

SPECS' VENTRILOQUISM CAUSES SOME FUN!

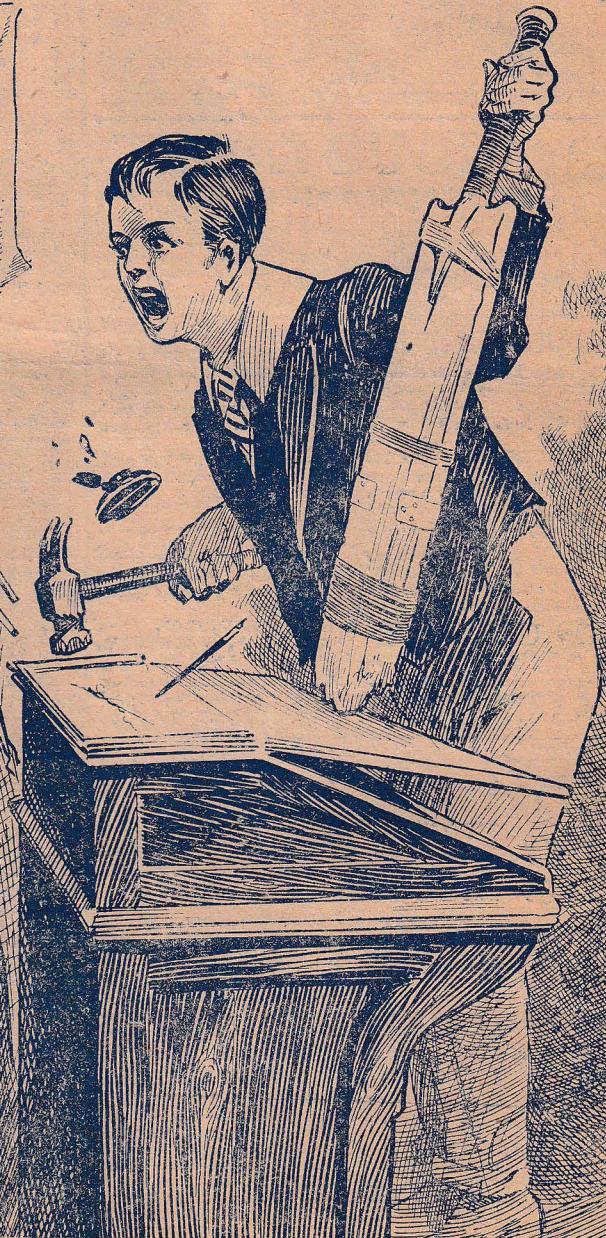
PLUCK

GRAND SCHOOL STORY.

1^d

THRILLING ADVENTURE TALE.

IMPORTANT SALE
OF
VALUABLE PROPERTY
BY J. HARKER Esq
AT 2 O'CLOCK
NO RESERVE!
MUST BE CLEARED OUT!



"GOING! GOING! —" As Harker uttered these words, Specs, the Ventriloquist, had something to say. (See "THE RAGGERS.")

Supporting one another and dragging Sinclair, they staggered away from the place which had become too hot to stand.

"Dad's finished!" Charlie exclaimed, as they laid him on the moist earth of one of the flower beds in the garden.

Sinclair raised himself on his elbow, groaning with pain.

"My son! My son!" he cried. "Let me die with him! Bad as he is I will not live—"

"Quondong your son?" Ned exclaimed.

Sinclair turned terrified eyes towards him and fell back with a deep groan. It was the last sound he uttered.

There was a clatter of galloping horses as the station hands and police came racing back, enraged at the trap into which they had fallen, and dismayed at the spectacle of the blazing homestead. A glance only was sufficient to show that no human effort could save the building from destruction.

While the men were tearing to and fro, generally making confusion worse confounded, Ned stood apart trying to understand the riddle of Sinclair's last words.

If Quondong were his son, then how could his name have been Ransom? If the outlaw were not the missing Ned Ransom, who was?

Too much occupied in his wrestling with this conundrum to notice his surroundings, Ned failed to see Tester and Bill approaching him.

"Well, Ned, things are a bit clearer now, aren't they?" he heard Tester say almost at his elbow.

"Clearer? No, they're ten times worse, answered Ned.

"Not really, Ned," Bill said. "You think they are, that's all. Do you know why I managed to get here to-night? After you had gone it seemed to me to be a bit rough letting you battle through as best you could while I had certain knowledge which might assist you in your search."

"But," Ned began, looking at Bill wonderingly. "I never told you what the search was about."

"No, my lad, you did not. Tester has, though. You see, it was this way. Your uncle, Ned Ransom, owned this station at one time. He had a friend, or a man he regarded as a friend, and once, when he went away for a trip, he left that friend in charge of the place with full powers. You may guess what happened. When your uncle returned he found his friend had cheated him out of the property. He was going to fight the matter out in the law courts when a strange thing happened. There was a bushranging outrage, and evidence no man could disprove showed that Ned Ransom was the culprit."

"My uncle?" Ned exclaimed hotly.

"Your uncle was arrested and sent to gaol for ten years. He has not been out of prison many months," Bill went on.

"Then he was Quondong?" Ned asked.

"No, he was not. Quondong, as you heard Sinclair say before he died, was the man who fell in the fire yonder—Sinclair's own son, to be exact."

Ned passed his hand across his forehead. Matters were getting more and more hopelessly confused to him.

"Sinclair was also the man your uncle trusted and by whom he was robbed. Now do you understand?"

"No, I don't," Ned retorted. "Dooney, the trooper, said that Quondong's real name was Ned Ransom. Now you say Quondong was Sinclair's son. Then who's Ned Ransom?"

"I am."

"You?" cried Ned.

"Yes, my lad. Let me tell you the rest of the story. I suspected—and so did my old friend Tester here—that Quondong was either Sinclair himself or someone closely related to him. No one else could have laid that snare into which I went and was so absolutely held. I saw your name in the paper—the newspapers out here, you know, publish the names of all passengers arriving overseas. I guessed you were my nephew and I guessed your mission, so I went down to Townsville and hung about the wharf till I caught sight of you. There was no mistaking you—you are exactly what your own father was at your age. I let you come on by yourself in the hopes that you would find out enough to clear me before I revealed myself to you."

"And he's done it, too!" Tester cried.

"Yes, Sid, thanks to the way you helped him," Bill replied.

"You were working together?" said Ned.

"I sent word on to Sid to look out for you."

Ned held out his hand.

"Whatever I have found out was all by accident," he said.

"But I am glad you're Uncle Ned—you're—"

"That's all right, Ned. Here, Tester, what about—"

Uncle and nephew both looked round. Tester had vanished.

"He's a white man, is Tester," the elder Ned said quietly.

"He's the second one I've met," the younger replied.

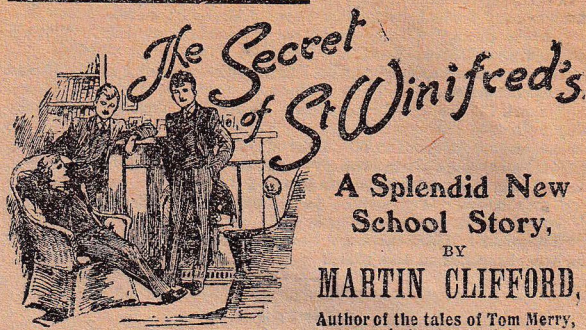
"Oh, but how about young Charlie?"

"I forgot him for the moment. Yes, he's another."

"We're only Australians, my lad," the elder Ned said. "The Sinclairs and the Dooneys are the exception out here—you won't find many of them; but there are lots of Testers and Charlies in the bush."

(Two long, complete stories again next Saturday. Please order your copy of **PLUCK** in advance.)

NEW SCHOOL TALE.



A Splendid New
School Story,

BY

MARTIN CLIFFORD,

Author of the tales of Tom Merry,
appearing every week in the
"GEM" Library.

READ THIS FIRST.

Clive Lawrence, a new boy at St. Winifred's, is put into the Fourth Form, which is at daggers drawn with the Fifth. The leaders of the Fourth are Fisher and Locke, Clive's study-mates, and those of the Fifth are Kendal and Keene. Courtney, a bully, takes Clive for "fag," and sends him on an errand to the Jolly Seaman, a public-house in the village. Clive arrives at his destination, and is shown into a back room to wait for a Mr. Napper. He falls asleep before the fire, and is awakened by the sound of voices. Concealed as he is by the high-backed chair, he overhears a plot between Napper and a German to get possession of the clue to a hidden treasure, which Trelawney, the Captain of St. Winifred's, holds. Having discharged his errand, Clive returns to the School. That evening the Fifth-Formers rush the Fourth dormitory, intending to 'rag' Clive. However, they meet with defeat and are thrown out. Herr Stossel, the German master, disturbed by the noise, gives each of the Fourth-Formers twenty lines. The boys show their resentment at being punished on the first night, but Herr Stossel orders them to bed. (Now go on with the story.)

An Early Morning Run.

Clive Lawrence was the first awake in the Fourth Form dormitory on the following morning. He had slept soundly during the night, but his sleep had been troubled by strange dreams, in which the Jolly Seaman, and Mr. Napper, and Franz Stossel, and the wrecked Spanish galleon had been curiously mingled. He had been chased through the caves of Penwyn Bay by Herr Stossel, who had changed into Courtney of the Sixth just as he caught up with him, and the two had struggled and fallen into a heap of Spanish dollars and pieces-of-eight, and were wrestling there, when Clive awoke with a start.

The early morning sunlight was peeping in at the high windows of the dormitory. The rest of the Fourth were still sleeping. Clive lay awake and looked round him with a feeling of strangeness natural to one awaking in entirely new surroundings. His mind was still full of his dream, and he could still see the dark, threatening face of Franz Stossel, the sly, cunning features of Mr. Napper, and the golden gleam of the ancient coins, rolling and clinking in the sands of the cave. But as his ideas became more collected, he sat up in bed and glanced up and down the long row of white coverlets.

"So this is St. Winifred's!" he murmured. "Well, I like it! I've had a high old time so far, but I've come through it pretty well; and I suppose a chap must be prepared to rough it a bit at first!"

He looked round the room again. The juniors were sleeping soundly, and were not likely to wake till the rising-bell commenced its unmelodious clang.

"I say, Locke!" called out Clive.

There was no reply.

"I say, Locke, old fellow!"

Locke's eyes half opened.

"Hallo! Wharrer marrer?"

"It's a fine, clear morning," said Clive; "aren't you going to get up?"

"Rising-bell gone?"

"No; I haven't heard it."

Locke opened his eyes fully, to fix a glance of withering indignation upon the new boy at St. Winifred's.

"Rising-bell hasn't gone!" he said. "You utter ass! Do you mean to tell me that you've woke me up before rising-bell?"

NEXT SATURDAY: "WYCLIFFE'S GHOSTS." A Splendid Long, Complete School Tale, By Jack North.

AND "THE GLADSDOWN COALKEEPER." A Thrilling Long, Complete Detective Tale. IN "PLUCK," 1d.

"Well, I thought you might like to come out for a run," said Clive.

"Ass! Donkey! Shrieking idiot!" said Locke politely. "Lie down and be quiet, before I get up and scrag you! Don't make a sound, or I'll jump on your neck!"

And Locke closed his eyes to make an endeavour to woo slumber once more. Clive Lawrence grinned as he stepped out of bed. He was always an early riser, a habit to which he owed a great deal of his energy, and clearness of head and eye. But it was evident that Locke wasn't inclined to lose a moment of the time allowed him for balmy slumber. The rising-bell was early enough for him—in fact, too early!

Clive slipped into his clothes, and put his boots on—a second pair, as his others had not yet been returned to the dormitory after cleaning. He meant to have a run out in the early morning air to freshen him up for the day. As soon as he was dressed he bent over Locke and tapped his head.

"Groo!" said Locke. "Gero-o-o-o—oooo—ooooh!"

"I say, wake up, old chap, I want to ask you a question!" Locke's eyes opened drowsily.

"You young villain!" he murmured. "This is the second time you've disturbed me this morning! Wait till I get up, I'll pulverise you!"

"I say; is it allowed to go out of the school grounds as early as this?" asked Clive, smiling. "I want to have a run down to the shore."

"Isn't the school close good enough for you?"

"I want to run down to the sea and get a bathe."

"Well, if you can get out before the gates are opened, you may," said Locke. "I don't see how you are going to do it, though. If the porter is rung up at this hour to open the gates for a junior he may be in a good temper and do it. But I should rather think not. He isn't the nicest man in the world."

"Do you mean that I can't get out?"

"Yes, ass, of course I do! Go and play diablo in the close! Go and eat coke! Go to Jericho! And let me go to sleep!"

"But, I say, isn't there any way of getting out?"

"You troublesome beast, I shall never get to sleep again after this! It's very hard to go to sleep after being woke up, and bad for the health, too. I shall kill you after breakfast, so look out!"

"Yes; but isn't there any way of getting out without waking up the porter to open the gates?" asked Clive Lawrence.

"Yes, there is; but it's naughty to break bounds, and I'm too sleepy to give you directions, and so you can't go; and so get away, and leave me alone!"

"Give me the directions, old chap!"

"Oh, hang! Well, you get out of the house—that's easy enough, as the maids and the boots will be up by now, and the door will be open. You go round the close to the grass behind the chapel, and find the fourth elm-tree in the row at the back, and climb it. It's easy to climb on the left-hand side. Then you crawl along a branch to the wall, and drop down on the outside; then you bunk."

Clive rubbed his nose thoughtfully.

"Blessed if I think I can remember all that," he said. "Let's see, you go behind the chapel, and crawl up the fourth wall—"

"Climb up the fourth elm," growled Locke; "on the left-hand side—"

"And then bunk?"

"Then drop over the wall and bunk," said Locke. "If you go through the plantation, there's a narrow path leads right down to the beach without going out on the road at all. You can follow it easily enough, only look out for the sand-pits."

"But how am I to get in again?" asked Clive.

"Blessed if I know!" grunted Locke. "What's the good of asking me these conundrums when I'm sleepy?"

"Can I climb the wall from the outside?"

"Yes, if you're a human fly; not otherwise."

"Then I can't get in again if I go out?"

"Apparently not. But you never know your luck. Try, anyway. You may find somebody to give you a bunk up; or the doctor may come, if you call him, and help you over."

"I say, Locke, don't you feel inclined for a run this morning?" suggested Clive Lawrence persuasively. "It's fine and clear!"

"Oh, my word! Of all the obstinate bounders I ever heard of, or read about, you're the top sawyer!" exclaimed Locke. "Can't you see I'm busy—I mean, that I want to snooze?"

"It's bad to stay in bed late, and you say yourself it's unhealthy to go to sleep again after you've woke up!"

"Oh, you see, I didn't wake up! I was woked—I mean, I

waked—and by one of the most obstinate and obstreperous bounders that ever deprived a tired kid of his beauty sleep."

"Still, you've lost it now, and you may as well come out. I shouldn't know the time to get in to breakfast."

"Breakfast at eight, prayers at nine, morning school first lesson nine-fifteen," grunted Locke. "You can remember that, I suppose?"

"Yes, I can try, but if I can't get over the wall—"

Locke grunted and sat up in bed.

"You horrid, beastly bounder," he growled, "I suppose I had better get up. I can't go to sleep again now. I'll come."

"That's right. You'll feel all the better for it."

"Rats! Shove some water in my basin. I say, it's too cold to bathe."

"Oh, the sea water is warmer, you know, and I've bathed at this time of year before. We can take these towels along."

"It's not allowed for juniors to bathe without the supervision of a master or a prefect, in case of accidents."

"Then it's time we started a new custom about that," said Clive coolly. "Buck up! I'm ready to start."

"They've taken my beastly boots away."

"Well, haven't you a second pair here?"

"No, I haven't! You see I can't come."

"Here's a pair; they look about your size."

"They belong to Carker."

"Never mind; Carker can go and cark. Shove them on."

"They're brown ones, you see, and tranping over mud and sand won't improve them."

"Carker can't expect his boots to be improved for him. Shove them on, and say no more about it. I'm sure Carker would be happy to let you have them if he were awake."

"I'm sure he would!" grinned Locke, as he put the boots on. "He would be delighted—I don't think! Never mind, here goes. They fit me pretty well, and they're thicker boots than mine, so there's nothing to grumble about. Sha'n't be a tick!"

Locke's ablutions did not take him long. The juniors left the dormitory together, and passed quietly down the stairs. Locke pointed out the door of the German master's room. Clive took a piece of chalk from his pocket.

"What's the game now?" asked Locke, as the new boy at St. Winifred's scrawled the chalk on the panels of the door.

"Only the compliments of the Fourth Form," grinned Clive. His chalking was soon done, and an expressive word in big capitals stared from the German master's door.

"RATS!"

"Ha, ha! Good! Stossel will get on the war-path when he sees that," grinned Locke. "Come on, kid, before you're caught in the act."

Early as the hour was, the juniors could hear sounds below stairs as they went down, which showed that the maids were afoot. The lock and chain of the great door had been unfastened, and the lads left the house without hindrance. The close was fresh and bright and breezy in the early morning.

"This is a bit better than the dormitory, I think," said Clive, taking in a deep breath of the vivifying air.

"Yes, rather; but I've lost my beauty sleep."

"Hang your beauty sleep! Come round the chapel."

Locke led the way round to the rear of the chapel, where a track of level grass lay between the rails and the old weather-stained wall, lined with trees. He stopped at an elm with a rough trunk, and climbed nimbly up to the first branch, a stout limb which extended over the top of the wall.

"Follow your leader, Lawrence."

"Right-ho!" said Clive cheerfully.

He watched Locke slip along the branch to the wall, catch the coping, and drop out of sight into the lane beyond. It did not take the new boy long to swarm up the tree in turn and cross the wall as Locke had done.

He dropped into the lane beside Locke. Then he looked about him. A narrow lane ran beside the school wall, and on the other side of it was a dark and thick plantation. Towards this Locke led the way, crossing the leafy lane.

Where a couple of palings were lacking, Locke forced his way through the fence, and Clive followed, and they found themselves in the sombre shadow of a thick wood.

Locke led the way, by a path that was at times almost indistinguishable in the thickets that grew round and over it. Sometimes the juniors had to push branches out of their way, and at other times to carefully go round deep hollows in the ground. The path was rugged and uneven, but it had a downward trend upon the whole. The wash of the sea on the Penwyn rocks reached Clive's ear as he followed his companion through the wood.

A sudden wide glimmer of blue burst upon Clive Lawrence's sight, as he came out among the last scattered trees on the seaward side of the plantation.

"The sea!" he exclaimed.

Locke grinned. The sight was beautiful and moving, but he was too accustomed to it for the familiar scene to have much effect upon him.

But Clive halted upon a rising knoll, and looked, and looked again, and his eyes were bright with pleasure as he looked. For Clive, as for most British boys, the deep sea had a mysterious attraction—an attraction natural, doubtless, to a son of a seafaring race. Wide lay the great bay before him, with the water crisping on the rocks, washing on the yellow stretches of sand—wider, bluer rolled the great ocean beyond.

"Glorious! Glorious!"

"Yes, it's ripping!" said Locke. "Come on, kid! Don't stand there in raptures till breakfast-time, you know."

Clive laughed, and followed his companion to the shore. The keen breeze was blowing from the ocean, laden with health. The shore was lonely. In the direction of Penwyn village boats could be seen drawn up on the sand out of reach of high water, and a lugger was swinging lazily to a cable. On the right of the bay rose the great rocks, honey-combed with caves, in other days the haunt of smugglers.

Clive gazed towards the grey old cliffs, weather-beaten by the storms of centuries. They looked out on the wide ocean as they had looked a thousand years ago, when Danish pirates came in their craft up the coast; as they had looked in the days of Queen Bess, when the great Armada came, and when a gal-
teon, storm-caught and helpless, came speeding before the gale past the Point, to go to ruin on the Penwyn rocks.

Clive's mind was full of such thoughts as he stood looking out over the sea. The great fleet had not come that way, but that one fugitive vessel had been storm-driven there, and on that wild day three hundred years ago he could imagine how the fishermen of Penwyn had turned out to see the great foreign-rigged vessel come sailing round Black Point to her doom on the wave-swept rocks.

Clive's meditations were interrupted by an exclamation from Locke.

"Hallo, there's another early-riser!"

He pointed towards the cliffs. A dark figure could be seen against the grey rock—a figure that seemed familiar to Clive Lawrence. He gave a start.

"By Jove, Locke, I know who that is!"

"Seems familiar, but he's so far away," said Locke. "Who is it?"

"Franz Stossel."

"My hat, you're right!" cried Locke.

The next moment the figure had disappeared among the rocks.

(An extra long instalment next Saturday.)

Your Editor's Corner

All letters should be addressed, "The Editor, PLUCK, 2, Carmelite House, Carmelite Street, London."

"WYCLIFFE'S GHOSTS."

Wycliffe College, the centre of our next long, complete school tale, is the scene of great excitement. Mystery succeeds mystery, and the Brothers of Borden are at their wits' ends to solve the problem.

"THE GLADSDOWN GOALKEEPER."

Our second story, a detective tale, will tell of the exciting adventures of Wendell Vance and his assistant Jimmy.

NEW 3d. BOOKS.

Two more additions to the popular "Boys' Friend" 3d. Library are now on sale.

Ask your news-agent for Nos. 47 and 48. The former being entitled "Gilbert Nameless," a tale of 'prentice life in old London, by Morton Pike, and the latter, "Black England," a tale of the chain and nail industry, by Allan Blair.

NEXT SATURDAY'S COVER.

THIS SPEAKS FOR ITSELF.

"Horsham,

"Sussex.

"Dear Editor,—
We have been going to write to you for a long time to tell you how very much three girls like the "Gem Library," and how eagerly we look forward to Thursday. As Arthur Augustus D'Arcy would say, we think it is 'weally a wippin' book.' If we had a few of D'Arcy's fivahs we would buy copies and give them right and left. We are all in love with Tom Merry. D'Arcy sends us into fits of laughter. We will do all we can to make your paper known; and wishing you every success, we remain, yours truly,
"THREE NICE GIRLS."

YOUR EDITOR.



A thrilling incident in next Saturday's Grand School Tale, and a small reproduction of our next cover. Look out for it!