George McLachan.

He dashed off to the heads of the society—and within another hour two members of the

committee were breaking speed records to get to St. Katherine's School. They saw Mr. Blunt, who didn't quite grip what all the excitement was about at first. When he did begin to understand he took them off to the library and they began to hunt among the old registers!

Oh joy! Oh Jerusalem! There it was! Not in one, but in two. What did "præp."

mean? Præposter—a kind of head boy, a monitor of his form? How wonderful! Beyond all shadow of doubt. But it could, perhaps be tested still further!

"There was the reference, you remember, Mr. Mordenfelt," said Mr. Hustlet, "in the correspondence with Reynolds. 'When I, a boy, did learn Latin under Mr. K., a stern man but an excellent teacher.' That is one of the few definite references to his school-days. Now is it possible, Mr. Blunt, that there exists a roll of the masters who served the school during this period?"

Roger went back with them to his study, and dragged out other manuscript books. Sure enough, they discovered that there was a certain Mr.

Keynes, a Master of Arts and a scholar of the University, who had taught in the school. Later, indeed, Mr. Keynes had reigned as Head!

What more proof was needed? Even Roger shared in their joy, and agreed to show them over the school and to drag out Lincoln Beck and hear his views. There may have



"There you are, Linky!" said Charles gloatingly. "If there's another chap in England or America who could have made a better job of that I'll eat my hat!" (See Chapter 2)

been a fleeting suspicion in Roger's mind, but it swiftly passed. Lincoln seemed surprised that his father had shown his letter to anybody, and he even tried to suggest that it was probably someone else and not the McLachan whose name was on the roll.

"No, my dear boy," Mr. Hustlet assured him. "I think we can reasonably assume that we have to-day definitely established another link in the history of the great and noble George McLachan. Your very fortunate and commendable interest in the history of this famous school has laid on your countrymen a debt of gratitude, and I trust that this school itself will permit us, who revere the name of George McLachan——"

It was quite a posh speech, and everybody felt that there ought to have been a band there, just to do the "Ta-ra-ra! Ta-ra-ra! Ta-ra!" touch when Mr. Hustlet's record ran down. But they shook hands with Linky and told him again that his name wouldn't be forgotten when the real speechifying began; and then Roger turned Linky out so that he'd have a chance to grasp whether they proposed to buy up the school on the spot and turn it into a museum, or whether they only wanted to add a "McLachan Prize" to the lot that would be handed out next Speech Day.

But they were quite reasonable about it. They wanted a tablet stuck up somewhere, and they wanted McLachan's name to get its right place among those other famous names which adorned the honours boards of St. Katie's. Then they'd like a little ceremony, and they rather hoped to have it pretty quick because the American Ambassador was making the home trip very shortly and he'd probably like to tell the folks about it and report that the job was done.

"In the matter of founding a prize or prizes in memory of the great McLachan," said Mr. Mordenfelt, "we shall, of course, be guided entirely by you, Mr. Blunt. And we shall submit to-morrow, I trust, the design for the tablet, based upon the one recently unveiled. Any alterations which you may desire will, of course, be at once carried out. You, Mr. Blunt, steeped in the great traditions of this noble school——"

Oh, yes, Mr. Mordenfelt knew how to ladle the soft soap and butter all right. He didn't get excited, or throw his weight about, but just turned it out in a quiet, soft, drawing voice, and Mr. Hustlet looked serious and nodded his entire approval; and by the time the pair of them had said their piece even Jolly Roger, for all his granite heart, felt rather thrilled and very proud of St. Katie's, and jolly glad that he was doing so much to keep America and Britain real good pals.

"It will, I trust, be a great day for St. Katherine's School when we are permitted to dedicate our modest memorial to the nobility of one of her famous sons," said Mr. Hustlet, as he shook hands with Roger and bade him farewell.

But, of course, Mr. Hustlet didn't know that about a week ago Lincoln Beck had prophesied the coming of a Great Splash for St. Katie's. And for once Linky was quite right.

THE THIRD CHAPTER

Problems for Jolly Roger!

THE big-wads, as Linky would have called them, who had the job of the McLachan Memorial in hand were the sort of men who *get things done*. They didn't get excited or kick up a fuss, but they moved as swiftly and easily as the big Rolls-Royce cars which began to purr round St. Katie's in the next few days.

The library had more visitors in those few days than ever before in its history. Executive sub-committees and deputations filed quietly and solemnly into the Head's study, and most of them just told Roger what they thought about him. Generally they mentioned Abraham Lincoln and George McLachan as being the only two men they'd really admired until they met Roger Blunt. Almost against his will Roger had to order an extra couple of dozen photographs of himself, and he was getting quite an expert at signing them in a dignified sort of way.

And the good work went swiftly on. The drawing-hall was closed for one full day, and lots of odd people went in and were hammering and knocking, and in the morning there

was a big patch on one of the walls, not far from the tablet which told you about "Herbert Spencer Velwood, first Baron Velwood, sometime scholar of this school," who was great-grandfather to the Lord Velwood who was now a governor of the school, and the patch was covered with a big white sheet, with thin ropes hanging from it, but all carefully tied up so's you couldn't start fooling with it.

There were photographs in the papers, and articles about George McLachan, illustrated by an old picture of George and one of the brand new ones of Mr. Roger Blunt. Jolly Roger was a bit annoyed about this when he saw it, but it wasn't any use kicking up a fuss, so he just had to put up with it. Quite a lot of little details were now fitting in about the Great McLachan—things and remarks which before hadn't any particular meaning: a journey he had taken as a boy with several companions through the snow, was proved quite clearly to be the journey from St. Katie's to his home for the Christmas holidays.

Even Linky Beck gasped when he read some of these new discoveries. But he absolutely kept his mouth quite tightly closed when the Kid and Curtis began to question him, especially after Roger had announced that there would be no school on a certain day as various distinguished visitors were

coming to unveil the tablet to Sir George McLachan.

And, although there were one or two little annoying things, you can take it from me that Jolly Roger was pretty cheery these days. He'd never have gone out to advertise the school, but it was pleasant to see so many kind and generous things printed about it; fine to read again the list of St. Katie's boys who had played their part as men, and inspiring to think that under him now were boys who would doubtless in the fulness of time bring honour to themselves and to the school. And other masters felt it; and even the older

boys, awaking afresh to the records and traditions which St. Katie's held, felt that—well, they would not let St. Katie's down.

The great day came. It was, according to the programme, going to be a sort of special Speech

Day, but Roger had nodded gently when the captain of the school had suggested that they might let the Ambassador man and the crowd of distinguished American (and British) visitors see what St. Katie's could do in the way of a welcome.

"But don't overdo it!" Roger begged. "A little cheering, of course, but—no violence."

"Certainly not, sir!" said the captain, in dignified surprise.

As though the gentle lads of St. Katie's could ever get violent! Quite the wrong word to use.



St. Katie's may not have turned out all the brass-lunged heroes in the world, but when it came to giving the glad shout of joy they'd have taken first prize at an Eisteddfod! (See Chapter 3)

Early in the morning the cars began to buzz up St. Katie's drive. They all got a cheer and a bright welcome, but it was nothing to what happened when the message came through from the scouts at the station by telephone to the porter's lodge that the Ambassador and his pals were en route in three cars and were looking quite well.

The chap who was driving the Ambassador's car, with Lord Velwood as chief host with him, and two other posh fellows, expected to glide up the drive at somewhere round about forty-five miles per hour. But St. Katie's lads were in a solid phalanx across the entrance to the drive, and as he didn't want to get his licence endorsed that day the driver slowed down in record time.

They recognised the Ambassador right away. He was the sort of chap you couldn't mistake anywhere, even if it hadn't been for the fact that his bosom pal was sitting alongside him. The Ambassador was a very tall, very thin man, with a very solemn-looking face, except for the queer little twinkle behind his horn-rimmed specs; his friend was also tall, but he would have made six ambassadors counting by width, and his smile was a first cousin to Linky Beck's, inasmuch as it belonged to the fadeless brand and never wore off.

There were two cars behind, each packed carefully with first-class people, including Mr. Hustlet and Mr. Mordenfelt, and they drew up just in time to get included in the opening cheer of welcome. My hat! St. Katie's may not have turned out all the brass-lunged heroes in the world, but when it came to giving the glad shout of joy they'd have taken first prize at an Eisteddfod.

And some folks have said that St. Katie's isn't a musical school. If you mean they're not much good at "Sweet and Low" and things of that sort, nobody wants to argue with you. There's different kinds of music, and if you're talking about victory marches with talking-tommies and comb-and-paper accompaniments, and the real, genuine joyous vim behind the happy voices blending or unblending together, or a bit after each other, in the "Marseillaise," you wait till you've heard

St. Katie's before boasting about your male voice choirs!

I don't know why they chose the "Marseillaise." But, then, there's no reason why they shouldn't, is there? The captain of the school marched alongside the chauffeur's seat and told the uniformed chap how to go slowly ahead as the band struck up, and away they went up the drive, the mob simply swarming round the cars and playing giddy tunes on the Klaxon horns and the hooters, which upset the "Marseillaise" a bit, but didn't lessen the row.

And there was Jolly Roger, supported by a little mob of masters in caps and gowns, standing on the top steps at the main entrance ready to hold out the glad hand of friendship to our cousins from over the seas; and photographers and cinema men were dodging about to get the right view-point, or swinging their cameras on the marching lads; and newspaper men were jumping round and asking nice little questions from masters and from boys. Oh, a great day!

"Could you tell me which is Lincoln Beck?" asked one of the newspaper men, and somehow Linky was dragged into the limelight.

Now it had really come to the big splash, Linky wasn't particularly keen on getting the limelight turned on him too much, but he couldn't dodge it that day.

Mr. Beck was there, and Mrs. Beck, and they lugged Linky round and introduced him to the Ambassador, who said what a bright lad he looked and how every boy born under the Stars and Stripes had a free ticket to White House tucked away in his pocket-wallet, and how he hoped Lincoln, with the unparalleled opportunities which being at St. Katie's gave him, would be there or thereabouts one bright day.

Then one or two others came along, and Linky had to do the personally-conducted tour business; and at odd intervals they whispered sweet words to him about there being a candy-store somewhere in the vicinity, in which case: "Just get some from me for you and your little playmates, Lincoln."

And the glad hand passed, and Lincoln,

with a soft, low murmur, did the conjuring act swiftly in case some of the other mutts saw it happening too often and thought they might miss that item of their programme. Linky didn't want anybody to miss anything—especially him.

Presently they all assembled in the drawing-hall, and things were serious for quite a while, because the Ambassador was telling them a bit about all men having been boys. He wasn't too serious, and it was really a jolly good speech.

Then he pulled a string, and everybody saw the brand new tablet which said that George Andrew McLachlan, Baronet, had once been at St. Katie's; and after that he did a lot of good by starting states and towns and building schools—only it put it a lot better than that, and really looked very decent, with nothing cheap or nasty about it.

After that the nuts went to the platform, and, of course, St. Katie's lads had to sing "Forty Years On" presently, and there were more speeches, and even Roger said a few words, and everybody cheered him mightily, because he had on his best gown with the bits of fur peeping out, and his Sunday cap with the different-coloured tassel, which seemed to match his bright face more.

Then the Ambassador had to say another piece, and he dragged in Lincoln Beck, and everybody cheered Linky, just to show the visitors that St. Katie's bore their troubles nobly. And you can guess that pleased Mr.

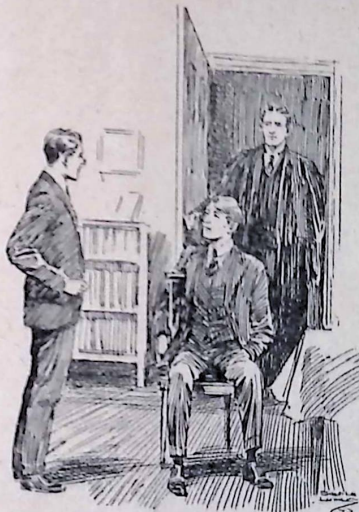
and Mrs. Beck no end, even though it made Linky himself horribly nervous, and begin to wish— But all he said was: "Oh, shucks!" and "Can it!" quite a lot of times, and bent his head so much that you couldn't see the gentle flush of youthful modesty which suffused his boyish cheeks.

"I have but one request to make," said the Ambassador, after he'd told a bright story and handed out a little more soothing syrup—about old Roger, "and I trust that your worthy Head will not deem me avaricious or grasping when I express the hope that he will be graciously pleased to grant the school a whole holiday on Thursday next. That, I feel sure—"

He didn't say any more, because St. Katie's boys were showing their complete approval of his ideas! They clapped and cheered, and indulged in the famous "Ra-ra-ra-ra" and the long shrill whistle which is the hall-mark of their pleasure.

It was a bit of a surprise for old Roger, because he calculated the lads had had a good day, and it would be about time to settle down to work to-morrow. But Thursday!

To-day was Tuesday! Queer how the Ambassador had got to know the one hard day of the week at St. Katie's! Even while he was struggling to weigh it up, but getting a bit fogged because of the row, Roger's eyes fell on the bright faces of the Transitus lads. Two of them were not clapping at all, but were leaning forward and gazing in wonder at a fellow in the



"Sh!" the Kid suddenly hissed, and rose to his feet. For Jolly Roger was standing in the doorway, and was looking curiously at the back of Lincoln's head (See Chapter 3)

Matric. For Jimmy Curtis and Richard Dexter had suddenly realised that every detail of Linky's prophecy was coming true, and it started a lot of queer ideas in their minds!

And there was Lincoln Beck also leaning forward, and the forefinger of his right hand was pushing to one side the tip of his not too handsome nose. It was not a beautiful gesture, but it conveyed, combined with a ten-horse power grin, exactly what it was meant to convey—derisive and scornful yet triumphant amusement!

And into Roger's mind flashed horrible doubts. Surely— But perhaps it was only in connection with the holiday? Anyhow, he was bound to grant that now!

"There will be a whole holiday on Thursday next!" Roger announced when a lull came in the cheering, and the Ambassador had sat down. Whereupon came another splendid exhibition of gladness and joy, expressed by means of the mouth, hands and feet.

One or two more little speeches, and the day's work was done. An hour later practically every visitor had left, and peace and quietness began to fall upon St. Katie's.

Mr. Roger Blunt had shaken many hands and spoken many kind words, and just for a brief space, when all was over, he retired to his study to survey the little pile of souvenirs of this glad day. Photographers had actually sent him swift proofs of the joyous welcome; there were to-day's papers with their preliminary announcements about the affair. To-morrow's papers would doubtless have the Ambassador's speech and a lot of stuff about St. Katie's. Well, the old school was worthy of all the kind things which had been said, and Roger meant that it would be even more so.

Mr. Ruffell, the writing and singing master, entered the study with a little apology. He looked worried, and Roger asked him what his secret sorrow was.

"Well, it is a secret sorrow, sir," Ruffell admitted. "I don't know—I wondered last night. It's worried my conscience all the day, but I think I ought to mention it to you.

Have you got the original registers with McLachan's name in?"

"Yes!" Roger began to hunt round; but for the life of him he couldn't find them. They'd been in his study all day and had been inspected by the visitors with wondering awe. "I'm sorry, Ruffell. I can't lay hands on them at the moment. But here you are! They have had very excellent photographs taken of the page, exactly to size."

"Yes, yes!" Mr. Ruffell examined the photograph. "But this doesn't show— Fact is, sir, and I hate to say it, but I'm convinced that name was put in quite recently—and with a steel pen! It's some chemical preparation which was used—not faded ink. I— Of course, writing, and manuscripts generally, are a hobby of mine, and I'm bound to admit I never suspected—"

"What!" Roger suddenly gasped. "You mean McLachan's name is a forgery? But Ruffell— Why? What purpose—what possible object— For goodness' sake, man, don't publish this fact until you have absolutely definite proof!"

"I know! I know!" Mr. Ruffell was genuinely upset. "But I thought I ought to let you know my belief. Of course, we needn't mention it. If you know where the registers are, I will point out to you exactly what leads me to believe—"

"But they were examined by the American experts!" protested Roger, fighting back the horrible fear in his mind.

"I know. I saw them a dozen times before the least doubt arose in my mind," Mr. Ruffell said. "It was only yesterday afternoon, when I had it under the microscope that I began to wonder and tried the Gunter test. Even now I wouldn't swear—but I wish I could show you."

But, search as they would, they could not find the two registers. It rather looked as though one of the visitors had calmly taken them as a souvenir! Yet that was incredible!

The bright day seemed to be petering out into a very sad affair! Roger suddenly jumped up and made for the door.

"Stay here, Ruffell! I'll be back very

soon!" he said, and disappeared. He headed for Study 7!

In Study 7, Lincoln Beck had been doing the heavy father act on the other lads, and they were getting a bit tired of it, even though he gave them definite proof that on Thursday they could buy up the whole of Dulchester's restaurants at his expense. Linky had had a great day—and a profitable one!

"But tell us truthfully, Linky!" they begged. "How did you know so long beforehand that all this would happen? You didn't fix it in any way, because I saw the jolly old register in Roger's study when the mob went in, and old McLachan's name, a bit faded, but quite clear. I reckon it was just a bit of luck——"

"Luck?" Lincoln grinned. "Dear child! I make luck! That's Lincoln Beck, little one. What about George McLachan? He went to school, didn't he? And if nobody knows where he went, how are they going to find out he didn't come to St. Katie's? I'm proud of St. Katie's, I am, so I just put Georgie's name down——"

"Sh!" The Kid suddenly hissed and rose to his feet. For Jolly Roger was standing in the doorway, and was looking curiously at the back of Lincoln's head!

Linky jumped up, too, when he realised that Roger was in the room!

"Yes, sir!" he bleated, as though he knew already that Roger wanted him.

"Yes, Beck! I wanted to ask you—— No! Come with me!" Roger snapped, and Linky followed him from the room.

"Oh, my hat! It's come unstuck!" murmured the Kid as the door closed. "But what a game! Jumping snakes! If Linky really has—— My hat!"

Words failed them. Even Jimmy Curtis couldn't imagine the awful end that was awaiting Lincoln. But Washy struggled to smile and bleated his usual hope.

"Trust Linky!" he murmured. "Linky always has the luck!"

"He'll need it, too!" said Jimmy Curtis. "Jove! But if this really is one of Linky's wangles——Gee!"

Inside Jolly Roger's study the game began

quietly enough, which gave Linky a chance to think about things. He was a fighter, was Lincoln Beck, and he wasn't going to throw up the sponge straight away.

But Roger got most of the truth presently, though there was one little item Linky absolutely refused to divulge. That was the name of the person or persons who had altered the register.

"You see, sir," Linky explained, very sorrowfully, "they're all quite certain that McLachan did go to school some time, and it's pretty certain, I expect, that he went to St. Katie's, only there isn't any absolute proof. Well—it's proved now, sir, and nobody can ever disprove it."

It wasn't often Mr. Roger Blunt was in a real fog, but he was to-night. Being the sort of man he was, he wouldn't force Linky to sneak and give away the person who had actually made the addition to the register, especially as in Roger's mind was the idea that it was some of the Americans.

Nor could Linky throw any light on the question of the missing registers, beyond the fact that he hadn't taken them.

For perhaps five minutes there was deep silence in the Head's room. Roger was thinking hard; he wasn't the chap to burk anything, but—would he be wise to start raising doubts again about McLachan? It had been a great day for St. Katie's, but it would all be lost and spoiled if people had the impression that it was a spoof, a trick. No! The best plan would be to let the matter lie quietly for a time, at all events.

"All right, Beck! I won't express any opinion at the moment on your conduct!" Roger snapped out at last. "It may have been a proud day for the school, as you suggest, but I would much rather—— However, I will take an early opportunity of talking to you again on the subject. There is just this point, in the meantime: I trust you will refrain from mentioning your part in this unfortunate affair to anyone! You may go!"

"Yes, sir!" said Lincoln, and wandered forth.

Strictly speaking, the story ends there, because nothing more ever happened, so far as the outside world was concerned. The tablet still stands to McLachan, and everybody believes, as they always have done, that McLachan went to St. Katie's.

And they are right! Lincoln's luck absolutely held! For many days after the Big Day, Roger was hunting and turning out old cupboards, ancient records, and queer bundles. There was quite a lot of rubbish of one sort and another stored away at St. Katie's, and every Headmaster who came, generally looked at it in his first enthusiasm, and said:

"Right! I'll have a look at that very soon, and we'll have everything that is valueless destroyed. No use harbouring rubbish!"

But that was all they ever did—till Roger began to sort and examine, and other masters helped him. Actually they discovered a lot of interesting material relating to St. Katie's past. They learned, for instance, that it was when Mr. Keynes became Headmaster that the foundation or charter of the school had been altered. A fairly large number of boys were "attached" to St. Katie's, but on a special register known as "Keynes' House."

Cutting the long search short, the old registers of Keynes' house were discovered. And—Oh, the joyous moment when Roger realised the truth!—George McLachan had been in Keynes' house, and his name was inscribed in these other registers!

No wonder everything had fitted in so beautifully and Lincoln Beck's little joke had gone through so swimmingly. And when Roger grasped all this—what could he say to Lincoln Beck? After all, Linky had only been guilty of "intelligent anticipation," and

probably if he hadn't started fooling about, it never would have been discovered that McLachan had been one of St. Katie's lads!

The other registers were returned by post all right some days afterwards. Strangely enough they had been posted in Dulchester. There's no harm now in telling just what happened, which was that Charlie Challinor managed to come to the school for the celebrations, though not to the unveiling. He went to examine the registers when no one was worrying about an "outsider" being there, and he realised that his chemical preparation was beginning to show! So he just took them away to touch them up a bit before anyone had a chance to get suspicious!

And the lads of Study 7 duly celebrated the Great Splash, prophesied and arranged by Lincoln Beck. Yet it was not till some time afterwards they realised the full truth and how, after all, Lincoln hadn't done anybody any harm—in fact, he'd done quite a lot of good all round to everybody!

But it might have been different! Lincoln's "intelligent anticipation," as Roger called it, might have turned out to be a most horrible practical joke, and Lincoln might have celebrated it by going on the long, lone trail, instead of having a tophole feed with his chums and Charlie Challinor in Dulchester. And Mr. Hustlet and Mr. Mordenfelt might have said a lot of rude things to Linky and the Beck family generally, instead of patting Linky on the head and putting him down for life-membership of their society.

And this story could never have been written—but all's well that ends well! George McLachan went to Katie's—and Lincoln Beck arranged the Big Splash to celebrate it! Well done, Linky!



When The Stormy Winds Do Blow!

By Dick Penfold.



THE wild West Wind is blowing ;
It booms and roars around,
As if great guns were going—
A terrifying sound !

With fury unabating,
It madly thunders by ;
And hefty slabs of slating
Come crashing from on high !

It's like a fierce tornado ;
It rages and it roars.
But we, with gay bravado,
Refuse to go indoors !

It catches Quelch's " topper "
And whirls it into space ;
A merry voice cries, " Stop her ! "
And there's a thrilling chase !

Old Hacker's best umbrella
Goes soaring to the sky !
What right have they to sell a
Gingham that's learned to fly ?

The elm-trees' leafless branches
Towards the ground are bending,
As if fierce avalanches
Were suddenly descending.

The din is most appalling ;
All sounds it seems to smother,
Though one scared fag is bawling :
" Oh, take me home to Mother ! "

The wild West Wind is blowing,
More than it ever blew !
We don't care if it's snowing ;
We'll stay and see it through !

