

337 *Whitney*
THREE HUNDRED POUNDS PRIZE STORY *Inside!*

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"MENACE OF THE TERRIBORE!"—*New Super-Thrill Story!*

The SCHOOLBOY DETECTIVE

In search of the mysterious "Sussex Man," LEN LEX learns the astonishing truth behind the midnight prowlings of the Master of the Fourth!



With nobody to take a pass, Len shot from the wing. The crowd roared as the ball got home!

Picked for the Eleven!

"GRATERS, Lex, old man!" exclaimed Harvey and Banks, clapping their study mate on the shoulder.

"Rot, if you ask me!" said Pie Porringe, shaking his head.

"Nobody asked you, sir, she said!" sang Len Lex, and there was a laugh from the fellows gathered round the notice-board at Oakshott School.

It was morning break. That afternoon, Parsley were coming over to Oakshott to play the first eleven, and the list was to be up in break. Generally it was posted earlier; but old Oliphant was undecided about his outside-right, and had been deep in consultation with Bullivant, the games master, on that important matter. Everybody wanted to know who was going to be the happy man, and there were about twenty fellows hoping to see their names there.

There was some surprise when the name proved to be L. Lex, of the Fifth Form. Len Lex was a new fellow at Oakshott that term, and though he had hoped, he had hardly expected to get into the first eleven. Certainly he was a good footballer, and had been assiduous at games practice, and had attracted the favourable notice of old Bully, who had a keen eye for a fellow's form.

It was sheer satisfaction to Len to see his name there, and Harvey and Banks, his study mates in Study No. 8, clapped him on either shoulder, and said "Gratters" simultaneously. They were both in the eleven.

Porrige, the other member of Study No. 8, was not—nor likely to be. So Pie's opinion was that it was "rot." Pie had rather hoped for that place in the team, being happily unaware that his Soccer was about on a level with the "small game" of the fags.

Oliphant, the Oakshott captain, had decided in favour of the new fellow in the Fifth. Pie declared that it was rot. Rance of the Sixth sneered, and shrugged his shoulders. But most of the fellows gave the happy man cheery "gratters." Len went out into the quad, feeling rather as if he was walking on air.

Len, though Oakshott knew it not, was at the school rather as a detective than as a schoolboy; and his uncle, Detective-Inspector Nixon, of Scotland Yard, was in hourly hope of hearing from him that he had spotted the wanted Sussex Man, the mysterious burglar who was thought to be a member of the Oakshott staff. But

Len, at the present moment, had almost forgotten the Sussex Man—he was picked to play for the school, and rejoicing in his good luck.

Mr. Surtees, master of the Fourth, gave him a nod and a smile, as he came out in the winter sunshine.

"Gratters, my boy!" said Surtees. He was the youngest man on the staff, and rather boyish in his ways.

"Thank you, sir!" said Len. "It's a bit of luck for a new man."

In that happy moment he hardly remembered that Surtees was on his list of suspects.

His own Form-master, Mr. Silverson, was in the quad. But Silverson did not offer congratulations. He was not keenly interested in Soccer, though he occasionally acted as referee in a match.

Silverson was talking to Chowne, master of the Shell, and Len, as he passed, caught the name of the Sussex Man. No doubt they were discussing the recent burglary at the school. That was a serious enough matter to Mr. Silverson, as two hundred pounds in banknotes had been taken from the desk in his study. That it was the work of the Sussex Man nobody doubted—except Porringe. Pie maintained that it was not a burglary at all, but a rag on Silverson.

Len Lex did not want to think about the Sussex Man just then. He wanted to think about Soccer, and his good luck in getting into the team. He spotted Bullivant, the games master, in the quad—burly, red-faced old Bully, the most popular master at

By
**CHARLES
HAMILTON**

Oakshott, and crossed over to speak to him.

He knew that he owed his chance to old Bully's advice to Oliphant, and he was determined, at that moment, to regard him simply as popular old Bully, and not as the man whom he had seen, in the dark hours of the night, open Silverson's desk with a key, and take the banknotes therefrom. If Bullivant was, as all appearances indicated, the Sussex Man by night, he was a dutiful and conscientious games master by day—and in the latter character, at least, he could be respected and liked.

Mr. Bullivant was not looking happy that fine morning. Many fellows had noticed that old Bully was looking rather off his feed of late. Only the schoolboy detective knew why.

But, worried as he looked, old Bully's clouded brow cleared as Len came up, and he gave the Fifth Former a smile. It was as if the brightness in the schoolboy's face had a tonic effect on him.

"You've seen the list, Lex?"

"Yes, sir," answered Len. "I rather think I owe it to you that my name's there. I should like to thank you, sir."

"I've had my eye on you, Lex. I think you'll do Oakshott credit."

With that, Bullivant walked on. He was a man of few words.

Len Lex glanced after him with a pang at his heart. Old Bully had had an eye on him, and this was the result. He did not know that Len, also, had had an eye on him, and that the result might be that he would be taken away from Oakshott with handcuffs upon his wrists! Was it possible—could it be possible—that old Bully was the man Bill Nixon wanted? Or, rather, was it not certain, after what the schoolboy detective had seen? But Len still hesitated. It was as if some instinct, stronger than reason, warned him.

The bell for third school interrupted unpleasant reflections. Len went in with the Fifth to Latin prose with Mr. Silverson. Silverson's name was on his list of suspects, and Len was half ashamed to realise that he wished that the evidence had been stronger in Silverson's direction, and weaker in Bullivant's.

He did not like Silverson, and he could hardly respect him since he had discovered that the man was a secret and desperate gambler on the Turf. Certainly, if it was the Sussex Man who had robbed Silverson's study, Vernon Silverson could not be the man. Yet he could imagine Silverson, with his soft-footed tread, in the role of the Sussex Man. It was more difficult to picture big, heavy-footed old Bully in that role.

After morning school, however, the Sussex Man was banished from Len's mind again. It was not a detective, but a schoolboy pure and simple, who went to the changing-room early in the afternoon to get ready for the Parsley match. Len had changed, and was waiting near the doorway with Harvey and Banks, when Pie looked in, a grin on his face. Pie, clearly, was up to something!

"No end of a lark, you men!" grinned Pie.

To the astonishment of the three, he half-drew a screwdriver from his pocket, and shoved it hastily back again. In his other hand he displayed, for a moment, a gimlet.

"I've got screws in my pocket!" he whispered.

"You goat!" said Banks. "What on earth's the game?"

"Silverson!" grinned Pie. "Don't let it out, of course! What about screwing up his study door?"

"Screwing up his study door!" gasped Harvey. "Oh, my hat! Think he won't spot you?"

"Not this afternoon," said the astute Pie. "I've just heard that Bullivant has asked him to referee the match—you know old Bully's a bit off his feed—and Silverson's agreed! And when Silverson goes in after the game, will he be able to get into his study? He will not!" chuckled Pie.

"You ass!" said Banks.

"You goat!" said Harvey.

"Come on, you men!" said Oliphant. The footballers went out of the changing-room, and Pie was left grinning.

A Surprise for Pie!

PORRINGE was probably the only fellow in the House. Standing at the window of Study No. 8, Pie watched the gathering crowd on Big Side. The Parsley match was a big event in the Oakshott list, and few Oakshott men were likely to miss it.

Pie himself would have been there had he not had more urgent business on hand. He watched from the study window, and heard the pheeep of the whistle as Silverson started the game. Bullivant's massive shoulders towered over the crowd. He was watching the game, though he had asked the Fifth Form master to take his place as referee.

When the game had got fairly going, Pie groped in his pockets to make sure that screwdriver, screws, and gimlet were still there, then left the study.

Silverson was the only master who had rooms on the ground floor. Pie passed nobody as he walked along the big corridor, and once he had turned into Silverson's passage all was safe—nobody ever came there but the Fifth Form master, now fully occupied on Big Side.

Absolute safety and lots of time—nothing could have suited Pie better. Half an hour would be ample, tough as the old oak door was. Then Pie would join the crowd on the football field—and who would know that he had lingered in the House at all? Nobody, so far as Pie could see.

Silverson's door opened inwards, so it had to be screwed from the inside. Pie stepped into the study, shut the door, and started. It was easy enough to escape, after his work was done, by way of Silverson's casement into the quad. There would be no eye to see him leave. Pie had provided himself with a dozen screws, all of them long and strong. After he had driven them in, he was going to bang

on them to destroy the slots in which the screwdriver was inserted. The task of getting them out again, after that, would be some task! Pie chuckled at the thought.

He found the work rather hard. The oak was old and tough. It was not easy to drive the gimlet in. By the time Pie had made one hole and driven a screw therein through the door into the floor, his palms were aching, and there were signs of coming blisters. He decided not to use the whole dozen screws, after all. Five or six would be enough!

It was a cold day, but Pie was perspiring by the time the second screw was driven in to the head. Undoubtedly it was hard work. More than a quarter of an hour had passed—a laborious quarter of an hour. Pie started slowly on the third screw.

It was half-way in, when Pie gave a sudden start and dropped the screwdriver in his surprise and alarm. There was a footstep in the passage!

"Oh crumbs!" breathed the startled Pie.

Who the thump could be coming to Silverson's study? Nobody had any business there but Silverson—and Silverson could not possibly be coming. That tread, too, was too heavy for Silverson. It sounded more like old Bully! But old Bully couldn't possibly have left the football ground while the Parsley match was in progress. But it was somebody! Pie, on one knee just within the screwed door, was transfixed.

The door-handle turned. He heard a surprised grunt as the door failed to open. There was no mistaking that grunt. It was old Bully!

Pie hardly breathed. What the thump did the games master want in Silverson's study? He knew that the Fifth Form master was not there. Obviously, he was not coming there to see Silverson. What else could he want?

Whatever he might have wanted, it was clear that Bullivant did want to enter that study. It could not have occurred to him that it was screwed inside; and it would have been very unusual for Silverson to lock the door and take the key away with him. Doubtless, Bullivant supposed that the door was jammed somehow, for Pie heard it strain and creak as a powerful shoulder was pressed on the other side.

But, though Pie had, so far, driven in only two screws, they more than held the door fast. Indeed, something like a battering-ram would have been needed to get it open from the outside. It strained, creaked, but did not stir. Pie heard a breathless grunt from the passage. He grinned. Old Bully was a hefty man, but he could not shift a screwed door.

For a long minute, Pie, silent himself, heard the games master breathing hard outside the door. Then there came a sharp tap, and Bullivant's voice:

"Who is there? Is someone there?" Porringe was not bright. But he was too bright to answer that question. The silence of the tomb

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was Pie's cue! Bullivant, no doubt, had reached the only possible explanation of the mystery—that some practical joker had got into the study and fastened the door somehow. Pie was not going to tell him who that practical joker was!

Another grunt—then receding footsteps. The games master was going! Pie chuckled softly. But he ceased to chuckle, and crammed the screwdriver, the screws, and the gimlet into his pockets and cut across to the casement. Ten to one, Bullivant would walk round to look in at the window, and spot who was there. The bare thought of being spotted, and handed over to Silver-son's tender mercies, made Pie feel quite cold all over! Silver-son had a heavy hand with a cane, as Pie knew only too well!

He opened the casement, stepped out over the low sill, and drew the casement shut after him. The spring-lock closed with a snap. Only Silver-son had a key to that lock and could open the casement from outside. Sometimes he entered the study that way, using it as a french window. Outside, Pie cast a swift glance about him, then cut across to the nearest of the ancient Oakshott oaks, and blotted himself out of sight behind the massive trunk.

He was in safe cover, and grinning serenely, when a heavy tread came along from the direction of the House doorway. It stopped at Silver-son's window. Peering round the oak, Pie spotted the games master, standing at the window, staring in. He spotted something else, too—Bullivant's hand gliding over the lock, in the evident hope of finding it unfastened. Pie was quite mystified. Really, it looked as if Bullivant was so keen on getting into Silver-son's study that he would have got in by

the casement had it been practicable. It was, however, impracticable; and, with an angry and annoyed grunt, the games master turned and walked away.

"Well, my only hat!" murmured Pie.

He watched from a distance. Bullivant was going back to the football field. Whatever his object was, he had been unable to carry it out, and he had gone back to the football. Pie, wondering what it all meant, but extremely glad not to have been spotted, cut into the House, to deposit his tools in Study No. 8, then made his way down to Big Side to mingle with the crowd there.

A roar from the Oakshott crowd greeted him as he arrived, Bullivant's deep voice loud above the rest.

"Goal!"

"Well kicked, Lex! Good man!"

Len Lex had bagged the first goal for Oakshott. There was old Oliphant, at centre-forward, on his back; there was Harvey, inside-right, staggering under a Parsley charge, and nobody to take a pass. Len shot from the wing, and the crowd roared as it got home.

Pie had no doubt that, in Len's place, he would have bagged two, if not three, goals by that time. But he joined generously in the roar of applause.

Len's face was flushed and ruddy, and very merry and bright, as he went back to the centre of the field with the Oakshott men. He was enjoying the game and doing well for his side. Oliphant, if he had had any doubts, knew now that old Bully was right.

It was not till well on in the second half that Parsley equalised, and it was almost on the stroke of time that Oliphant, with a pass from Len, put the pill in. When Silver-son blew the final whistle Oakshott were winners by two goals to one.

Pie followed his friends to the changing-room.

"It was all right, you men," he told them, grinning.

"All right!" repeated Harvey. "I should jolly well say it was—two goals to one is all right!"

"I mean my rag on Silver-son—"

"Oh, blow Silver-son, and blow your silly rags!" said Banks.

Everybody was full of Soccer, and the victory over Parsley, and it was not till tea-time that Pie had a chance of imparting the news of his wonderful exploit in Silver-son's study. Then Harvey told him that he was a goat, and Banks that he was a howling ass. Len, who said nothing, thought the more—not about Pie's rag but about what Pie mentioned as a trifling detail—the fact that Bullivant had tried to get into the study and failed. Len knew now why old Bully had got Silver-son to referee in that game.

"You are the Sussex Man!"

M R. SILVERSON'S eye seemed to linger on Porryng when he put lights out for the Fifth that night. Pie noticed it, perhaps with an inward tremor. He wondered whether his beak had thought of him in connection with the rag in his study. It was quite probable that Silver-son had, knowing the goat of the Fifth as he did.

Still, there was nothing to go upon. Silver-son himself had seen Porryng on the ground during the Parsley match—plenty of fellows had seen him there most of the time. Nobody had specially noticed that he hadn't been there all the time. There had, of course, been a fearful row about the screwing-up of a Form-master's door. The reckless ragger was booked for a Head's whopping if discovered! Pie could only hope that he wouldn't be discovered.

After lights were out, and Silver-son was gone, there was a buzz of voices in the Fifth Form dormitory, Pie's rag, and the row it had caused, almost ousting the Parsley match as a topic. Every fellow in the Fifth, by that time, knew who had done it.

Often and often had Pie set out to make Silver-son sit up, but generally something or other had gone wrong. This time it was a winner, and Pie was immensely bucked. Silver-son had had to get into his study by the casement and let in the porter by the same means to draw the screws before he could get his study door open. It was no end of a rag, though not so tremendous as Pie had planned, owing to the interruption he had had.

"If old Bully hadn't barged in," said Pie, "I'd have had a dozen screws in the door, with the heads knocked flat. And I can tell you Silver-son mightn't have got that door open for days! Ha, ha!"

"What the dickens did old Bully want there?" asked Cayley.

"Goodness knows! But if he hadn't barged in—"

"Rot!" said Harvey. "It can't have been old Bully! You dreamed that part of it, Pie!"



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"I tell you I heard him at the door, and afterwards he came round to the window."

"Fathead!" said Banks. "What would old Bully want to sneak into a man's study for? He wouldn't! Bet you old Bully never missed a minute of the Parsley match."

Len Lex, with his head on his pillow, was not joining in the talk, but he was not asleep. Neither did the schoolboy detective intend to sleep. Hardly a man in the Fifth doubted that Pie had made one more of his usual idiotic mistakes. It couldn't have been old Bully who had tried to get into Silverson's study while Silverson was out. But Len did not doubt.

This was the third time to Len's own knowledge that Bullivant had tried to visit that study secretly since the night he had taken the banknotes from the Fifth Form master's desk. And while the Fifth were talking Len Lex was thinking, and asking himself why?

Keen as the schoolboy detective was, he could find no answer to that question yet. If Bullivant was the Sussex Man, no doubt he used Silverson's casement for egress and ingress, as Len had suspected from the first. But that did not account for visits to the study in the daytime! And how astutely he had made sure that Silverson would be off the scene that afternoon by getting him to referee in the Parsley match. But why?

The Fifth Form dropped into slumber at last—all but one member of that Form. No one in the dormitory heard a sound when Len Lex slipped out and made his way down dark staircases. Hardly a night since he had been at Oakshott had the schoolboy detective failed to keep watch on the study by which, he knew, the secret burglar came and went. He was less likely than ever to fail now.

But he knew as he stood outside Silverson's study in the dark that if Bill Nixon had known all that he could have told him Bill would have said that the case was as good as complete. Was he wasting his time hesitating to act because he liked the man against whom all suspicion seemed to point? Yet, if Bullivant was the man, why did Surtees prowl the House at night, and who was that unknown fourth suspect whose shadowy form had clambered over the wall by the old oak where the cracksman's tools were hidden?

And Silverson, too—the secret gambler whom Len had seen white and stunned by his loss, whose motor-bike he had spotted parked in Trant Woods when Silverson was supposed to have ridden it in the opposite direction. No; all the suspicion was not against old Bully, in spite of what Len had seen him do—there was still a chance.

And yet when Len, in the dark, heard a footfall, and a sound of deep breathing, he knew that it was Bullivant who was coming.

He could see nothing, but he knew that it was the games-master who stood within three feet of him at the door of his Form-master's study.

The door opened softly. From the

casement came a glimmer of the winter stars. It revealed the bulky form as a massive shadow standing in the doorway.

Bullivant was listening. He was in fear of hearing a sound from Silverson's bed-room, which adjoined the study. But there was no sound from that direction.

But from the corridor from which Bullivant had turned into the passage came a faint sound. Bullivant did not seem to hear it, or heed it—but Len did. He backed deeper into the shadow at the end of the side-passage, knowing that another prowler was abroad.

Suddenly, from the dark shot a beam of light.

It was a flash-lamp, and its beam fell full upon the bulky form standing listening in the study doorway. It did not reach Len, blotted in the dark at the end of the passage. It was concentrated on Bullivant. He whirled round with a low, choking sound between a gasp and a sob, and the light was on his face, usually ruddy as a cherry, now as pale as its complexion allowed it to become.

"Surtees!" Bullivant breathed the name in a husky whisper.

"Caught!" Ralph Surtees' voice did not sound boyish and pleasant as usual. It vibrated with scorn, and mingled with the scorn was a note of triumph.

Bullivant gave a groan.

Len, blotted in the dark, could only wonder. He remembered the night when Surtees, prowling the House in the small hours, had grabbed him in the blackness and mistaken him for Bullivant. The young master was making no mistake this time. But what did it all mean?

"We'd better call Silverson, I think," said Surtees, in the same biting, contemptuous tone. "I'd better have a witness to this!"

"For mercy's sake, no!" Bullivant's voice was barely audible. "Give me a chance, Surtees—give me a chance! You don't understand—you can't understand!"

"I think I understand only too clearly."

"You do not—you cannot!"

"No need to waste words!" said the Fourth Form master crisply. "I've known this the whole term. I had suspicions last term—but did not know what man to fix them on. This term, I knew! I've kept watch, three or four nights every week—ever since the night the boy Porringe was knocked out by the Sussex Man! I knew I should nail you at last."

"Silence—silence! Silverson will wake—"

"Let him, and the sooner the better! The game's up, Bullivant—and this time the police will get their hands on the Sussex Man!"

"The Sussex Man!" repeated Bullivant.

"Do you think I don't know? You are the Sussex Man, and I've found you out!"

Guilty!

LEN LEX hardly breathed. His eyes were on Bullivant's face—white, tormented. He saw amazement dawn in that tortured

face. Guilt he half-expected to read there—Surtees wholly expected it. But it was blank amazement they saw. Len felt his heart lighter. In Surtees' face surprise dawned—and a trace of doubt.

"You're mad!" Bullivant's voice came husky, but firm. "Is that what you think? Oh, you're mad!"

"You deny it?"

"Oh, you're mad!" breathed the games master.

Then he gave a sudden start, as there was a sound from the bed-room, across the study. Hurriedly, though softly, he drew the study door shut.

"Quiet! Silence—silence! Silverson's awake!" He groaned out the words. "Surtees, I can explain—give me a chance! For mercy's sake, don't disgrace a man who's more unfortunate than guilty; guilty, I own up, but not as you think—nothing like what you think! Give me a chance!"

For a second the Fourth Form master gazed at him. There was the sound of a movement from the study. Surtees suddenly shut off the light.

"Follow me!" he said. "I will hear you, at least!"

He stepped back into the big corridor. The burly games master almost tottered after him. After him, a flitting shadow in the blackness, went Len Lex. The side passage was dark and deserted as the study door opened from within. Three pairs of ears, in the long, dark corridor, heard. But the study door, after opening, closed again. Possibly the Fifth Form master, after what had occurred that afternoon, suspected another rag when he heard sounds in the silence of the night. But, if so, he was reassured by the darkness and the silence, and he shut the door. Len heard a sobbing gasp. It told of the relief of the games master when he knew that Silverson had gone back to bed.

Surtees' voice came, in low tones.

"Come up to my study!"

The light gleamed again as he led the way up the stairs. Bullivant followed him. Not till they were in the passage above did Len Lex follow. He reached the upper passage in time to see Surtees switch on the light in his study and shut the door.

Surtees' bed-room adjoined his study, and there was a door on the passage. Silently, the schoolboy detective stepped in by that door. The communicating-door between bed-room and study was half-open. Light shone in from the study. Len could see Bullivant—sunk in an armchair, looking like a man beaten, down and out. He could not see Surtees, who was out of range.

"I've said that I'll hear you, Bullivant!" came Surtees' voice. "It's useless, but I'll hear you. I know who you are—I've known for weeks. I suspected long ago that the Sussex Man had his headquarters in this school. It was too wild an idea to hint to the police, even if I had wanted to drag the name of Oakshott in the mud. But—"

Bullivant raised his head.

"The Sussex Man—in this school! Oh, you're mad!" he muttered.

"I knew—or as good as knew!" said Surtees quietly. "A good many

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people have remarked that the Sussex Man's beat lies within a fifteen-mile radius of Oakshott—the school in the centre. But I thought a little further than that. I noted that the date of every burglary was in term time—the Sussex Man gave his beat a rest in the holidays. I don't say that the significance of this struck me at once—but it did strike me, in the long run. So far as I know, it has struck no one else."

The schoolboy detective, in the dark, adjoining room, smiled. It was that very circumstance that had struck him and brought him to Oakshott School on the trail of the mysterious burglar.

"The night the boy Porringer was struck down, in Silverson's study, my suspicions came to a head!" went on the quiet voice. "If, as it looked to me, the Sussex Man was making Oakshott School his hide-out, I determined to nail him.

"When I discovered that you prowled at night, Bullivant, I knew that I had spotted my man! If I had been able to find evidence, such as burglar's tools or hidden loot, you would not have had so long a run—but you were too wary for that—I knew that I should have to catch you in the act. Had I been on the watch the night Silverson spent at Trant Elms, and his study was robbed in his absence, you would have been caught red-handed—"

A groan came from the bowed figure in the chair.

"Even now, I do not understand why you cleared out Silverson's desk and spared the Head's safe. One must have been as easy as the other to the Sussex Man! But there is no room for doubt! You are the Sussex Man?"

"I am not the Sussex Man!" said Bullivant. "You must be mad to believe that he is an inmate of Oakshott! You have said that you will hear me. It's not as you suppose. My young brother, Roger, was wanted by the police for a robbery at the bank where he was employed. He was hiding, under an assumed name, at Trant. He had to have money to flee the country. I had to help him! I was at the end of my resources. It was the Sussex Man coming here that put the horrible thought into my mind. Silverson's known to have money—to keep a sum in his desk—and—and— I fell!"

"I hoped that it would be put down to the Sussex Man. I made it look as if it was the work of an outside thief—I set the window ajar. I—I—" The husky voice trailed off.

"You are asking me to believe that you robbed Silverson and no one else—that you are not the Sussex Man?"

"It's the truth!"

"Then why"—the question came with a scornful snap—"more visits to that study if you were not going out by Silverson's casement?"

"You don't know all!" The games master's voice came husky, broken. "I had the money—the theft was put down to the Sussex Man, as I planned. Silverson, whom I feared most, had no suspicion—none at all. But I might have known that I should

be punished! I had the money—but it was too late!

"When I got to Trant, with two hundred pounds in stolen banknotes in my pocket, it was only to find that Roger had been taken by the police the night before! How they tracked him I do not know. I came back, with the banknotes still in my pocket, a thief for nothing—nothing! Then there was only one thing left—and you have prevented it!"

"I?" exclaimed Surtees.

"You!" said Bullivant bitterly. "I tell you, it was only to save Roger that I touched the money! It was too late to save him! What could I do but put the money back where it belonged? I tried, more than once; but it was not easy to undo what it had been only too easy to do. This afternoon I got Silverson to take my place on the football field—and tried again. Then, to-night—"

Bullivant lifted his head.

"You fool!" he said. "You've been watching for the Sussex Man—mad enough to fancy that he is an inmate of Oakshott! But for you, the banknotes would have been back in Silverson's desk this night! I tell you, I'd have cut off my hand sooner than have touched them, except for the boy's sake!"

"If I could believe that—"

The bulky figure rose unsteadily from the armchair.

"I've told you the truth, Surtees! Judge me as you like—but keep silent and give me a chance! To-night it is impossible, but to-morrow— You will believe me when you hear that Silverson has found his money!"

"If you are not the Sussex Man"—Len could hear the doubt in Ralph Surtees' voice now—"if I have been led on a false scent, it is you who led me. If you've told the truth, there are others who prowl the school at night, and I have further to seek. I half believe you, and you shall have your chance. For the present, at all events, I shall say nothing."

Len Lex slipped quietly away, and he was out of sight when Bullivant came heavily along to his room and the door closed after him.

Len had a lighter heart. He knew now! His faith in old Bully, after all, had not been misplaced. Old Bully had sinned, but he had been more sinned against than sinning! And it was Len who had saved him from ineradicable guilt: for it was he who had caused the arrest of Roger Bullivant. From that moment the unhappy man had been thinking only of undoing what he had done—Len knew that that was the truth, and old Bully's name was taken from his suspected list!

And Surtees? Len smiled as he slipped silently into his bed in the Fifth Form dormitory. Surtees had been playing detective, suspecting Bullivant, and never dreaming that he was placing himself under suspicion. Two names were gone from the schoolboy detective's suspected list of four. Two remained: Silverson and the unknown one! It would not be long now before he had definite news for Detective-Inspector Nixon!

"If Pie's right—"

"Now, how," said Harvey argumentatively, "could Pie possibly be right?"

Len laughed. They were in the quad, in break. Mr. Bullivant, leaning on one of the old oaks, hardly noticed the Fifth Form fellows as they came along. Certainly, he did not know that Lex of the Fifth was steering his companions in that direction. He heard them without heeding.

"Porringer has been saying all along that it was a rag on Silverson!" Len spoke carelessly, apparently unobservant of the games master. "Not a burglary at all, but just a rag on Silverson. Isn't that so, Porringer?"

Bullivant gave a start. His eyes turned on the Fifth Formers.

"Pie's a goat!" said Banks. "That's just what Pie would think, with a brain like his! Why, even Pie himself isn't ass enough to mess about with money for a rag. Lex, you're a fathead! If it was a rag, the money would turn up again. Has it turned up?"

"Not yet," said Len. "But if Pie's right, and it was only a rag, those jolly old banknotes will turn up somewhere about Oakshott. No end of a jest if Silverson found them on his window-sill or under the telephone in Common-room—what?"

"Well," said Harvey, "if those banknotes are ever found under the telephone in Common-room, or anywhere else, I'll believe that it was a rag on Silverson. But not till then!"

"Hardly!" grinned Banks. The Fifth Form fellows strolled on. Bullivant stood looking after them, a strange expression on his face. Was there a useful hint in this careless talk which he had heard by chance as they passed him?

The bell rang for third school. The games master went slowly into the House, and it was into the deserted Common-room that his footsteps led him.

It was Mr. Chowne who made the amazing discovery when he went to the phone after third school. A quarter of an hour afterwards, all Oakshott knew that Silverson's banknotes—supposed to be far away in the greedy grasp of the Sussex man—had been found in a bundle under the telephone in Common-room! It was not, after all, a theft, but a rag—an unusual and extraordinary rag! Nobody could doubt that when the banknotes were left there to be found!

Who had perpetrated the amazing rag remained a mystery. Most fellows thought that it must be Pie. Only Pie, they considered, was goat enough to do anything of the kind. Porringer protested that he knew absolutely nothing of it, and he found one believer, at least, in Len Lex!

Len Lex completes his thrilling case next Saturday—but YOU WILL NEVER GUESS HOW!
If you want to know the identity of the mysterious "Sussex Man," DON'T MISS NEXT WEEK'S "MODERN BOY"!