

MENACE OF THE TERRIBORE!

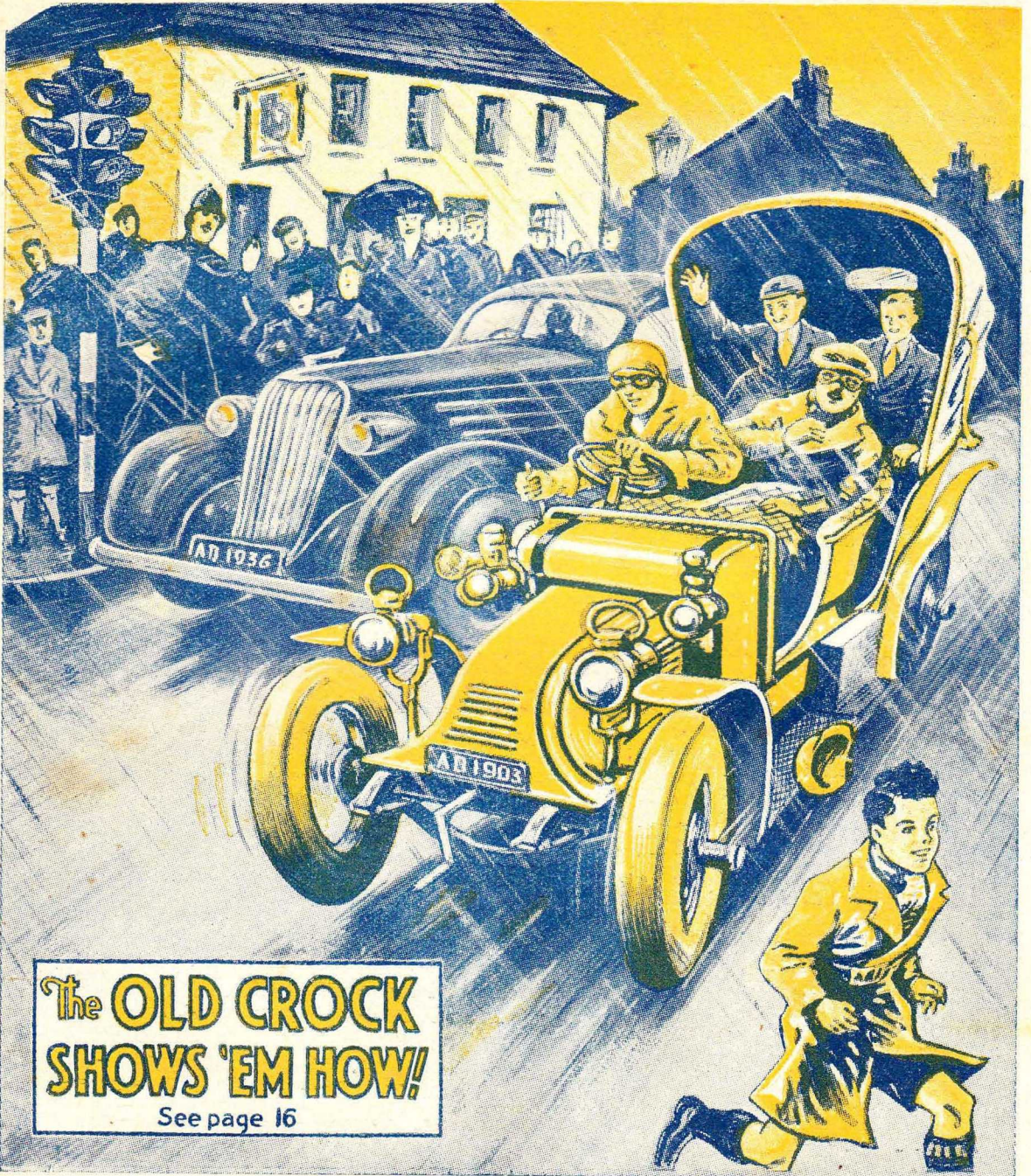
£300 PRIZE STORY INSIDE

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2^d.



The OLD CROCK
SHOWS 'EM HOW!
See page 16

The SCHOOLBOY DETECTIVE

Len Lex has the handcuffs ready for the wrists of the Master he suspects of being the wanted "Sussex Man"!

By
**CHARLES
HAMILTON**

Something Up!

"SOMETHING'S up!" said "Pie" Porringe.

The Oakshott fellows did not need the goat of the Fifth to tell them that. After third school that morning, everybody at Oakshott School knew that something was "up."

What had happened, nobody knew—unless it was Lex of the Fifth, the schoolboy detective. But Len, who knew most, said least. Pie Porringe, who knew least, said most.

"Bet you," said Pie, to a group of Fifth Form men in the quad, "that it's a rag on Silverson."

Rags on Mr. Vernon Silverson, the master of the Fifth, occupied much of Pie's thoughts—Pie having a "feud" on with his Form-master. But nobody else imagined that it was merely a rag that had happened. Obviously, it was something much more serious than that.

"You priceless goat!" said Harvey. "Do you think that a rag would make all the beaks look like a lot of moulting owls?"

"It's something jolly serious!" said Banks. "But what? Somebody going to be sacked, perhaps."

"Have they spotted Rance of the Sixth, at last?" asked Cayley, and there was a laugh.

There were plenty of Oakshott fellows who could have told the Head much more than he knew about Rance.

"Bet you," said Pie obstinately, "it's a rag on Silverson! Look what a chance it was! Silverson was away last night, at Trant Elms. He only came back this morning in time for third school. Why, I was going down from the dorm to rag his study myself, only Bullivant heard me saying so, so I couldn't—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, though, I fancy it's got something to do with Silverson," remarked Harvey. "There was no row on before Silverson came back—and everybody can see there's jolly well a row on now."

"I saw Silverson going in to see the Head, and he was looking awfully solemn!" declared Pie. "Bet you anything—"

"Well, all the beaks are looking



Porringe struck a match, then stood transfixed. The door opened and in came Mr. Bullivant, who stared at the startled Pie with a tense, white face. It was a question which of the two was the more startled!

awfully solemn," said Banks. "Look at Bullivant—he looks quite sick this morning."

"Yes, but I noticed old Bully was looking sick before Silverson came back, and nothing had happened then. That's got nothing to do with it."

"There's old Bully, with Silverson!" said Harvey. "I wonder what they're chinning about! I'd like to know."

All eyes were turned on the two masters, passing at a little distance, deep in conversation. Clearly, they were discussing the mysterious happening—whatever it was! Len Lex—a silent member of the Fifth Form group—gave the two masters a very intent look. Mr. Bullivant, the games master, usually red and ruddy, had quite a pale, worn look. Mr. Silverson, the slim, dark, handsome master of the Fifth, looked rather graver than usual, otherwise his customary self. What Silverson was saying did not reach the ears of the Fifth Formers. But "old Bully" had a stentorian voice, and a remark from him reached every ear.

"The Sussex Man! Of course it was the Sussex Man!"

Mr. Silverson was seen to nod assent as they walked on—leaving the Fifth Form group staring, and almost breathless with excitement.

"I say, did you hear that?" gasped Harvey. "Did you hear old Bully say 'the Sussex Man'? I say, that's the burglar the police can't get hold of! The man who got in at Silverson's window one night and knocked old Pie out when he was there ragging!"

"I—I say, has there been a burglary?" "Oh, rot!" said Pie. "Old Bully's got the Sussex Man on the brain. I've heard him say a dozen times that the Sussex Man would come again some time, because he had to skip that night he came without pinching anything. What I think has happened is this—a rag on Silverson—"

"Fathead!" said all the Fifth Formers together.

"I jolly well think—" hooted Pie. "You jolly well don't!" contradicted Harvey. "You jolly well can't, old man! Forget it!"

The dinner-bell rang. The Oakshott men went into Hall, in a suppressed buzz of excitement. Whispering ran up and down the tables.

The rumour was spreading that

The Schoolboy Detective

there had been a burglary over-night. Dozens of times the name of the Sussex Man emerged from the buzz. Every fellow was anxious to get out of Hall and hear the latest.

After dinner, fellows collected in eager groups. Root of the Fourth told a cluster of juniors that he had heard that the Head's safe had been blown open with dynamite, and thousands of pounds pinched! On the other hand, Lamson of the Shell pointed out that the Head had been seen several times that morning, and had not apparently turned a hair!

Porrage of the Fifth clung to his belief that nothing had happened but a "rag" on Silverson, pointing out that there had not been a whisper of anything unusual before Silverson came back from Trant Elms! Which was undoubtedly true.

But even Pie was staggered, and there was a delicious thrill of excitement all through Oakshott, when a taxicab drove in at the gates, and a stocky man in uniform was seen speaking to Wegg, the porter. Word ran like wildfire that a police inspector from Parsley had arrived. Scores of eyes were on that official as he went into the House.

Inspector Stace was shown into Dr. Osborne's study. Upon which Root of the Fourth declared triumphantly that he had gone there to examine the fragments of the safe, blown all over the shop! But the Parsley inspector was in the study only a few minutes. Then about fifty pairs of eyes beheld him in company with Mr. Silverson, proceeding with that gentleman to his quarters.

Eager fellows ventured as far as the corner of Silverson's passage, but the door of the Fifth Form master's study was shut, and they saw and heard nothing of what went on within. Other fellows eyed the study window from the quad and were rewarded with a glimpse of the inspector examining the window with very close attention! Harvey of the Fifth, who was blessed with very keen eyesight, declared that he also spotted the inspector examining Silverson's desk.

The bell that rang for classes had never been more unwelcome to the general ear of Oakshott. But it did ring—and the fellows had to go to the Form-rooms, leaving the Parsley inspector to carry on.

"Old Bully was right!" said Banks, as the Fifth gathered at the door of their Form-room. They had to wait for their beak, who was still in his study with the Parsley inspector.

"How's that, Banker?" asked Len Lex.

"Why, he's said umpteen times that the Sussex Man would come back to try again, because he muffed it the time he came before!" said Banks.

"I've heard him," agreed Harvey, "lots of times! It's the Sussex Man all right, and there's been a burglary in Silverson's quarters. It's jolly queer that he left the Head's safe alone, though. Must have—you can see that nothing was found out till Silverson came back."

"Might have been alarmed," said Cayley.

"They jolly well ought to catch him!" declared Banks. "What are the police doing, I'd like to know, letting him run on like this? They had a Scotland Yard man down last time. What was his name—Dixon or something?"

"Nixon!" said Harvey.

"Yes, that was it—Nixon! Detective-Inspector Nixon! Must be rather an ass not to have copped that burglar by this time!"

"Awful ass!" agreed Harvey.

Len Lex grinned. The Fifth Form men were in blissful ignorance of the fact that they were discussing Detective-Inspector Nixon in the presence of his nephew! And that Len Lex had been sent to Oakshott specially to catch the much-wanted Sussex Man, who was believed to be a member of the staff.

"That was before you came, Lex!" remarked Banks. "It happened the week before you blew into Oakshott. Now it's happened again—"

"Bet you it hasn't!" said Porrage. "Looks as if they think so, as they've sent for a bobby. But I jolly well think that it will turn out to be just a rag on Silverson—"

"You silly ass!" hooted Banks.

"Well, that's what I think!" declared Pie. "Silverson being away last night, some chap ragged his study, and they think—"

"Fathead!"

"Ass!"

"Hallo, here comes Silverson!"

And the discussion ceased as the Fifth Form master arrived and the Fifth went into their Form-room.

Len—and Another!

"**W**HY are you not at games practice with the others, Lex? You should not be idling about here."

Mr. Bullivant spoke severely. Why Lex of the Fifth was loafing about the gate, with his hands in his pockets, after class, the games master of Oakshott did not know. And Len Lex, most assuredly, was not likely to tell him. Bullivant, wheeling his motor-bike down to the gate, spotted him there and frowned at him, and rapped at him. Old Bully was always a bit of a tartar, especially to fellows whom he suspected of slacking.

Len, certainly, was not slacking. He was quite keen to join in the Soccer practice that was going on. But there were other tasks for the schoolboy detective, and one of them was to see James Bullivant safely off—with a view to certain proceedings, in his absence, which could not proceed while old Bully was within the walls of Oakshott School. So when Mr. Bullivant went down to the cycle-house, Len Lex strolled down to the gate—and there he was!

"Idling—slacking!" rapped Bullivant. "Go away at once, Lex, and change, and join in the pick-up."

"Yes, sir!" said Len meekly.

He walked up the path slowly. Mr. Bullivant frowned after him, wheeled his motor-bike out, and disappeared. Then Len came to a halt—

and listened. The chug-chug-chug of the motor-bike came from the road. Bullivant was going. With a faint smile on his face, Len walked back to the gate, and looked out. The bulky figure of the games master was disappearing up the road in the direction of Trant.

Len watched him out of sight, and the smile faded from his face, leaving it clouded. His heart was heavy. The schoolboy detective was at Oakshott to spot the Sussex Man, and now, to all appearance, he had spotted him—which certainly should not have been a weight on his mind and his heart. But it was! He liked old Bully, with all his aggressive ways—liked him still, in spite of what he knew. Against his own reason, against all evidence, that liking made him cling to a hope that Bullivant was not, after all, the man that Detective-Inspector Nixon wanted.

Was there a hope? The night before, hidden in Silverson's study, he had watched the man open Silverson's desk with a key, and take out two hundred pounds in banknotes, and had watched him set the window ajar, to give the impression that the thief had come from outside.

All Oakshott knew, by this time, that Silverson had been robbed during his absence at Trant Elms, and that the robbery was set down to the Sussex Man—one more on a long, long list extending over a period of two years! Only Len knew the truth—and he had said no word. But was Bullivant, after all, the Sussex Man?"

Len could not doubt it—till he had learned, in the morning, that the Head's safe had not been touched. If he was the Sussex Man, why had he spared that safe? The general belief was that the cracksmen had taken some alarm, and fled with his work unfinished. But the schoolboy detective knew that that was not so.

Why had he, if he was the Sussex Man, contented himself with what was, after all, a trifle—leaving valuable loot untouched? Until he could find an answer to that question, Len Lex intended to say nothing—even to his uncle, the Scotland Yard detective-inspector, who was waiting eagerly for news. He had to know more.

Now that Bullivant was gone, the coast was clear. Len walked back to the House—but not to the changing-room, as the games master had bidden him. As he went in, he passed a group of the masters—Silverson, with Surtees, the master of the Fourth, and Mr. Chowne. They were discussing the affair of the night—he heard the name of the Sussex Man—a name that was on almost every lip at Oakshott that day.

"Bullivant declared, many times, that the Sussex Man would pay us another visit!" Mr. Silverson was saying. "Evidently he was right."

"If you had taken my advice, my dear Silverson, and had a bolt placed on your study window—"

said the master of the Shell. The Fifth Form master smiled. "I doubt if that would have stopped the Sussex Man, Chowne!" he answered.

"I also!" said Mr. Surtees. "I doubt it very much indeed."

Len Lex passed on, unnoticed by the masters. He went slowly up the staircase. Both Silverson and Surtees were on his list of "suspects"—but what became of his suspicions now that he had actually seen Bullivant at work? And the dim figure that he had tracked, one night, to the oak-tree where the cracksman's tools were hidden. Who and what was that—if Bullivant was the man?

Of the four suspects, three had to be eliminated—and surely what he had seen in the night had done the work of elimination? Yet, in spite of himself, the schoolboy detective still doubted!

But he was going to know! In the upper passages, there was no one about. Most of the fellows were at games practice, and not likely to come in before tea. In a few minutes Len was in the passage on which three of the masters' rooms opened—Bullivant's, Surtees', and Chowne's. The coast was clear. Len stepped softly along to Bullivant's door, opened it, stepped in, and closed the door after him.

More than once the schoolboy detective had looked for a chance of giving the games master's room the "once-over." This was his chance. He knew that the games master was gone to Trant—ten or eleven miles away. He had plenty of time. Bullivant, with two hundred pounds in his pocket, had gone to see Roger—to provide that absconding bank clerk with the means to flee the country.

Len knew it as well as if Bullivant had told him so. And he knew, too, what Bullivant did not yet know—that Roger Bullivant had been already taken by the police, on the information Len had supplied to Detective-Inspector Nixon. That startling discovery awaited the games master when he arrived at Trant, and inquired for "Robert Barker" there. Bullivant was not likely to linger at Trant, after he made that discovery; but he could hardly be back under an hour or more. That was twice the time Len needed for what he had to do.

Once in Bullivant's room, the schoolboy detective lost no time. If

there was a clue to be found in that room he was not likely to miss it. Nothing in the way of a burglar's tools, of course—he knew that the Sussex Man kept his bag of implements parked in the hidden recess in the old oak near master's gate. But something, perhaps a letter, an address, or a pass-book revealing a secret bank account.

In the two years that he had been at work within a fifteen-mile radius of Oakshott, the Sussex Man had cracked many cribs, and got away safely with a great deal of loot, which he must have turned into money. Somewhere there must be a fence—a receiver of stolen goods—with whom he had dealings; and there might be a letter, or a fragment of a letter, from that quarter. Somewhere the profits of his strange trade must be banked—doubtless under an assumed name—unless the money went as fast as it came in!

But if that was so, it pointed rather to Silverson, with his losses on the Turf, than to Bullivant. Yet Bullivant was short of money, for he had been unable to take Roger what he needed, until—in his own words—the Sussex Man got to work again!

But in thirty minutes, every one of which the schoolboy detective spent in keen search, he discovered nothing. There was nothing—absolutely nothing—in Bullivant's room to hint at any secret activities or connections outside his work as games master of Oakshott.

Len was standing in the middle of the room, looking round to make sure that he had missed nothing, when there was a footstep in the passage outside.

He started, catching his breath. Bullivant could not be back yet—unless something unexpected had happened to stop him on his way to

Trant. It was one of the other masters—Chowne or Surtees—going to his room! But the unexpected might have happened! If the door opened, and Bullivant saw him there—

A wooden wardrobe stood across a corner of the room. Its edges almost touched the wall on either side. But it was not heavy. Len shifted it a few inches, backed behind it, and was completely hidden from sight almost in a moment. With beating heart, he listened. The footsteps stopped at the door. The schoolboy detective was deeply thankful that he had hunted cover, as the door opened.

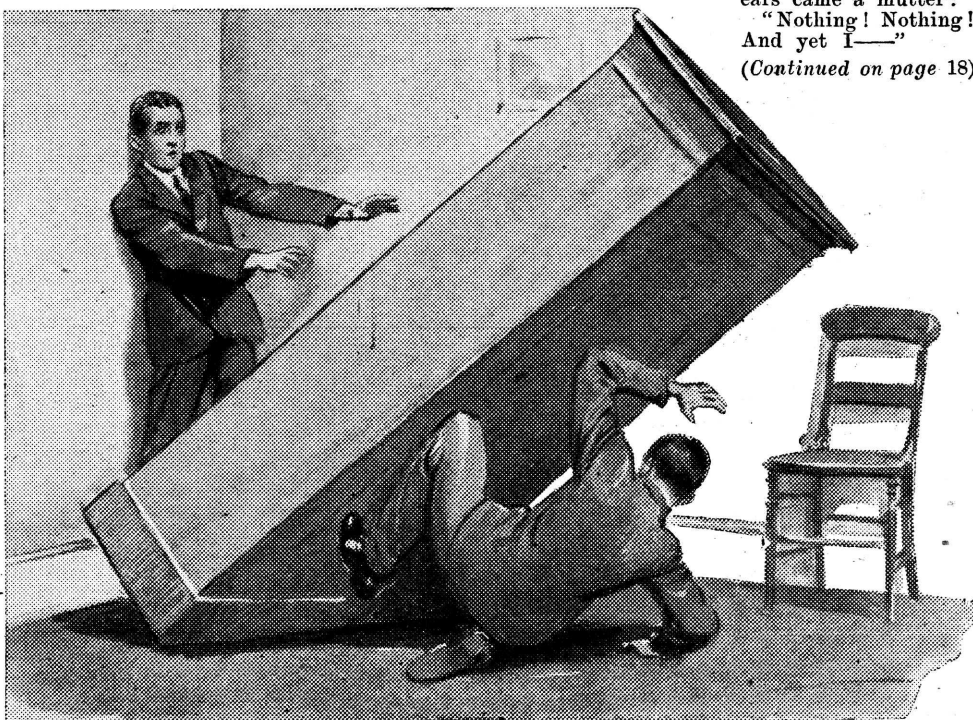
A light, almost stealthy step entered the room; the door was closed quickly and quietly. He heard a low breathing—a sound of soft movements, as someone moved about the room. He listened in amazement. Who, beside himself, had entered Bullivant's room secretly and surreptitiously, in his absence? It was not one of the fellows ragging—a goat like Porridge might rag Silverson's quarters, but nobody would dream of ragging old Bully. Who was it, and what did it mean?

Minutes passed, while Len listened, and wondered, to soft, stealthy movements, flitting all over the room. He heard drawers pulled out, lids lifted. The unseen one was searching the room—as Len had done!

He—whoever "he" was—stopped at the wardrobe in the corner, and Len suppressed his breathing. He heard the door of the wardrobe opened—heard a rustling and brushing, as the coats hanging within were examined. Ten minutes ago, Len had gone through every pocket in that wardrobe. Now, someone else was repeating the performance. The wardrobe shut again—the searcher had found no more there than Len had found. Faintly to his ears came a mutter:

"Nothing! Nothing!
And yet I—"

(Continued on page 18)



Len placed his hands on the back of the wardrobe and pushed. There was a startled yell from Surtees as it crashed over on him.

The Schoolboy Detective

(Continued from page 15)

Only a few muttered words, but Len knew that boyish voice. It was Ralph Surtees, the master who mysteriously prowled the House at night—who, one night, had collared Len in the dark, and mistaken him for Bullivant! And now he was searching Bullivant's room.

Surtees moved back to the middle of the room. Len knew that he was standing there, looking about him, and considering! It was clear that he was in search of something, whatever it was, and might look behind the wardrobe! Len listened, with beating heart.

Footsteps came towards the corner again. A hand appeared at the side of the wardrobe, to pull it out a little farther from the wall—evidently so that Surtees could glance behind it. In a few moments more his eyes would fall on Lex of the Fifth, hidden in the corner!

Len acted swiftly. Whatever Surtees' game was, the schoolboy detective could not afford to be discovered. As the Fourth Form master's hand appeared in sight, pulling, Len placed both his hands on the back of the wardrobe, and shoved with all his strength.

There was a startled yell from Surtees, as the wardrobe crashed over on him. Len shot from the corner to the door, tore it open, and darted out. The door slammed behind him, and Len Lex did the passage like the cinder-path, and went down the stairs three at a time. There was a panting, gasping, and scuffling in Bullivant's room—but he did not hear it as he flew. He was in the lower passage, and dropping into a casual saunter, when he heard a door above him open—Bullivant's door.

Len smiled, and walked into Study No. 8.

Painful for Pie!

SO far as Harvey, Banks, and Len Lex, Pie's study-mates in Study No. 8, could see, there was nothing of an amusing nature on hand. It was the hour of prep, and the three were sitting down to their books when Pie came in, his face wreathed in smiles, and chuckling again and again like a series of Chinese crackers.

If Pie found prep amusing, it was more than his comrades did. It was Livy that evening, and nobody at Oakshott School, so far, had ever found anything amusing in Titus Livius. But Pie, as he sat down to Livy, chuckled and chortled as if Titus Livius was a humorist calculated to set the table in a roar.

"What has that goat been up to?" asked Harvey resignedly.

Clearly, the goat of the Fifth had been up to something! That it was something fatheaded, his study-mates, of course, did not need telling. They could only wonder what had been his latest goatish proceedings.

"Give it a name, Pie!" said Banks.

"I've done him this time!" chortled Pie. "Ha, ha! If I haven't done

nim right in the eye, you can use my head for a Soccer ball. Ha, ha!"

"Thanks—I've no use for a wooden football!" said Banks. "You've done what—and whom?"

"That swab Silverson!" grinned Pie. "I tell you, he's gone for his stink-bike now to scoot across to Parsley!"

"Anything funny in that?" asked Harvey, with a stare.

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Pie. Evidently the goat of the Fifth saw something funny in it.

"How do you know he's gone to Parsley?" asked Harvey.

"You'll laugh when I tell you! Silverson got a telephone call that Inspector Stace wanted him at Parsley—in connection with that burglary last night, you know! Not that I believe that it was a burglary."

"Fathead! How do you know Silverson got a call?"

"Because I put it through!" roared Pie. "Ha, ha!"

Porrings's three study-mates stared at him. They blinked at him. They almost goggled at him.

"You—you—you put it through!" gasped Len Lex.

"Little me!" gurgled Pie. "Ha, ha! I suppose you know Wegg's got a phone in his lodge. Well, Wegg was out, and I dropped in and used his phone. I put the call through to Common-room, asked for Silverson, said I was Inspector Stace, and told Silverson he was wanted at Parsley to see a man taken into custody in connection with the burglary in his study. How's that for high?"

They gazed at Pie.

"Silverson fell for it!" gurgled Porrings. "Fell for it right away! Said he would come immediately—and he did! I've just seen him go!"

"You unspeakable idiot!" breathed Harvey. "There'll be a fearful row if Silverson hikes over to Parsley for nothing!"

"You bet!" agreed the hilarious Pie. "But he won't spot me! He never knew my voice on the phone—I was jolly careful of that! I'm pretty cute!"

"You are? Oh, my hat!"

"I fancy so," said Pie complacently. "I say, picture Silverson's face when he hikes in at the police station at Parsley, and finds that he isn't wanted! Think he'll be shirty—what? Ha, ha!"

"You'll get a flogging!" said Harvey.

"Who's to know?" grinned Pie.

"And that isn't all, either! I'm giving him a quarter of an hour to get clear, and then I'm going down to his study to leave a note for him."

Porrings dipped a pen in the ink, and started on a sheet of impot paper. In large capitals, he traced the words:

"SOLD AGAIN!"

Overflowing with mirth, the cheery Pie grinned at his staring study-mates. They could only gaze at him.

"You—you're going to stick that in Silverson's study!" exclaimed Len.

"That's the big idea! He will know, when he hikes in at Parsley,

that his leg's been pulled! And he will know, when he finds this on his study table, that it was an Oakshott man did it. That's all he's going to know!" chuckled Pie.

"Better leave well alone!" said Len, laughing.

"When I want advice from a new tick," said Pie, "I'll ask for it! You can shut up, Lex!"

Len laughed, and shut up. As a hunter of trouble, Pie excelled any other man at Oakshott. Still, if he was absolutely determined to hunt for trouble, it was not Len's business to stop him.

"But look here, old man—" urged Banks.

"Chuck it, Banker! I've got it in for Silverson!" said Porrings. "Sneering, sarcastic brute—yah! Did you see the way he looked at old Bully when he came in this afternoon? Old Bully was looking fearfully sick about something—lots of fellows noticed it—you noticed it, Lex—I saw you looking at him!"

"I thought he looked rather peeved!" assented Len.

"Peeved!" said Pie. "He looked absolutely sick—like a man who'd taken the knock! I shouldn't wonder if old Bully's had bad news, or something!"

Len made no rejoinder to that. He had no doubt that Mr. Bullivant must have learned that Roger had fallen into the grip of the law. There was no doubt that he had looked absolutely knocked over when he came back to the school—so much so that dozens of fellows had noticed it, and remarked on it, and wondered what was up with old Bully!

"And I saw Silverson look at him with that beastly sardonic grin of his," continued Pie. "He ain't good enough to clean old Bully's boots! Blow him and his superior airs! I'd jolly well make him sit up, if it was only for the way he looked at old Bully!"

Porrings blotted the paper he had written, and rose. Len shrugged his shoulders, but Banks and Harvey expostulated together:

"Chuck it, Pie! If you're spotted out in prep—"

"Silverson ain't in to spot me!" grinned Pie. "Don't you worry! Safe as houses, old beans! Think of Silverson's face when he comes back in a fearful rage and finds this note on his table! Ha, ha!"

And Porrings left No. 8. Oakshott men were not supposed to go out of the studies in prep, so Pie was very cautious as he went. Mr. Silverson's rooms being on the ground floor, he had to go down the stairs. On the landing he passed Mr. Bullivant—but the games master was standing at the landing window, looking out into the dim autumn evening with his back to Pie—and Pie passed unseen.

In the big corridor, which Pie had to pass through to reach Silverson's passage, two Sixth Form men stood in talk. One was Rance, the other was Campion. Rance did not matter, but Campion was a prefect, and head boy of the House, and he mattered very much. Porrings dodged into a near-by window recess, and waited

impatiently for them to clear. The head boy's voice came to his ears: "I'm not sure, Rance, or you'd hear more about it! But I'll tell you this—I believe it was you I spotted at the Magpie, and I warn you to be careful."

"I've never been near the place," said Rance sullenly.

"Well, if you haven't, all right. But I believe you have—and you know what you would get from the Head! Where were you going, this very minute, when I stopped you?"

"Can't a man walk in the corridors?"

"Not in a corridor leading to a study with a window on the quad, when the beak the study belongs to has gone out," said Campion, in a very significant tone. "I'll walk with you back to your own study, Rance."

Porrige was glad to hear them walk away together. He peered out—the coast was clear. He cut down the corridor at a trot and reached Silverson's passage. Once in that passage he was safe, for it led nowhere but to Silverson's rooms. But he realised that he had had a narrow escape of running into Rance of the Sixth there. Rance's manners and customs were pretty well known, or guessed at, by a good many fellows, and Pie knew what Campion suspected—that Rance had intended to slip out by Silverson's window. However, the head boy had effectively put the stopper on that, and Pie was all right now.

He went into Silverson's study and shut the door after him. The room was dark, only a pale glimmer of the stars shining in at the casement. Pie groped across the study, knocked over a wastepaper basket, bumped into a chair, and reached the table. Then he groped under his jacket for the paper he had carefully hidden there.

He groped in vain. The paper was no longer under his jacket. He had tucked it safely there out of sight when he left Study No. 8; he had kept his arm pressed down to pin it there coming down, but no doubt it had slipped out when he dodged into the window recess to avoid Campion.

Losing that paper in transit was Pie all over. To go back along the corridors, looking for it, when he was supposed to be in his study in the Fifth at prep, was risky. But he could not write a fresh note in Silverson's study without turning on a light, which was riskier still. If there was no one about, it would be all right.

Pie crept to the door and looked out. He crept along the side-passage to the corner of the corridor and peered round. Then he popped back his head, like a tortoise popping back into its shell. Big and bulky in the lighted corridor stood Mr. Bullivant. He was staring at a sheet of paper he held in his large, red hand. Pie did not need telling what that paper was. Evidently old Bully had come along and picked up the paper Pie had dropped, and was now wondering what "Sold Again!" might possibly mean.

Breathing hard, Pie backed into Mr. Silverson's study once more.

That paper was gone beyond recovery. He was sure, at least, that Bullivant had not spotted him, and old Bully would never guess what that paper was intended for. He would know that Silverson had gone out, but he could not know how or why.

"Blow!" said Pie.

It was more than annoying. If he was going to leave a note for Silverson at all, clearly that note had to be written in Silverson's study. It couldn't be written in the dark. Pie debated in his mind whether he could venture to strike a match. If some beak was walking in the quad, and saw the glimmer in Silverson's window, it was as good as giving himself away. But he was not going to be beaten. There were pens and ink on the table, and plenty of paper there.

Standing with his back to the window, to screen the light therefrom, Porrige struck a match. As he did so the study door opened.

Pie stood transfixed, the burning match in finger and thumb! Mr. Bullivant walked into the study, obviously expecting to find no one there—and stopped, still holding the door in one hand, staring blankly at the burning match, and Pie's startled face behind it.

Porrige was simply petrified. Not for one fleeting instant had it crossed his mind that Mr. Bullivant might be coming to Silverson's study. But there he was, staring at the startled Pie, with a face suddenly white.

The match burned down to Pie's fingers unheeded. Startled as he was, and chiefly concerned about himself and the consequences of being caught in his Form-master's study, Pie could not help being struck by the look on Bullivant's face. It might have been a grisly spectre at which Bullivant was staring, in the glimmer of the match, to judge by the petrified expression on his ghastly face.

The pause was awful—unbearable. It lasted only seconds, though it seemed hours to Pie. It was broken by a sudden fearful howl from Porrige as the unheeded match burned his fingers. The match went out.

Next moment Bullivant switched on the electric light and strode across the room at Porrige. Terror, if it had been terror, was gone from his face now—no longer white but red with rage. He grasped Porrige.

"You—you—" His voice came husky. "Porrige! You—you young fool! Playing tricks here—what? You startled me! Fool!"

"Ooooooh!" gasped Pie. "I—I—" Holding him with his left hand, Bullivant grasped Mr. Silverson's cane from the table with his right. That cane rose and fell. Whack! Whack! Whack! Whack! Pie, surprised, amazed, and hurt, yelled. He had never seen old Bully in a rage like this before. He could not begin to understand it. Silverson might have whopped him hard—but old Bully! It amazed Pie, but his amazement was not equal to his anguish. He howled, he hopped, he roared! Bullivant was laying it on as if he fancied that he was beating a carpet.

"Yow-ow-ow-ow!" roared Pie. "I say—yow-ow! Stop it! Yoo-hoop! Oh, my hat! Yow-ow-ow-wooop!"

Whack! Whack! Whack! Oliphant of the Sixth looked in at the door, startled. Pie's wild yells were heard far and wide.

"What—what's up?" exclaimed the Oakshott captain. Two or three more seniors appeared in the passage behind him.

As if recalled to himself, Mr. Bullivant threw down the cane. He released Pie's collar, and the hapless goat of the Fifth staggered towards the door, panting and spluttering. Mr. Bullivant calmed himself.

"I caught this boy playing foolish tricks in his Form-master's study, as he has done before, Oliphant," he said. "Mr. Silverson being out, I have dealt with him for his folly. Go back to the Fifth, Porrige, at once!"

"Ow!" gasped Pie. "Wow!" He forgot at that moment that he liked old Bully! "Look here, you've no right to cane me! You jolly well know—"

"Go at once!" rapped Mr. Bullivant in a voice that made Porrige jump. And Pie scuttled out of the study.

Mr. Bullivant followed him out, turning off the light. Oliphant and the other fellows exchanged rather curious glances as the games master went. It was really unusual—indeed, extraordinary—for old Bully to take a Form-master's business into his hands in this way. Even if he had chanced to spot a japer in a Form-master's study, he had no right to cane him. Old Bully had not seemed himself at all that day, and obviously he had lost his temper. Why was rather a puzzle to the Oakshott men.

In Study No. 8, three fellows looked up from Livy with grinning faces at the sound of Pie returning. He had gone quietly—but he made plenty of noise as he came back.

"Ow—ow—ow—wow!" announced his arrival. He tottered into the study, gasping, wriggling, almost writhing. Three fellows chuckled.

"Silverson come in and snaffle you?" asked Harvey.

"Ow! No! Wow!" moaned Pie. "That old ass Bullivant! Ow!"

"Bullivant?" exclaimed Len Lex. He started, staring at Porrige.

"He barged in—ow!—and nailed me—wow! What was he doing there, I'd like to know—yow—ow! He's got no business in Silverson's study—yow—hoooh! I jolly well told him he'd no bizney to whop me—wow!—but he did—ow—ow!"

It was quite a long time before Pie was able to settle down to Livy; and then he did not give that great author the concentrated attention that so great a classic deserved.

The Unexpected!

L EN LEX, as he heard the chimes of midnight, wondered whether he was wasting his time, and whether he might not as well have been in bed in the Fifth Form dormitory as keeping watch in Silverson's passage.

For more than an hour, Oakshott School had been buried in silence and

The Schoolboy Detective

slumber. At half-past eleven, the schoolboy detective had taken up his watch, sorely puzzled and perplexed.

He was at Oakshott School to solve the mystery of the Sussex Man, but it seemed to him that mystery was piled on mystery. Silverson, Surtees, Bullivant, and one whose name and identity he had never yet been able to discover—that was his suspected list. But which was the man? Bullivant, according to overwhelming evidence. Yet why had Bullivant gone to Silverson's study that evening, taking advantage of the Fifth Form master's absence?

He must have had some object—what? Whatever it was, he had had to abandon it, finding Porringe there. Mr. Silverson had returned shortly afterwards, very angry at having been tricked on the telephone, but, fortunately for Pic, never guessing who the trickster was. Not until he had gone to bed would Bullivant have another chance of visiting the study secretly—and Len, as he waited and watched in the dark passage, wondered whether he would come.

In the silence that followed the midnight chime, Len heard a faint sound in the study. Was Silverson stirring from his bed-room, adjoining the study? Or had Bullivant come earlier than Len had ventured out of his dormitory, and was he in the study now? Or was it another—Surtees or the unknown one—returning from a night prowl by way of the casement? Whoever and whatever it was, someone was in the study, moving softly and stealthily across the room to the door!

Even as Len listened to the faint sound from beyond the door, there

came a tread from the corridor turning into the dark little passage. A cautious tread—but the tread of a big and heavy man—the tread, Len had not the faintest doubt, of James Bullivant, games master of Oakshott.

Len backed into the deepest shadow and listened, his heart throbbing. Bullivant was approaching the study door from the outside, a lighter step was approaching it from the inside, and when the door opened in a moment or two from one side or the other, they would meet face to face in the dark!

Len felt a thrill run through his veins. Two of the night prowlers of Oakshott were about to meet unexpectedly. One of them was Bullivant, but the other—who was he?

Bullivant's hand reached for the doorknob as the door swung open from within. Taken utterly by surprise, the bulky man stood and gasped—a gasp that that was echoed by another as a black shadow, coming through the doorway, collided with him.

Bullivant's voice came in strangled tones:

"Silverson—you! For mercy's sake, silence, I beg of you, Silverson—silence!"

In the belief that he was discovered by the Fifth Form master, Bullivant stammered he hardly knew what. But the next moment he must have known that it was not Silverson who came from the study. Whoever it was backed for a second, as startled and utterly confounded as Bullivant by the unexpected encounter. Then, springing forward, he thrust fiercely at the games master, sending him staggering.

A split second more, and the unseen one was racing into the corridor, and Bullivant, thrown completely off

his balance, staggered across the passage. Len heard him bump against the opposite wall. And he heard another sound—that of a stirring in the bed-room that adjoined the study. Mr. Silverson was stirring.

The sound of a creaking bed reached Bullivant's ears and warned him that Silverson was moving. He was not discovered, as for one terrible moment he had supposed; but discovery was imminent if he lingered. Len heard his breathless gasping die away up the corridor.

It was time that the schoolboy detective was gone also. But he remained a moment to pull the study door silently shut. If Silverson turned out of bed, he would discover nothing amiss. Then Len hurried away. As he tiptoed up the dark staircase he heard a panting breath in the shadows, and knew that it was Bullivant, going back to his room. But of the other—the shadowy figure that had darted out of Silverson's study—there was no sound or sign!

Who was it? Someone who must have gone out by Silverson's casement before Len took up his watch, and who had returned at midnight. Who?

Len Lex slipped into bed in the Fifth Form dormitory. Late as the hour was, it was long before he slept. He was beginning to wonder whether the mystery of Oakshott was too deep for him—whether the handcuffs would ever click on the wrists of the Sussex Man!

Next Saturday, Len Lex learns the astonishing truth behind the midnight prowlings of the Master of the Fourth!

The Lost Land!

(Continued from page 12)

dearly as I should like to do so. But the Flying Cloud is perfectly capable of scaling the mountains once more, therefore—” The professor checked, blinked, and looked inquiringly around.

“Is anything the matter?” he asked mildly, as it suddenly occurred to him that every occupant of the sick bay was gazing at him, amid a silence that could be felt.

“Are you really suggesting that we should climb back into that—that ghastly buried valley again, now that we've been lucky enough to barge our way out?” asked Connor.

Professor Flaznagel looked thoroughly perplexed by the question.

“Why—why, of course! Surely you can have no objection to that now?” he asked blankly. “It would be a crime, I tell you—a crime against Science to leave such a fascinating region before we have explored and plumbed its secrets to the full!”

“We must return!” he insisted. “May I remind you that in England there is a man called Dr. Petersen—a scoundrel—a libellous rogue who dared to discredit my theory concerning the lost Tropics of Antarctica, and called me charlatan and cheat! Justice, I'll confront him with proofs

—actual living proofs—of the existence of that land if I have to return to the valley alone!”

Captain Justice looked at his eccentric old friend thoughtfully. He was only too familiar with the scientist's boundless determination and resource.

“Living proofs, eh?” he repeated quietly. “And what do you mean by that, professor?”

“Precisely what I say!” snapped Flaznagel. “It is my intention to take specimens—actual living specimens—of the Mesozoic life in the Lost Land back to England, and thus vindicate myself before Petersen and the world! I have my whole plan of campaign mapped out to the last detail. And I insist, in the name of Science, that we return to the Tropics of Antarctica to fulfil our task!”

Again the professor's ultimatum brought silence—a spellbound hush—during which his companions strove to adjust themselves to the prospect of braving the perils of the Lost Land over again, and flying back to civilisation with a cargo of gigantic and ferocious brutes.

The silence was shattered by Midge. “And what,” he demanded, in a hollow voice, “can you do with a guy like Whiskers?”

Captain Justice smiled grimly. He

knew what he would have done had the choice been entirely his—and that was: make all speed out of the Antarctic continent.

Nevertheless, he had to admit that he and the rest did owe a duty to Professor Flaznagel, whose heart would surely have broken had they let him down. And besides, the Tropics of Antarctica were a challenge in themselves, and Captain Justice had never backed out of a mission yet.

“Professor, I think you are asking for trouble with both hands,” the captain said bluntly. “But since you are so set on returning—”

“Thank you, Justice! I knew you would agree!” cried the professor—and stalked out with suspicious haste before the captain could finish.

Thus, for the second time, the gallant Flying Cloud and a reluctant company turned their faces towards the mountain rampsarts, en route again for the Lost Land!

Never before has any vessel carried such a startling cargo as is packed aboard the Flying Cloud next week—a cargo to set England in mad panic! Utterly unexpected thrills in store for you in next Saturday's story, “THE FLYING ZOO!”