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Great
**ALFRED EDGAR
RAILWAY STORY!**

The SCHOOLBOY DETECTIVE

The new boy at Oakshott is hot on a trail that has defeated Scotland Yard!

By
**CHARLES
HAMILTON**

That Goat, Porrhinge!

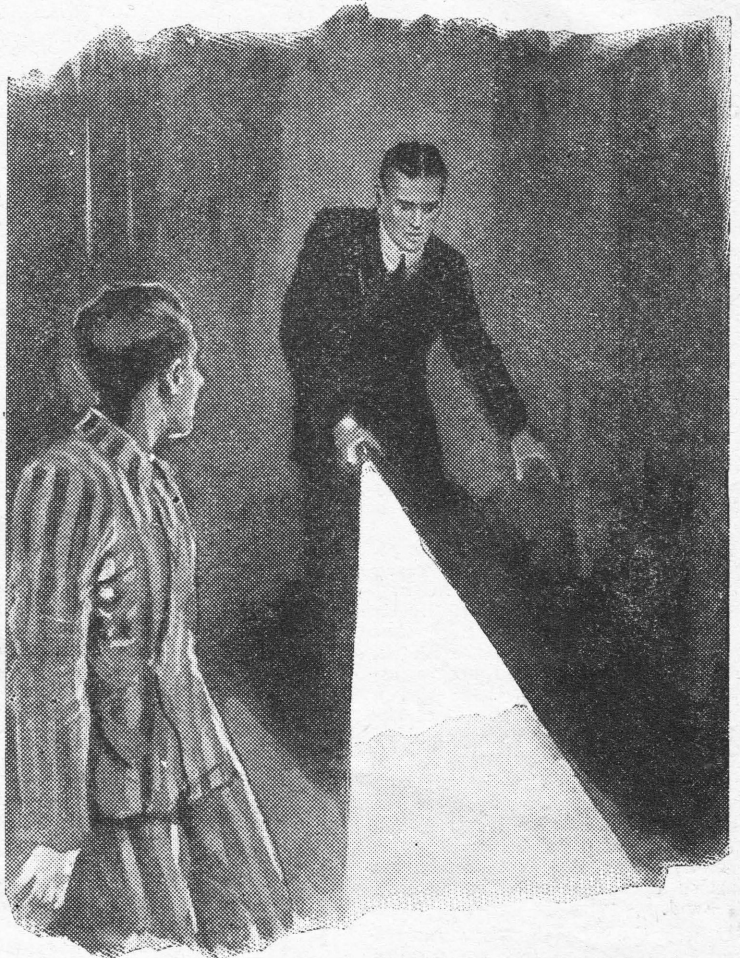
LEN LEX spotted Porrhinge, of the Fifth, and wondered what Porrhinge fancied he was up to. Len, a detective as well as a schoolboy, was quick on the uptake. He was not easily puzzled. But the strange proceedings of "Pie" Porrhinge puzzled him—and might have puzzled Len's uncle, Detective-Inspector Nixon, and the rest of Scotland Yard. For they really were inexplicable.

Morning break at Oakshott School was nearly over. Any minute the bell might ring out for third school. But at the moment nearly everybody was out of doors in the fine autumn morning. Len, sauntering into the House, with his hands in his pockets, saw nobody but Porrhinge!

Pie was standing at the corner of a rather dusky passage that branched off the big corridor. With a manner of extraordinary stealth and caution, he put his head round that corner, glanced up the passage, and popped his head back again, like a tortoise popping back into its shell. Less than a minute later he repeated the performance. Another minute, and he did it again. Len watched him with interest and curiosity.

That dusky passage led to the rooms of Mr. Vernon Silverson, master of the Fifth Form, and nowhere else. Pie's Form-master was in his study, from which, naturally, he would emerge when break ended, to go to the Fifth Form Room. He would come round the corner behind which Porrhinge lurked. If Pie's mysterious actions meant anything, they meant that he was watching for Mr. Silverson to come. But why, was a mystery. Why should Porrhinge care two hoots whether Mr. Silverson was coming away from his study or not? Yet it was clear that Porrhinge was fearfully keen about it.

Len had been only a few days at Oakshott. But he had not been there a few days without learning that Por-



Len Lex held his breath and flattened himself against the wall. The searching beam of the torch was within a few inches of him now!

ringe was regarded as rather a goat in the Fifth Form. And he had not shared Study No. 8 with Porrhinge during those few days without noting that Pie was justly so regarded. Pie, undoubtedly, was a goat. Still, his present weird proceedings were surprising, even in a goat. It was well known that Pie had a feud on with his beak. But if this stealthy vigil at the corner of Silverson's passage had anything to do with his feud, it was not easy to see the connection.

A door was heard to open and shut. Silverson was coming from his study at last! The bell had not yet rung, but Silverson was always punctual, and generally early. Evidently, Pie heard the sound of Silverson's door. He did not look round the corner again. He backed away from it.

Round the corner came the dark, handsome face and sinewy, supple figure of Vernon Silverson. At the same moment, Porrhinge of the Fifth shot forward. Before the master of the Fifth even saw him, he crashed.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Len Lex.

He understood at last! That was Porrhinge's game—barging over the beak as he came round the corner. Of course, he was going to pass it off as an accident! It was a scheme worthy of the intellect of the goat of the Fifth. If Mr. Silverson believed that that barge was an accident, he was a much simpler man than the schoolboy detective judged him to be.

Pie, at all events, got away with the barge! Mr. Silverson, taken utterly by surprise, went over backwards. He gave a gasping howl, and landed on his back. His mortar-board flew off, two or three books he was carrying under his arm flew in two or three directions, a fountain-pen shot from one pocket, letters and papers from another, and Silverson, lying on his back, kicked his feet in the air.

Porrhinge, stumbling from the shock, dropped on his knees. The barger was nearly as winded as the bargee! Len Lex gave a gasp of laughter. The sight was, for a moment or two, extraordinary and

The Schoolboy Detective

striking—Silverson on his back, kicking the air, Pie on his knees, blinking at him dizzily. But the scene lasted hardly a second. Mr. Silverson sat up, then leaped to his feet. The breathless surprise in his face changed to an expression which revealed that Vernon Silverson had a temper that needed to be kept in control. At the moment, it was out of control. He fairly flamed at the gasping Pie.

"Porrige! You—you—you—"

"I—I— Sorry, sir! I—I—" Pie staggered up. "I was coming to your study, and—and— I say! Oh!"

Porrige jumped back as Vernon Silverson came at him. But he did not jump fast enough. A grip of steel fastened on his collar.

"You dare to say that it was an accident! Upon my word! Porrige, I—"

Mr. Silverson wasted no more time in words. Pie, gurgling, was whirled round the corner and whirled up the passage to the master's study. They disappeared from Len's view.

"Oh crumbs!" murmured Len.

He was sorry for poor old Porrige. It was only too clear what was going to happen to the goat of the Fifth.

Len went along to the corner. He picked up the various articles that Mr. Silverson had dropped, with the intention of returning them to his Form-master. Among them was a printed card, folded double, and the schoolboy detective's eyes remained fixed on it.

A bell clanged in the distance, and from Mr. Silverson's study came the whacking of a cane on trousers, and a succession of painful, dismal yelps. But Len Lex did not heed; his startled eyes devoured the card in his hand.

It was the official programme of the races held at Parsley, seven miles from Oakshott School. Yesterday was Wednesday, the first of the four days' racing at Parsley. Len opened the card. Inside were the races for the day, with the lists of the horses. The three o'clock race was called the Parsley Plate, and there was a pencilled tick against the name of one of the horses—Bonny Blue!

Whoever had bought that programme had evidently selected Bonny Blue to back. And that programme had fallen from the pocket of the Form-master of the Fifth Form at Oakshott!

An Oakshott master, at the races on a half-holiday! The thoughts of the boy detective, who was at Oakshott on the trail of the mysterious and very much wanted burglar known as the "Sussex Man," moved swiftly. He dropped the card to the floor again and placed one of the books over it.

That discovery had quite changed his intention of taking the fallen articles to Mr. Silverson. Vernon Silverson would hardly like to know that a boy in his Form had seen it; still less did the schoolboy detective want Mr. Silverson to know. He walked along the corridor, stopped at a window, and stood looking out into

the quad, with one eye on Mr. Silverson's passage.

Round the corner from that passage came Porrige, limping and wriggling. Only too plainly, Mr. Silverson had dealt faithfully with the goat who had barged him over.

"Ow! Ooooooh! Wooooooh!" mumbled Porrige, as he limped past Len.

A moment more, and the master of the Fifth came round the corner. He stopped to pick up his scattered property. Len, facing the corridor window, was not looking at him. But the corner of his eye was on the master of the Fifth. Mr. Silverson's face was still red and angry. But as he picked up the books, and saw the race-card under one of them, and realised that he had dropped it, his expression changed. His startled look, and the swift, stealthy glance he gave round him, did not escape the schoolboy detective. The race-card disappeared into a pocket instantly.

Len's back was to him as he came up the corridor. Mr. Silverson gave him a sharp rap on the shoulder, and Len looked round.

"The bell has gone, Lex. Why are you not in your Form-room?" snapped Mr. Silverson. "Go at once."

"Yes, sir!"

There was no indication in Len's face that he noted the searching look his Form-master gave him. He turned and walked away, that searching look following him. But Mr. Silverson, no doubt, was satisfied that the boy, standing at a distance, could not have seen the race-card lying on the floor under a book! He was, in fact, quite satisfied on that point, and the schoolboy detective was satisfied also!

Safe for the Night!

"I'M going!"

"You're not!"

"Who's going to stop me?" hissed Porrige.

"We are!" answered his friends, Harvey and Banks, simultaneously.

A light glimmered in the Fifth Form dormitory. As it was nearly midnight, no light should have been burning in Oakshott School—least of all in the dormitory. But it was only a candle-end that sputtered on a wash-stand. Harvey had lighted it when he heard a move from Porrige's bed.

A good many of the Fifth were awake, listening and grinning. Harvey and Banks were arguing with Pie. Pie, deaf to argument, had turned out of bed, and had his trousers on over his pyjamas. Len Lex, his head on his pillow, but his eyes wide open, watched him curiously. Len had his own reasons for not wishing his Form to be wakened at midnight's hour. The schoolboy detective had work to do at Oakshott of which the other fellows knew nothing, and most certainly he did not want a goat like Porrige barging in. He hoped that Pie's friends would succeed in persuading him back to bed.

But it did not look very hopeful. Pie might be a goat; but he was a very determined goat. He glared de-

fiance at his friends, stooped, and glared under his bed for a pair of rubber shoes he had placed there in readiness. They were not to be seen.

"Where's my shoes?" hissed Pie. "Have you hidden them, you cheeky ass?"

"Guessed it in one!" assented Banks. "You're not going on the jolly old warpath to-night, Pie!"

"Nor any other night!" said Harvey.

"Will you tell me where those shoes are, Banks?" hissed Porrige.

"No," answered Banks, "I won't."

"Then I'll jolly well go in my socks."

"For the love of Mike, Pie, have a little sense!" argued Harvey. "You tried this game at the start of the term. How did it turn out? You barged into Silverson's study when a burglar was barging in at the window. He knocked you out—might have knocked out your brains, if you had any!"

"Think that's likely to happen again, fathead? Think a burglar will come burgling to-night?" snorted Pie.

"Well, he might!" said Harvey. "It was the prowling blighter they call the Sussex Man, and he's never been caught. And Silverson's study is the easiest way in and out of the House, after lock-up."

"Rot!" grunted Pie. "I'll chance it, anyhow. I tell you, I've got it in for Silverson! He nearly took my skin off this morning, and then he jawed me in Form for not sitting still! As if a fellow could sit still after a six like that!"

"You'll get another six to match, if you wake up Silverson at this time of night!" chuckled Bird of the Fifth. "He's a light sleeper."

"That's all rot!" answered Pie. "The night I raided his study, I knocked over some books, and banged the poker over on the fender, and he never woke up in the next room. He sleeps sound enough."

"He woke up when the burglar Johnny bified you," said Harvey. "It was Silverson found you lying there stunned."

"Well, I dare say there was a row when I fell down!" said Pie. "But he slept all through the noise I made in his study. Anyhow, I'm going."

On the previous occasion, Pie had failed in his scheme of ragging the beak's study owing to the utterly unexpected intervention of the Sussex Man—the mysterious burglar who had prowled in that part of Sussex for nearly two years, undetected and uncaptured. But that, really, was not likely to happen a second time. Pie was prepared to take such a remote chance as that.

Len Lex sat up in bed.

"Hold on a minute, Porrige!" he said. "Isn't there one thing you've forgotten? Even if Silverson doesn't spot you while you're ragging his study, won't he guess who did it—as you tried it on before?"

"Let him!" answered Pie recklessly.

"You howling ass!" said Harvey, in measured tones. "You were let off last time because of that crack on the

napper that the Sussex Man gave you. But the Head won't let you off again. You'll be up for a beak's flogging."

Even that warning had no effect on Porrynge. He trod towards the door of the dormitory in his socks. Harvey and Banks exchanged a look, jumped after him, hooked him back to his bed, swung him off the floor, and deposited him on the bed with a bump. Porrynge sprawled there and gasped for breath.

"Now will you go back to bed, or not?" asked Banks.

"Not!" said Pie firmly.

"We're jolly well not going to sit up watching you—I can tell you that!" hooted Harvey.

"Who wants you to?" jeered Pie.

"What about tying him down with a sheet?" suggested Len.

There was a chortle as the new fellow made that suggestion. Porrynge's eyes turned on him with a withering glare.

"You cheeky tick! I'd like to see anybody tie me down with a sheet!" he roared. "Just you try it on, and see!"

"Done!" said Len.

He stepped from his bed. Harvey and Banks chuckled. All the Fifth were sitting up in bed now, grinning. It was quite an entertainment, by the glimmering light of the candle on the washstand.

Pie made a bound from the bed and jumped at the new Fifth Former.

"You cheeky tick!" he gasped. "I've been going to whop you ever since you came! Now I'll jolly well do it!"

Pie's fist, which was big and bony, came crashing at the new fellow's

nose. Len knocked it up, and it passed over his head, and they came together with a crash, chest to chest. The next moment—Pie never knew how—he was back on his bed: another moment, and Len was sitting on his chest. He smiled down at Pie's infuriated face.

Porrynge struggled frantically. But he was pinned, and he struggled in vain. Harvey and Banks, chuckling, grasped his wrists and pulled them to the sides of the bed. A sheet was passed under the bed, and two of its corners were knotted to Pie's wrists. Then Len got off his chest. Pie made a desperate effort to rise. But with his wrists tied down at the sides of the bed that effort was unavailing. Pie was safe for the night.

"That chap Lex has jolly good ideas!" chuckled Banks. "You're all right now, Pie, old bean! You'll be glad of this in the morning."

"Will you lemme gerrup?" came in hissing accents from Pie.

"Not till rising-bell, old scout," grinned Harvey. "Think how nice it will be in the morning, not to be going up to the Head for a flogging!"

"Think I'm going to stay like this all night?" howled Pie frantically.

"Sort of!" assented Banks.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll smash you to-morrow! I'll smash that new tick! I'll—I'll——" Pie choked with fury.

Banks blew out the candle. The Fifth Form, chuckling, settled down again—all but Porrynge. For the next quarter of an hour, Pie's voice was heard in mingled urgings, and pleadings, and furious threatenings. Sounds of struggling and wriggling

were heard, and the creaking of a bed. Sleepy chuckles mingled with those sounds.

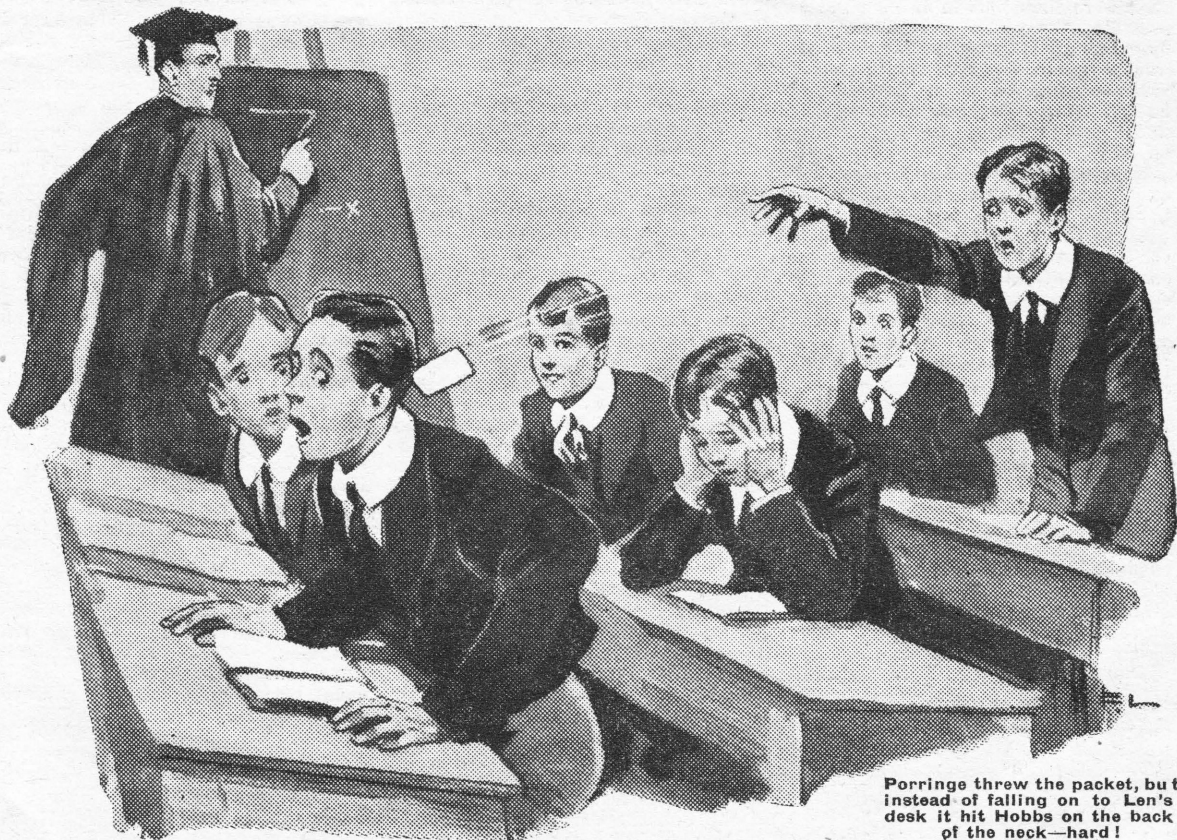
But Porrynge was quiet at last. He could not get loose, and he had to make the best of it. The goat of the Fifth had been saved from his own fat-headedness by those rather drastic measures, and that was that! The Oakshott Fifth were asleep again by the time Pie gave up his unavailing wriggling and struggling; and Pie, tired out by his efforts, settled down at last to get what sleep he could.

But there was one fellow in the dormitory who was not sleeping. When all was quiet, Len slipped from his bed in the darkness, making no sound. No ear in the Fifth heard the door open and shut; no man in the Form dreamed that there was a member of the Fifth absent from the dormitory.

The Shadow in the Dark!

BOOM! came heavily, dully, through the misty autumn night. It was one o'clock—dark and still. All was silent in the vast pile of Oakshott School, save for a rustle of old ivy and the vague and indefinable sounds of the night. In the little side passage on which Mr. Silverson's rooms opened, Len Lex was thinking of giving it up and going back to bed. But he was patient.

Every night since he had been at Oakshott, Len had left his dormitory, leaving a dummy in his bed to delude any waking eye. It was in the small hours that the schoolboy detective hoped, and expected, to make a discovery sooner or later. For, sooner or



Porrynge threw the packet, but instead of falling on to Len's desk it hit Hobbs on the back of the neck—hard!

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later, the Sussex Man would be on the prowl again; and any man in Oakshott School who prowled by night was going to receive the special attention of Detective-Inspector Nixon's nephew. For it was a fixed belief in Len's mind, for good reasons, that the mysterious burglar had his headquarters in the school.

Already there were two men at Oakshott under Len's suspicion. One was Bullivant, the burly games master, whom he had seen stealthily entering the Fifth Form master's study at night, an action unexplained, unless Bullivant had intended to leave the House secretly by the study window—in which case he was the man Len wanted.

The other was his own Form-master, Vernon Silverson. Easiest of all for Silverson to get in and out unseen by his study window, hardly more than a foot from the ground. And the race-card told its own tale. An Oakshott master who attended race meetings and backed horses had to keep such activities very secret; and a Public school master was not a man who should have had such secrets to keep!

It was, at least, a glimpse that all was not as it should have been with the Fifth Form master of Oakshott. And how was it that he had slept so soundly on the night of Porringe's raid? Had he been in the next room, or was his shadowy figure that had entered by the casement and knocked Pie out to keep him quiet?

These two members of the Oakshott staff were ticked off in Len's mind as possible "suspects." But he was only feeling his way, so far. There was a numerous staff at Oakshott School; some of them Len hardly knew as yet. Every man was going under his scrutiny as opportunity offered.

Meanwhile, if the Sussex Man was an inmate of the school, as he believed, he would not prowl again without Len's knowledge. Blotted in the darkness of that side passage, the schoolboy detective could not fail to spot any man who came to Silverson's study door in the small hours. And if Silverson himself stirred in his rooms, Len's keen ear was not likely to lose the faintest sound.

The quarter chimed. It was then that Len realised, with a quick thrill at his heart, that he was not alone in the darkness.

It was instinct, more than anything else, that told him so. He had heard nothing. If Silverson's study door had opened and shut, it had done so without the faintest sound. Whether the unseen one had come from that direction, or from the big corridor, he could not tell. But he was there. Softly, faintly, Len's straining ears picked up the sound of subdued breathing.

He made no move, no sound; he hardly breathed—though it seemed to him that the beating of his heart must be almost audible. Who was it that tenanted the blackness, so close to him, unseen?

Not Porringe? Even if Porringe

had got loose and carried out his intention of a raid, he would not have come silently like this.

Listening, he knew that the unseen one was standing by the study door. Len would have given much for a glimpse of him. But he could see nothing. Faintly he made out a blacker shadow in the blackness—that was all—six or seven feet from him. Then it was gone.

The faintest of footfalls told that it had turned the corner into the big corridor—the corner where Pie had barged Silverson that morning. Len turned the corner the next moment, silent as a shadow.

Silverson was the only man on the staff who had rooms on the ground floor of the House. Len guessed that the shadow he was tracking was making for the staircase. And he was right. He heard the creak of a stair. The schoolboy detective stepped cautiously up the stairs behind the flitting shadow. On the big landing above he paused to listen.

A beam of light suddenly stabbed the blackness of the landing. It was the tiny beam of a small flashlamp.

It shot out into the dark, not three feet from Len—but not towards him. His heart leaped almost to his throat, as he knew that the shadow had heard some faint sound, or had been warned, like Len, by an instinct that he was not alone in the dark. The bar of sudden brilliance was turned directly away from the schoolboy detective. But it was turning slowly. The man who held the torch was going to sweep the wide landing with a circle of light—and in a few seconds that circling beam would reach Len's face and reveal him there to startled eyes.

And then the man would know! Easy enough for a master to give some explanation of being up in the night—some tale that he suspected a fellow of being out of his dormitory!

Not so easy for a new fellow in the Fifth Form to explain! If this man's actions were innocent, he would report Len in the morning to Dr. Osborne, and all Oakshott would know of Len's nocturnal activities. But if he was guilty, he would know that he was watched—and by whom.

Len had only seconds in which to decide and act—but one second was enough for the schoolboy detective. As the hand holding the flashlamp came round, Len made a single step nearer and struck it suddenly, sending the flashlamp spinning from the fingers that held it. It fell on to the landing with a clatter that sounded, in the stillness, almost like thunder.

He heard a startled gasp as he leaped back. Another leap and he was on the upper staircase which led to the dormitories. The flashlamp had not gone out; it gleamed brightly as it lay on the floor. The man who had dropped it bent over it to pick it up. As he stooped, the light of it was, for a flashing second, full on his face.

Len, looking back through the banisters of the upper staircase, saw him. It was Mr. Surtees, the master of the Fourth Form!

The man had risen again the next

moment, the flashlamp in his hand, panting, and circling the light round him. Len, crouching close on the upper stairs, was hidden by the banisters. But Ralph Surtees did not even glance towards the upper staircase. Whatever he was thinking, it was clear that he was not thinking that it was an Oakshott boy who had struck the flashlamp from his hand. Twice he flashed the light round the landing in a circle; then the direction of the beam, as it moved, showed that he was making for the passage on which the masters had their rooms. The light vanished up that passage.

Len Lex breathed hard and deep. Softly he trod up the stairs and back to his dormitory. No one awakened as Len slipped quietly into bed.

But it was long before Len slept. Silverson—Bullivant—and now Surtees! Why was the Fourth Form master up in the night? Why had he raised no alarm when the flashlamp was struck from his hold by an unseen hand? For whatever reason he had been up, if it was an innocent one, surely he would have raised an alarm at that sudden attack?

Len, as he fell asleep at last, was wondering whether he would hear, on the morrow, that the Sussex Man had been at work again on his "beat," of which Oakshott School was the centre. If, on the morrow, there was such news, the schoolboy detective calculated that he would not have to look far for the mysterious burglar—no farther than the study of Ralph Surtees, master of the Fourth Form at Oakshott!

Pie on the Warpath!

PIE was wrathful. At brekker he refused to look at, or speak to, his faithful chums, Harvey and Banks. He ignored their existence with disdainful scorn, and if his eyes chanced to fall on them he looked at them as if they were not there. But he did not ignore Len Lex. He gave Len significant glances, indicative of what was coming to him later.

Towards his old friends, disdainful scorn sufficed to express Pie's deep resentment. But something of a more drastic nature was called for in the case of a new tick who had had the unexampled cheek to suggest tying Pie to his bed to keep him out of mischief. Every day since that extremely cool new fellow had been in the Oakshott Fifth, Pie had considered the advisability of whopping him. Now he ceased to consider it. He was going to do it.

On the way to the Fifth Form room that morning, Porringe dropped a grim warning in Len's ear:

"Look out!"

Len did not look, or feel, unduly alarmed as he sat with the Fifth that morning and did Latin prose with Silverson. But he was rather pleased when, Pie having exceeded even his usual record of blunders, Mr. Silverson told him he would be kept in over break. Pie was fearfully annoyed; but it was a relief to Len, who did not want a scrap with the goat of the Fifth.

Len rather liked Porringe. He was such an ass that nobody could help

liking him. Len hoped that, later in the day, Pie would have recovered his temper and banished thoughts of vengeance.

The vengeful Pie did not see him again till the Fifth went back to their Form-room in the afternoon. Pie sat at a distance from Len, and so was unable to whisper his wrath. It was near time for dismissal when Pie bethought him of a method of communication. He wrote a note on the fly-leaf of his "Selected Poems," folded it in four, with a couple of pen-nibs inside to give it weight, and tossed it over to Len.

It was scheduled to drop on Len's desk, just in front of him. But even in so simple a matter as this Pie was, as his friend Harvey described it, cack-handed! That message did not reach Len Lex. It travelled half the distance, and was stopped in transit by the back of Hobbs' neck.

Hobbs of the Fifth, suddenly rapped on the back of the neck by he knew not what, naturally jumped. He also ejaculated:

"Ooooh!"

"Porrige! What are you doing? How dare you throw inkballs in class!" thundered Mr. Silverson.

"Oh, scissors!" groaned poor Pie. "It—it wasn't an inkball, sir."

"What? Hobbs, hand me that—that missile at once."

The "missile" was handed over. Pie looked on in dismay as the Form-master unfolded it and the pen-nibs dropped out on the floor. Then Mr. Silverson read the following:

"You beastly tick! I'm going to nock you into the middle of next week after class."

"Upon my word!" exclaimed the Fifth Form master. "Porrige! How dare you threaten Hobbs in this way! Porrige, you will be detained for an hour after class. I shall set you an exercise in English spelling, since you seem to be unacquainted with the orthography of your own language."

"I—I—" stuttered Porrige.

"Silence! If there is any more of this I shall cane you, Porrige."

There was no more of that! Pie sat tight for the rest of that "school." When the Fifth went, Pie remained. Really, it began to look as if he would never get to close quarters with that tick Lex! He fumed, and almost foamed, over that hour. Never had an hour seemed to contain so many minutes, all unusually long. But the hour elapsed, and Pie was free at last; and he bolted up to Study No. 8 in the Fifth. He was bound to catch the tick in the study at tea, and vengeance, long delayed, would be satisfied at last.

Len, still with the cheery hope that Pie would cool down, given time, tea'd in Hall!

Pie did not cool down. So many disappointments and delays, far from cooling him, had the opposite effect. After tea, he hunted Len Lex with deadly persistence. Len, spotting him from the distance, faded out of the quadrangle.

Near Master's Gate there was a clump of oaks. One of them grew close to the old stone wall, which its branches overtopped. Len disappeared

behind that oak. He was as keen to dodge Pie as Pie was to run him down. It was not, as Pie suspected, funk. Len had a punch that would have curled Pie up like a note of interrogation. But he did not want to hand it out to Porrige if he could possibly help it. He was going, if he could, to steer clear of Porrige till prep.

At prep, he had to meet the wrathful Pie in Study No. 8, and if Pie was still asking for it he would have to have that for which he asked. But Len still nourished a hope that Pie might cool down before prep.

Between the big oak and the wall he stood and smiled. He could hear Pie's voice, inquiring loudly whether anyone had seen a funky, sneaking tick? Then Pie came through the oaks and spotted him.

"Oh, there you are!" shouted Porrige. "Dodging a chap all over the shop! Now look out!"

As Porrige came on, Len looked at the oak. Had a branch been within reach he could have swung himself up. But there was no branch within reach of a boy's grasp; even a man, unless tall, would have had to stand on his toes to reach the nearest. And the trunk was smooth, and gave no hold. It was safe to say that no Oakshott boy had ever climbed that particular oak. But the schoolboy detective knew a trick of climbing that required both skill and practice—both of which he possessed.

Pressing knee and elbow to the wall on one side, knee and elbow to the tree-trunk on the other, Len pushed up between the two. The space between tree and wall was hardly more than a foot. It was not an easy feat, though simple enough to an agile fellow after practice. Len went up quite quickly, put a hand on the top of the wall, reached a branch with the other—and sat in the tree, smiling down at the astounded Pie.

"Oh!" said Pie, staring. "Look here, come down, you tick! Do you hear me, you rotten funk? I'm going to whop you for tying me up last night! I'm going to push your silly face through the back of your silly head! Will you come down, or do you want me to come after you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Len—he could not help it—at the idea of the goat of the Fifth putting up that difficult climb.

"I'll give you something to cackle for!" hissed Pie.

He plunged between the thick oak and the stone wall, and started. At the fifth attempt, he got right off the ground and gained a foot in altitude. Then he slipped down and landed on the earth. His shoulders landed first with a heavy whack, the back of his head immediately afterwards, with a loud crack.

"Yooo-hooo-hooooop!" roared Porrige.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Len.

Porrige sat up dizzily and rubbed the back of his head.

"You just wait, you rotter!" he gasped. "I'll get you at prep! I'll mop up Study No. 8 with you! Ow, my napper!"

Rubbing his suffering napper, Pie limped away through the oaks. Len

smiled, and sat where he was. The thick branches hid him from the quad, and from the school windows.

Just above the height of the wall, jutting branches, where they left the parent trunk, made quite a comfortable seat. Len settled down there, to sit at his ease, with the idea of giving Pie plenty of time to clear off. To his startled surprise, the solid-looking wood yielded under his weight. He was up again in a twinkling, resting a knee on a solid spot, his first idea being that he had had a narrow escape of falling into a trunk which was unsuspectingly hollow below.

The next moment, Len had partially dislodged a chunk of wood. That chunk, as he could see now, was wholly detached from the surrounding wood; it was, in effect, a lid over a concealed space. As he prised the chunk out of its position, Len knew that he had made a discovery—and he guessed what it meant.

The chunk lifted, a hollow in the oak trunk, about a foot deep, was revealed. At the bottom of it lay a leather case.

Len lifted the case and opened it. There was a gleam of polished steel instruments. The schoolboy detective was holding in his hand the burglar's outfit of the Sussex Man!

Wary the Sussex Man was well known to be—wary as a fox. Safe, carrying on unsuspected as a member of the staff of Oakshott School, he yet envisaged the possibility of suspicion, of a search. Len knew now that a search would reveal nothing in his quarters in the House. It was in this secret hiding-place that he kept the tools of his trade ready to his hands when he crept out under cover of darkness, hidden so cunningly that only a remote chance could have revealed the secret. And, even revealed, it gave no clue to the man!

For a long minute Len Lex gazed at the gleaming steel. Then he closed the case, and replaced it where he had found it. With assiduous care, he replaced the chunk of wood that formed a lid to the hidden hollow in the oak. Not a sign was left that it had been disturbed. The Sussex Man was wary, but all his wary cunning would not tell him that this hidden secret was known.

Len slipped down from the old oak to the ground. No more attention, if he could help it, was going to be drawn to that oak. He hurried through the trees, and almost ran into Pie, waiting, as he had suspected, on the other side.

"Got you, you tick!" roared Pie, as he rushed.

How he came to stumble over Len's foot Pie never knew. But he did stumble, and by the time he resumed the perpendicular the elusive tick had vanished once more. Pie had to leave it, after all, till prep!

A clue—one which may solve the mystery of the Sussex Man! Len Lex, determined to succeed where the Yard has failed, encounters Fun as well as Danger in next week's story!