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WONDERS OF THE NEW TELEVISION!—See page 16

The SCHOOLBOY DETECTIVE

Whilst his dormitory sleeps, LEN LEX of the Fifth keeps watch for the mysterious "Sussex Man"—and sees two hundred pounds vanish from a Master's desk!

By
**CHARLES
HAMILTON**

Nipped in the Bud!

"SILVERSON'S away to-night!" Porringe of the Fifth made that statement, in the senior day-room, to his friends Harvey and Banks. His look, and his tone, as he made it, were both extremely significant.

But that significance seemed lost on Banks and Harvey. Harvey merely said "Is he?" and Banks made no remark at all. Obviously, they were quite indifferent to the fact that their Form-master, Mr. Vernon Silverson, would be away from Oakshott that night.

"I heard him telling Surtees," added Pie. "Bit of swank, you know. He's dining with Lord Trant, over at Trant Elms, and staying the night."

"Then he won't have an eye on us in prep this evening," remarked Banks. "I wonder how he got invited? Bit of a pusher, old Silverson."

"Well, it's all right, isn't it?" said Pie.

"All right for Silverson, if his jolly old lordship stands him a good dinner."

"All right for me, I mean."

"Has Lord Trant asked you, too, Pie?" grinned Harvey.

"Oh, don't be an ass! I mean it's the chance I've been waiting for, all this term, to get my own back on Silverson."

Len Lex, the new man in the Oakshott Fifth, grinned. Really, Len could not help grinning. This was so exactly like that goat Porringe!

Len was sitting in the bay window of the day-room, which was wide open to admit the fresh air and the sunshine. He had a view of the quadrangle and of the gravel path that ran under the window—and of a burly, red-faced gentleman who leaned against an adjacent buttress, reading a letter.

That gentleman was Mr. Bullivant, the games master of Oakshott. And, through the open window, every word spoken inside floated out to his red ears. Len noticed him give a little



As Len watched, Bullivant jerked out of Silverson's desk a small bundle of papers. Banknotes rustled in his hand as he counted them with silently moving lips in the glaring beam of the torch.

start as he heard Pie's statement that Silverson would be away that night, as if he was interested in that little bit of news—as very likely he was! There was no doubt that Bullivant heard—and no doubt that he heeded.

Len Lex, the schoolboy detective, was deeply interested in Mr. Bullivant, whose name was on his list of "suspects"—one of the three or four men at Oakshott who might turn out to be the "Sussex Man," the elusive burglar who was thought to operate from Oakshott, and whom Len had been specially sent to Oakshott to unmask by his uncle, Detective-Inspector Nixon of Scotland Yard.

From where he sat, Len's eyes had been on Bullivant for some time. He would have given a good deal to know what was written in that letter which "old Bully" was reading so intently. He wondered whether it was from the mysterious "Roger," whom he had

seen Bullivant meet in Trant Woods. He could not see the letter, but he could see the games master's face, and watch the varying expressions thereon.

Intent on the letter, it evidently did not occur to Bullivant that eyes might be upon him from an adjacent window—or perhaps he did not care. To all Oakshott, Len was simply Lex of the Fifth: and Bullivant had never taken any special notice of him, except in games.

Bullivant put the letter into his pocket and turned towards the window.

Porringe had a very heavy "down" on the new man in the Fifth. Len was, in Pie's opinion, a cheeky new tick who needed keeping in his place. Nevertheless, Len would gladly have saved him from announcing his intention of ragging his Form-master, in the hearing of another master.

Len put a finger to his lips, and

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with the other hand pointed to the open casement. That was as plain a warning that there were ears outside to hear as any fellow could have wanted—any fellow but Porrynge. But Pie was not quick on the uptake. He gave Len a stare but, without taking any other notice of him, rattled on:

"You men remember I started in to rag Silverson's study at the beginning of the term—that night the burglar came. That was a ghastly frost. I—"

"Shut up!" hissed Harvey and Banks together. They were quicker on the uptake than their chum Pie. They could not see Bullivant from where they stood, but they understood Len's action.

"Let a fellow speak!" said Pie. "It jolly well won't be a frost to-night, with Silverson away—see? I'm going down from the dorm—"

Pie broke off. A red face and a pair of hefty shoulders were framed in the open window. Mr. Bullivant was looking in, his rather bulging light blue eyes fixed on the dismayed Pie.

"Oh!" ejaculated Porrynge.

"Oh, you goat!" murmured Banks.

"Oh, you fathead!" breathed Harvey.

"Porrynge!" Bullivant's voice, loud and deep, boomed through the day-room, and caused every fellow there to look round towards the window. "Porrynge, I heard what you said."

There was a subdued chuckle from the Fifth Form men in the room. They had all heard what Pie said to Harvey and Banks. That did not matter, of course—Pie did not care if all the Fifth knew. They knew all about his feud with Silverson—it was, indeed, a standing joke in the Fifth—but it was rather a different matter if a beak heard!

"You are a reckless young rascal, Porrynge!" boomed Bullivant. "Have you forgotten that on the night you went down from your dormitory to play a foolish prank in your Form-master's study you were struck down by a burglar—the man who is called the Sussex Man? Cannot such an experience teach even you common sense? I have a great mind, Porrynge, to take you to your Form-master at once and report your words to Mr. Silverson."

Pie goggled at him in deep dismay. What would happen if his proposed enterprise was reported to Silverson made Pie feel quite faint. Silverson had a hefty hand with a cane, as Pie knew only too well from sorrowful experience.

"Oh, sir!" gasped Pie. "I—I—"

"I am unwilling," said Mr. Bullivant, "to cause a boy trouble with his Form-master. But I have no alternative, Porrynge, unless you give me your word not to leave your dormitory to-night, under any circumstances whatever. You are a very stupid boy, but I can take your word."

Pie breathed again. Old Bully's bark was always worse than his bite.

"Oh, yes, sir, yes, certainly!" gasped Pie. "I give you my word, sir—word of honour, sir."

"Very well," said Mr. Bullivant. "I shall accept your word, Porrynge, and trust you." He disappeared from the window.

"Old Bully's a good old bean," said Banks. "He never lands a man in a row if he can help it. But, by gum, you're the man to ask for it, Pie!"

"Was there ever such a goat in Oakshott or out of it?" asked Harvey. "Hardly ever!" chuckled Banks.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The fellows were all laughing. Pie did not join in the laugh. It was seldom that an Oakshott master had a night away from the school during the term. This glorious chance of getting his own back on Silverson was never likely to recur. It was a blow to Pie! Owing to old Bully's kindness of heart, he had got off cheaply—he fairly wriggled at the idea of being reported to Silverson. Still, it was a blow. Porrynge's face was long—while the rest of the day-room roared.

Quick Work!

"LUCKY man!" said Surtees.

"The nobility," said Mr. Chowne, "never honour me."

Vernon Silverson, the master of the Fifth, smiled, with perhaps a trace of smug satisfaction. It was rather a distinction to be asked to dinner by Lord Trant, at Trant Elms. His lordship was a governor of Oakshott, and, on his rare appearances at the school, was treated with marked respect by every member of the staff.

Mr. Bullivant, coming into Hall, did not join the group of masters. Bullivant seldom joined a group that included Silverson, if he could help it. There was no actual dispute between the two, but the big, burly, loud-voiced games master had nothing in common with the dark, handsome, and rather elegant Form-master. But though Bullivant did not join the group, he hovered within hearing of their voices.

Len Lex, who wandered into Hall after him, hovered also, at a respectful distance, taking a letter from his pocket and reading it. Bullivant did not notice him—there were dozens of fellows about, and Len was only one of them. But Len was noticing the games master, with quiet intentness. His idea was that Bullivant desired to confirm what he had heard from Porrynge at the day-room window—to make sure, in fact, that Silverson really was going to be away that night. Bullivant was looking at a painting on the wall, but Len had no doubt that he was using his ears, rather than his eyes.

If that was what James Bullivant wanted, he was gratified. Silverson, Surtees, Chowne, and Bailey were all talking on the subject; and anyone who heard that conversation could be left in no doubt, after a few minutes, that Vernon Silverson was dining with his lordship at Trant Elms that evening, and that his lordship had asked him to stay the night.

Len was not surprised when Mr.

Bullivant, after a few minutes, ceased to be interested in the painting and walked out of Hall.

On which, Len, too, ceased to be interested in the letter he had taken from his pocket, and left Hall also.

Mr. Bullivant walked along to Common-room, went in and shut the door. Len, passing that door a minute later, loitered. There was no sound of voices from within—most of the beaks, he knew, were in Hall. But there was a sound, to the schoolboy detective's intent ear, of the scratching of a pen. Which was enough for Len, and he went on his way, and left Mr. Bullivant to write his letter at the Common-room desk undisturbed.

He went out into the quad, with a thoughtful pucker in his brow.

At a distance from the House, Root, Sidgers, Tulke, and other heroes of the Fourth Form were punting an old footer about before tea. Len stopped near the school wall and watched the fags at their game.

At the spot where he stood, he had one eye on the school letter-box in the wall. If Mr. Bullivant, after writing his letter, came out to post it himself, he would not do so unseen. And if the address on that letter was one that he did not want other eyes to see, he was sure to carry it out to the box himself. In which case, Detective-Inspector Nixon's nephew was going to know to whom that letter was addressed.

Any fellow noticing Len would have fancied that he was mildly amused by the antics of the Fourth Form men with their old football. His face gave no clue to his thoughts.

But he was thinking hard! A week ago he had shadowed Bullivant in Trant Woods, and seen him meet an expensive-looking young man with a weak chin whom he called Roger. He had heard Bullivant tell Roger, in so many words, that he would "have the money," and that Roger would know it when he saw in the papers that the Sussex Man had cracked the crib at Oakshott School. What did that mean—what could it mean—except that Bullivant was the Sussex Man, and had his own school marked out for the next "job"?

Yet, somehow, Len doubted. Why, he hardly knew, unless it was because he liked old Bully, and everybody else liked him, except, perhaps, Silverson.

And there were others on his list of suspects—Silverson, deep in racing losses, who made mysterious excursions on his motor-bike, and whose study window was the mystery man's way in and out of Oakshott. Surtees, who prowled the House at night for no imaginable reason, unless going and coming, so far as Len could see. And the fourth man, whom Len had watched clamber into the old oak where the cracksman's bag of tools was hidden, and drop over the wall—the man of whom he knew nothing, of whose identity he could form not even a suspicion; nothing, except that he was someone in Oakshott!

But the others could wait. Bullivant was his game now. Bullivant had made sure that Silverson would be absent that night, and then at once

had gone to write a letter. Did that mean that the certainty of Silverson's absence had brought him to a decision, after long delay? And did that letter refer to it? The schoolboy detective was going to know if he could. And he thought that he could!

"Here, send that ball this way!" shouted Root. A hefty kick had sent the footer right across to where Len stood.

Len, smiling, kicked it back to the fags, carefully dropping it nearer the letter-box. The figure of Bullivant appeared in the distance towards the House, coming across. If he had a letter to post, it was not to be seen. But he came straight across to the wall, obviously heading for the box.

Root & Co. were not more than four or five yards from the box, scrambling round their footer. Len drew a little nearer to them. Bullivant, passing the noisy mob, stopped to speak.

"A little less kick and rush, Root!" said the games master. "Even in a punt about you may as well remember that Soccer is a scientific game."

"Oh! Yes, sir!" gasped Root. Bullivant walked on. His hand went to his pocket as he neared the post-box. Len's eyes glimmered. He had no doubt that the letter Bullivant had just written was one of which he did not desire other eyes to see the address. Once dropped in the box, it was safe from all eyes but those of the officers of the Post Office. But it was not in the box yet.

Standing in front of the box, Bullivant drew a letter from his pocket and lifted it to the slot. At the same instant, Len Lex stepped into the mob of fags and kicked the footer. There was a howl of protest from Root & Co., which died away in a gasp of

horror at the result of Len's kick. For the footer, shooting from that kick like a bullet, banged on Bullivant's shoulders from behind and sent him stumbling against the wall; and as he threw both hands to the wall to save his face, the letter dropped to the ground.

Len reached it almost in a bound. As the games master, spluttering, turned, Len picked it up and handed it to him, the address downward. One swift glance had been enough for Len, and the name and address on the envelope were written in his memory: "Robert Barker, Esq., 10, John Street, Trant."

"Who—what—what——" spluttered Bullivant.

"Awfully sorry, sir!" gasped Len. "I hope you weren't hurt, sir! My fault entirely! Your letter, sir!"

Bullivant almost snatched the letter from Len's hand. His glance shot to it as he snatched, and noted that the back was uppermost. As clearly as if he had spoken, Len read his thought that the boy could not have seen the address. Another second, and the letter was dropped in the slot.

"Did you kick that ball, Lex? How could you be so clumsy?" exclaimed Mr. Bullivant angrily. "I am not hurt, but you have made my coat muddy——"

"I was going to show the fags a kick, sir," said Len humbly. "I'm afraid I was a bit clumsy——"

"Well, well! There is no harm done," said Mr. Bullivant, gruffly but

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The footer, shooting from Len's kick, banged on Bullivant's shoulders and sent him stumbling against the wall. The mystery letter dropped from his grasp.

good-humouredly, and he walked back to the House.

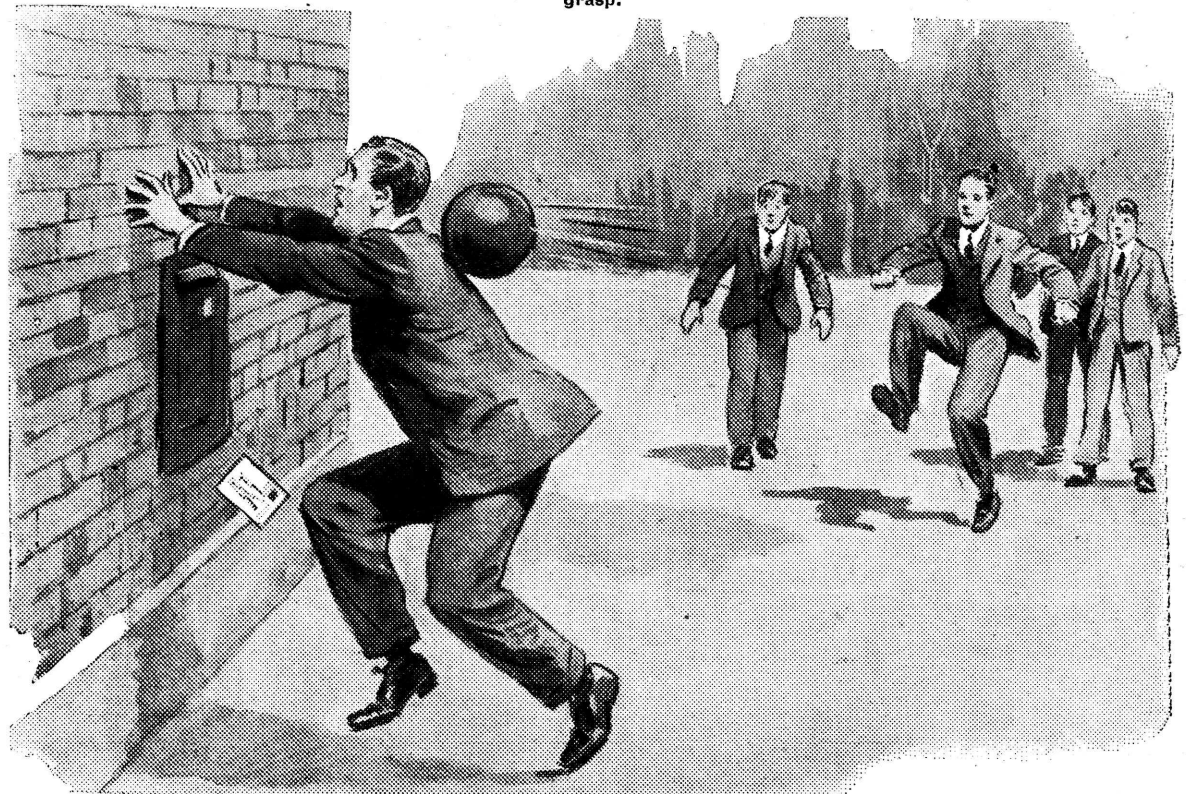
Any other beak would have made a fuss about that "accident"—Silverson, certainly, would have given him six. Old Bully had let it go with a gruff word or two. Len had never liked old Bully so much as he did at that moment. His face was clouded as he walked out of gates. It was utterly rotten luck to like and admire a man whom it looked like being his duty to trail down to a just punishment.

Putting Bill Wise!

THE man who sat in the little green Austin bore no resemblance whatever to Detective-Inspector William Nixon, of Scotland Yard. Had he done so he certainly would never have driven the car within a mile of Oakshott School. For though Bill Nixon did not know the Sussex Man, it was quite on the cards that the Sussex Man knew Bill Nixon.

But Bill's nearest and dearest relative would not have known him now, with his horn-rimmed spectacles, straggling moustache, and red cheekbones. Even Len would not have known him had he not been watching for him and known what to expect.

Len, strolling in Bingham Lane with his hands in his pockets, glanced at the green Austin and the horn-rimmed driver, and made no sign. Neither did the man in the car make any sign. Len walked into the field behind the willows that bordered the lane, and the horn-rimmed man backed his car on to the wide grass



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verge and descended from it, a little camera in his hand.

Anyone who had passed that rather solitary spot might have supposed that the motorist was going to take some snaps, as people often did, of the high downs rich in the autumn sunset, or of the deep woods that swept away towards Greenwood and Parsley. The horn-rimmed man opened the camera, all ready, as he walked into the field behind the willows. Once there, however, he nodded and grinned at Len, and the camera remained in his hand, unused.

"I got your call, Len, and came all out," said Bill Nixon. "You've not a lot of time before lock-up at your school, I think?"

"No," said Len. "I'm glad I got you, and you came quick, Bill."

"I was waiting to hear from you, chief!" grinned Bill.

Len chuckled. He had walked quickly down to Oakways village and put a call through to Greenwood 101. Anyone who might have overheard him doing so would have heard him say that he had not received the football boots, as promised, and request that they might be delivered without further delay. Which certainly would not have sounded, to the most suspicious ear, as if it meant that Len Lex was waiting for his uncle, the detective-inspector, at a certain prearranged spot.

But that was exactly what it did mean—and here was Bill Nixon. Len chuckled as his uncle playfully addressed him as "chief," but he became serious again at once.

"First of all, any news of Roger Bullivant?" he asked.

Bill eyed him over the plain lenses in the horn-rimmed spectacles.

"I thought you knew only the first name, Len, so far," he said.

"I've just seen a letter addressed to Robert Barker," answered Len.

Bill Nixon blinked for a moment. Then he grinned and nodded.

"Good!" he said.

"It doesn't always work," murmured Len—"not with a sportsman in the underworld, always changing his name. But our good Roger isn't that kind of a sportsman. I've told you what he's like—rather a young dandy, with expensive tastes, keeping up a certain position—not used to aliases. Lots of things about him marked with his initials, I should say. Which might excite remark in his lodgings if he wore a name beginning with other initials. If a landlady noticed Jack Jones or Tom Robinson, with a hanky or a collar marked R. B., she might smell a mouse. The same initials, Bill—for lots of reasons."

Bill nodded.

"And," said Len, "pretty certain in this instance, as Robert and Roger both begin with an R, and we knew Roger! If they stuck to R, why not to B? And B stands for Bullivant, Bill, and there was a certain resemblance between Roger's features and old Bully's—though one looks like a rabbit and the other like a mastiff. Have I got it right, Bill?"

"Right as rain," answered Mr.

Nixon. "After I got your tip about Roger I put them wise at the Yard, and they sorted out a list of wanted Rogers for me. Six of them in all—one surnamed Bullivant."

"And—"

"Bank clerk," said Mr. Nixon tersely. "Capital and Provincial Bank, Bristol. Bolted three months ago—four hundred pounds short—backing horses."

"He looked it," said Len. "Young brother or nephew of old Bully!" His face was pensive for a moment. "Bill, old Bully is a splendid man, in a lot of ways."

"A splendid cracksmen, at least, from what you heard him say to Roger," said Mr. Nixon, with a sharp look at his nephew.

"Yes. But I'm not satisfied, Bill. And there are the others—I've kept you posted in details, Bill—the others have a lot to explain. We're not through yet, Bill."

"No," agreed Mr. Nixon; but he eyed his nephew very keenly. "You like this man Bullivant, Len?"

"Can't help it," said the schoolboy detective. "Everybody likes him—a gruff old bear, with a roar like a bull, but a heart of gold, Bill—that's genuine whether he's a cracksmen in his spare time or not. If I have to get old Bully, Bill, I shall be sorry that I ever went to Oakshott."

"Don't be a young ass, Len."

"I'll try not," Len grinned. "Look here, leaving out what I heard him say to Roger in Trant Woods—I admit that it stumps me, but leaving it out—what else? Roger's on the run—skulking in a little country town ten miles from his relation's school, sticking his relation for money. Unscrupulous young scoundrel, landing his troubles on a better man—"

"Who knows what he's done, and if he's an honest citizen, ought to hand him over to the police," grunted Mr. Nixon. "Carry on."

"Roger wants money—most likely to cut and run abroad, and get clear. Bullivant's standing by him. I had it from the man's own lips that he'd given Roger two or three times the amount of his salary as games master at Oakshott. Any way out—except the Sussex Man's way?"

"I've gone into that," grunted Bill. "Shareholders' lists—and a precious mountain of work. But I've got it. In the last three months, four sales of shares traced to James Bullivant, Oakshott. The man had some private means, which he's sold out."

"The Sussex Man needn't have done that, Bill! The Sussex Man has other ways of raising money."

"I know," grunted Bill. "But—"

"Everything's against old Bully, including his own words. But all the while I feel in my bones that he isn't the man. If you said to any Oakshott man, Bill, that old Bully would touch a shilling that wasn't his own, that Oakshott man would dot you in the eye. But for the sake of another man, perhaps—" Len mused.

"Wash it out!" growled Inspector Nixon. "Young Roger's been in trouble for three months. The Sussex

Man's been on the prowl for two years!"

"You've got me, Bill," sighed Len. "But granting that there's a sporting chance that old Bully is only a soft-hearted old bear, landed in deep waters by an unscrupulous young scoundrel, that's where you come in, Bill. Tip some of your official friends to call on Mr. Robert Barker, No. 10, John Street, Trant, and collect the goods."

"We want the Sussex Man," said Bill. "But Roger Bullivant will be welcome to go on with. The goods will be collected to-night."

Len smiled.

"Old Bully wouldn't thank me, I'm afraid, if he knew," he remarked. "But he will be better off without Roger, and good old bean as he is, he can't be allowed such amusements as helping absconding bank clerks to get away from the tribe of Nixon. What?"

"I should say not!" grunted Bill.

"Then we'll leave it at that," said Len. "Gather up Roger and tuck him away where he belongs, and we shall see what we shall see, Bill! Now I'll cut, or Lex of the Fifth will be late for roll-call."

Bill grinned, and shook hands with his nephew. The green Austin whizzed away. Not till it had disappeared in the distance did Len emerge from beyond the willows, and saunter away in the direction of the school. He sauntered carelessly, with his hands in his pockets, but he arrived at Oakshott before old Wegg came out to close the gates, and was in good time to answer to his name when Mr. Chowne called the roll in Hall.

The Raider!

THE boom of eleven strokes from the old clock-tower of Oakshott reached two wakeful ears in the Fifth Form dormitory, and Len sat up in bed. He listened for a few moments to the sound of steady breathing from other beds—then slipped out, silent as a spectre, dressed, and put on rubber shoes that made no sound. He delayed a minute or two to fix up a dummy in his bed, for a fellow could not be too careful, then he was gone from the Fifth Form dormitory.

At that hour all Oakshott was silent and still. One or two masters, perhaps, might be still up, in their studies, but Common-room was closed and dark. The last light in the passages was turned out at eleven. When Len, therefore, looked out on the big landing, at a quarter past, he looked into a well of darkness. But he was wary—very wary. Surtees might be night-prowling—only a few nights ago he had run into Len, and collared him, and, amazingly, believed that he had collared Bullivant. If he had discovered that that was a mistake, he had not, at all events, discovered Len.

There was no danger from Silver-son, who was ten or eleven miles away, at Trant Elms. But there might be danger from Surtees—or from the unknown who was nameless

on the schoolboy detective's list—and Bullivant. For Bullivant, it was absolutely certain, was going to walk abroad that eventful night—whatever his object. Not that Len expected Bullivant to be on the move yet. He was certain to wait till a later hour—the later the safer. But Detective-Inspector Nixon's nephew left nothing to chance, and he was on the trail as soon as it was quite safe to get out of his dormitory.

Silverson's passage was his objective. He reached it, but he did not, as on other vigils, linger in the passage. Silverson away, it was safe to enter Silverson's study; there were no ears to hear in the bed-room adjoining. A door opened and shut without a sound, and Len Lex was in the Fifth Form master's study, a shadow in the glimmer of autumn starlight that fell in at the casement window.

He knew that he had to wait, and he was patient. Quietly and carefully, he selected a spot. There was a screen standing in a corner, and Len arranged it to suit his purpose. Behind it, he was blotted from sight, with just sufficient space left to watch the whole room without revealing himself. In the dark corner he placed a chair, to sit on while he waited. It was useless to tire himself by standing.

But if his limbs were at rest, his brain was busy. He was going to make a discovery that night, he knew. But what? That was still on the knees of the gods!

If Bullivant was the Sussex Man, his game, in all likelihood, would be the Head's safe. That was in Dr. Osborne's study, nowhere near where Len was keeping watch. But in Silverson's study Len knew that he would spot him. His desire to ascertain that Silverson would really be absent that night meant, and could mean, only one thing—business in Silverson's quarters.

Silverson's casement, with its low sill on the quad, was, as Len knew, the way the Sussex Man came and went. It might mean that the cracksmen did not intend to crack the Oakshott crib, as his words in Trant Woods implied, but had decided on another quarter. It might, more likely, mean that he intended to leave traces in Silverson's study of an entrance from outside—the way the Sussex Man had come the night Porringe had been knocked out. For he could not, of course, allow the slightest suspicion to arise that it was an "inside job."

Everybody, in the morning, would know that the Sussex Man had come and gone—but they were to believe that he had come, as before, from the outer darkness, and disappeared into it again. Whatever Bullivant's intentions might be, Len would get into touch with him by watching in Vernon Silverson's study. There was no doubt of it.

He waited. Midnight boomed through the misty night. As the slow minutes after midnight crawled by, the schoolboy detective was more than ever on the alert. But another

long hour dragged its slow length by and there was a boom of one. Silence again—and slow, endless minutes, and then—

Then Len knew that the door of the study had opened and closed.

Someone stood in the study, in the darkness.

He felt a thrill at his heart. All was dark, save for the pale glimmer at the uncurtained window. But a swift glance round the edge of the screen showed him a burly form standing by the door, with head bent to listen; and he knew that the subdued, laboured breathing he could hear came from Bullivant.

The faintest of clicks reached his ear.

In the name of wonder why had Bullivant turned the key in the lock? If he was going out, it did not add to his security. Nobody was likely to come to that door—but if anyone came, the locking of the door was more likely to awaken suspicion than to allay it, for that door was never locked. Moreover, how could it be locked in Silverson's absence, except by some surreptitious intruder in the study? If Bullivant was the Sussex Man, the Sussex Man seemed to have forgotten his usual wary cunning.

Len listened. Bullivant was at the window now. To step out and fetch the cracksmen's tools for his work, or to leave the window unfastened, as an indication that a thief in the night had entered from without? The latter, for having unfastened the casement and left it ajar, the massive figure stepped back.

There was a faint swish of rings on a rod. The starlight was blotted out. Bullivant had drawn the long, dark curtains across the window. Why? Len gave up trying to guess. He heard a rustling, and knew that the man was carefully arranging the dark hangings, and that it could only mean that he was going to turn on a light, and dreaded that a gleam of it should escape by the window.

Why a light? Len drew a deep, deep breath.

The master of the Fifth was known to have money. He had a rather expensive motor-bike. He dressed well—very well indeed. Yes, he had money—and Bullivant, like everyone else, knew it.

Len knew now what he was going to see in Silverson's study, and his heart was like lead. All was grist that came to the mill of the Sussex Man—a large sum in the Head's safe, a small sum in a Form-master's desk. This was the man he had hoped, and trusted, was guiltless.

There was a gleam of sudden light. An electric flashlamp was gleaming on Silverson's desk. It was a large, strong, massive desk, of solid oak, and safely locked with a patent lock. Keys to fit such a lock would not be easy to come by. There was a faint scraping as a key slipped into a lock.

Len hardly cared to look. He knew what was going on, and he was sick at heart. Old Bully—the most popular man at Oakshott—the man

he liked, admired, respected. It was only a matter of hours since he had said to Bill Nixon that he felt in his bones that Bullivant was not the wanted man. What would Bill think of that when he knew? He had to force himself to peer from the edge of the screen in the dark corner.

Bullivant's profile was towards him. The red face, the prominent light blue eyes, glimmered in the light. The red face was not so red as was its wont—it was as pale as its complexion allowed it to be. There were clots of perspiration on the broad forehead, though it was a cold night. The rather thick lips were set, but when they parted they quivered. The man was labouring under a stress of emotion. A thief in the night—but a thief breaking through moral bounds for the first time, conscience-stricken at his own actions, horrified at himself—that was what Bullivant looked. Yet the Sussex Man, surely, had had time to get used to his work? It was nearly two years since he had started to prowl.

Click!

The desk was unlocked.

Whatever plunder might be in it lay at the prowler's mercy. Bullivant did not stretch out his hand. He stood as if petrified. He stirred at last, and a fantastic shadow danced, as his large, heavy hand came across the light. But it dropped again, and the shadow was still. Then, like a man suddenly making up his mind, he plunged his hand into a pigeon-hole in the desk and jerked out a small bundle of papers. And Len knew that he had looked into that desk before to know so exactly where to find what he wanted.

Standing there with sweating brow, he rustled the edges of a little bundle of banknotes as he counted them. His back was partly turned to Len's corner now, but the watcher saw his face—and saw the drops that trickled down the red, rugged cheeks. Sweat from his damp brow.

The banknotes shook and rustled in his hand as he counted them. Len saw his lips move. He uttered the faintest of sounds, but, with the motion of the lips to help, Len guessed the words—two hundred.

He had taken two hundred pounds from Vernon Silverson's desk. It was a large sum for a Form-master to keep in his desk. No doubt a man with sporting speculations always on hand required to keep some ready money within reach.

The light vanished.

Len heard a sound in the darkness. It might have been a grunt, but it sounded to his ears like a groan. Then a shuffling of soft footfalls towards the window. A swish of rings—the curtains were drawn aside again.

Pale starlight glimmered in once more, revealing a massive black shadow which crossed to the door. A faint click of the key as it turned back, and the door opened and closed.

A few moments later it opened and closed again without a sound. Len Lex stepped into the passage as a

(Continued on page 31)

The Schoolboy Detective

(Continued from page 11)

bulky figure turned the corner out of it into the big corridor.

That figure made no sound. Bullivant, like Len, was wearing soft rubber shoes. From the tall corridor window a glimmer fell on Bullivant, then he passed on into darkness. Len ducked below the level of the window as he followed.

Where was the man going now? Only the Head's study was worth the Sussex Man's while, where there was a safe and substantial loot. But he was not heading in the direction of the Head's study. He was making for the stairs. Had he already cracked Dr. Osborne's safe before his visit to Silverson's quarters? It looked like it, for otherwise he had deliberately passed over a large prize for the sake of a small one—which was unthinkable.

Anyhow, it was clear that he was going back to his room now. A creak or two in the dark was enough for Len. In the passage above, Bullivant's door closed softly. Len Lex trod silently back to the Fifth Form dormitory.

His work was done for the night.

Dr. OSBORNE glanced up at a tap on his study door in morning break.

"Come in!"

Lex of the Fifth entered.

"What is it, Lex?" asked the Head, in a kindly tone.

Len did not state why he had come to the study. He had been waiting for news of the burglary before he acted. And there had been no news. Mr. Silverson was not yet back from Trant Elms. Len had expected the news to come from the Head. It had not come. Dr. Osborne was much in his study in the mornings—it was unimaginable that he would not have discovered that the safe there had been cracked by eleven o'clock. If he had not discovered it, it had not been cracked.

Len had to see for himself. But that was not an explanation he could make to the Head of Oakshott, who was far from dreaming that there was a detective in the Fifth Form. Len, however, was not short of a reason for looking in.

"May I have leave out of bounds, sir, as far as Shooters Fell, for a bike ride this afternoon?"

"You must ask your Form-master, Lex."

"Mr. Silverson isn't back yet, sir." The Head smiled.

"Then postpone the matter till he comes back, Lex."

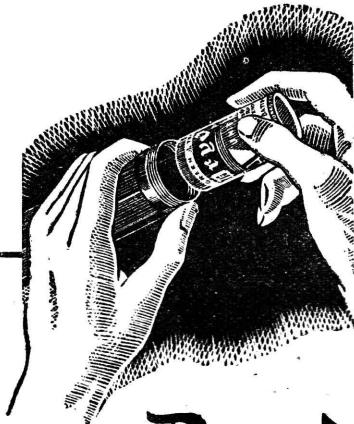
"Very well, sir."

Len left the study.

The Head's safe had not been touched in the night. There was going to be no alarm of a burglary till Silverson came back. Len walked away with his brain in a whirl. The Sussex Man had taken two hundred pounds in banknotes away from a Form-master's desk—and left the Head's safe, a rich prize, untouched.

Was Bullivant the Sussex Man? If he was, what did it mean? If he was not, what did his actions mean? It seemed to the schoolboy detective that he was in deep waters—out of his depth! But he did not call up Detective-Inspector Nixon on the telephone that morning!

Next Saturday.—Len Lex has the handcuffs ready for the wrists of the Master whom he suspects—but is he really on the right trail? There are astounding developments next week—surprises all round!



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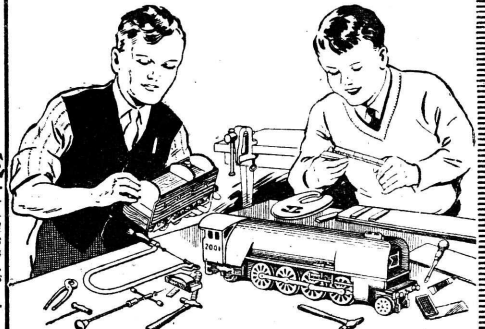
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