

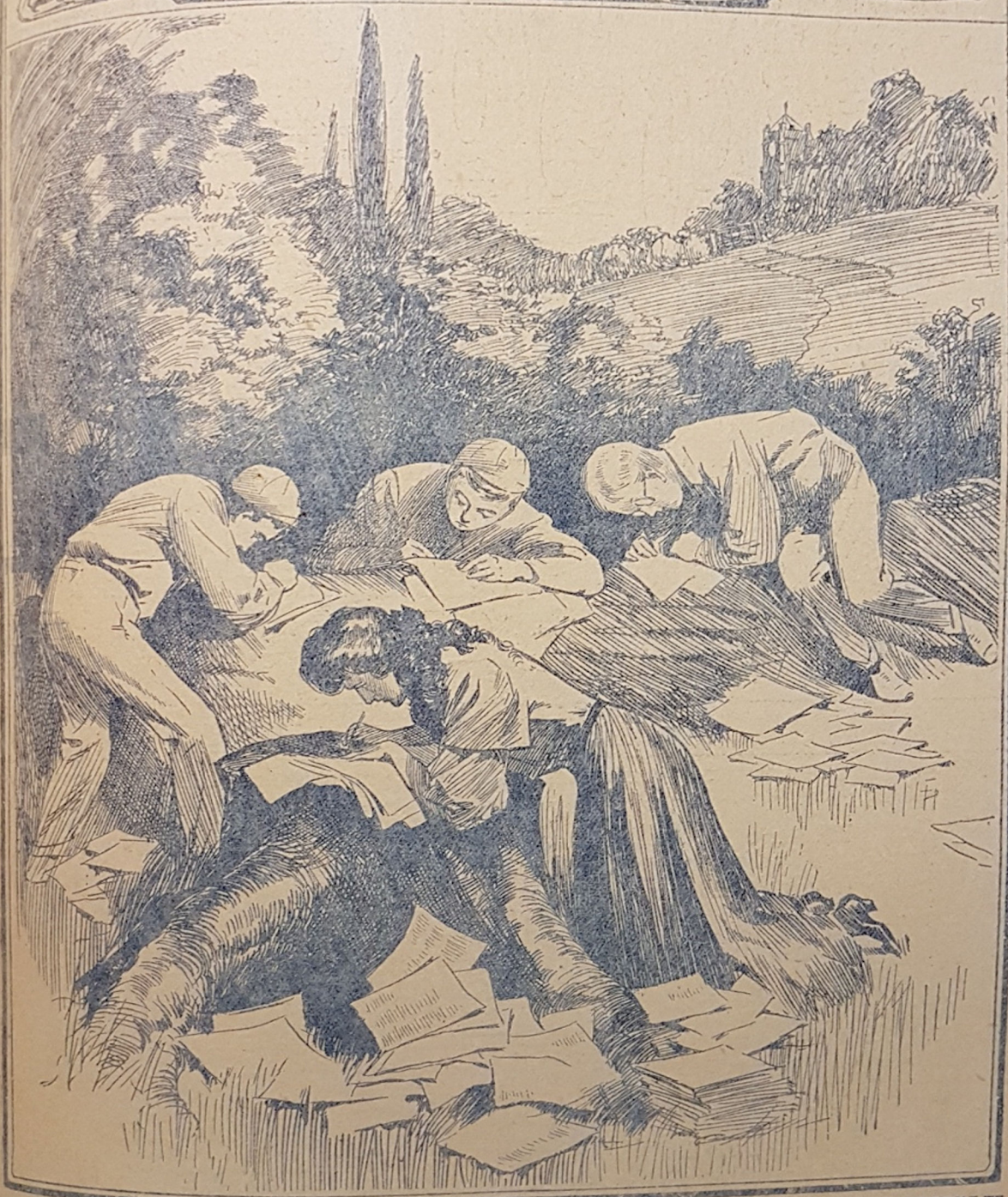
Grand Ventriloquist Story.

# PLUCK

GRAND TALE OF SCHOOL LIFE.

1<sup>d</sup>

THRILLING SEA STORY.

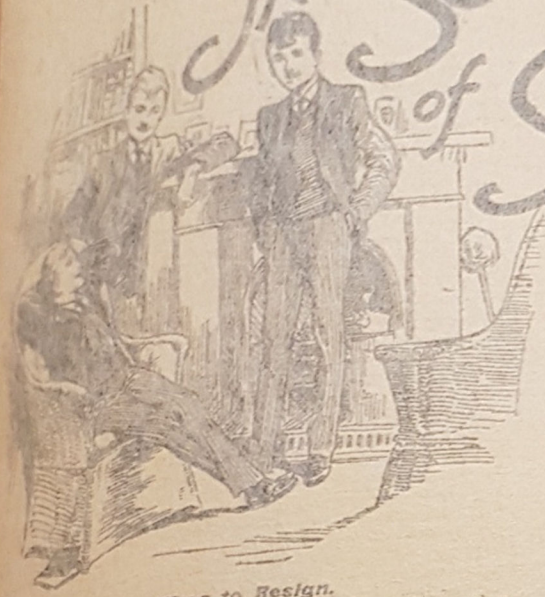


THERE WAS DEAD SILENCE WHILE THE FOUR WROTE FURIOUSLY.

NO. 185. NEW SERIES.

# The Secret of St Winifred's

A SPLENDID SCHOOL TALE  
By MARTIN CLIFFORD, Author of  
THE TALES OF TOM MERRY,  
appearing 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 Scaman, 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 overhears a plot between Napper and a German, whom he afterwards recognises as Herr Stessel, the German master at St. Winifred's. Clive returns to the school, and the next day quarrels with Fisher. The two agree to meet in a glove fight. Clive knocks Fisher out, and Pye congratulates the victor so heartily that Clive complains that his spine is injured. (Now go on with the story.)

**Pye Offers to Resign.**

"You," said Pye. "What does your spine matter at a moment like this? Why you haven't turned a hair—and Fisher's licked."

Locke was helping Fisher to his feet. The captain of the Fourth was still looking rather dazed. But for the fact that the combat had been fought with the gloves on, he would have been severely damaged. As it was, it was probably some time before he would get over the shock. The defeated champion blinked across at Clive. The new boy was resuming his upper garments with the assistance of the enthusiastic Pye.

"Feel pretty bad, Fishy?" asked Locke sympathetically.

"Of course not!" snapped Fisher.

Locke was silent.

"It was rather clumsy of me," continued Fisher, looking round, in a somewhat uncertain way; "I oughtn't to have let him get in a knock like that."

"You oughtn't, certainly!" agreed Sugden. "But, of course, you couldn't help it."

"Well, in a way, I couldn't help it—"

"Ha, ha! He'll be telling us he did it on purpose presently," chuckled Carter.

"I wasn't exactly looking for it," explained Fisher.

"Ha, ha! I thought all along that you'd get something you weren't looking for; you were so cocky about it," Sugden remarked.

"Confound you, Sugden—"

"Well, what's the good of talking?" said Sugden. "You've been knocked out, and that's all there is about it."

"Oh, shut up!" said Locke. "Let's get away from here, Pye, I—"

Clive Lawrence came over towards them. He held out his hand to Fisher, in the frankest way in the world—a way that he could have resisted.

"Give us your fist, Fishy!" he exclaimed. "Now we've got of steam by this little scrap, we shall pull together much better."

Fisher took his hand, but he was looking rather uncertain.

"That's all very well, Lawrence" he said. "You've got rather the better of this—"

"Rather the better!" exclaimed Kendal. "What do you mean, Fisher? You're licked! Lawrence has knocked you right out."

"Clean as a whistle!" said Pye.

Fisher turned red. But the interference of the Fifth Form captain was not well received by any of the juniors. Kendal had finished his duties as timekeeper, and his opinion was not wanted.

"Oh, you can dry up, Kendal!" said Sugden. "You walk off, and don't bother."

"If you want a thick ear, Sugden—"

"Rats! Shove those Fifth Form bounders out of the gym, chaps."

Matters looked threatening, and the Fifth-Formers were in a hopeless minority. Kendal linked his arm with Keene's, and walked away, with as lofty an air as he could assume under the circumstances, followed by a derisive yell from the juniors.

"What I was going to say, Lawrence, is this," said Fisher, "you've got rather the better of this; but if we're to be friends, you've got to keep your place."

"Same old wheeze!"

"And remember that I'm captain of the Form," said Fisher impressively.

"My dear chap, we needn't worry about that. What's the good of having rows among ourselves, when there's the Fifth Form to be settled with?" said Clive practically.

"Let us all stick together against the Fifth, and nothing will go far wrong. They're my sentiments, anyway."

"Hear, hear!" shouted Pye. "Who says Clive Lawrence for captain of the Fourth Form—vice myself, resigned?"

There was a laugh and a cheer. Clive Lawrence coloured.

"Shut up, Pye!" he exclaimed.

Fisher let go of the new boy's hand, and walked out of the gym, with Locke. There was a rather gloomy expression upon his face. The reception which had been given to Pye's remark showed him how the Fourth Form were already coming to regard Clive Lawrence. Fisher had been licked; but even without that, he realised that he was falling from his high estate as captain of the Fourth Form.

"Back up, old kid!" said Locke comfortingly. "It's all right."

"No, it isn't," said Fisher, somewhat tartly. "It's all wrong!"

And he said no more; but it was evident, from the expression of his face, that he was thinking a great deal, and that his thoughts were not wholly pleasant ones.

**Fisher Has Doubts.**

The fire was burning brightly in Study No. 7 in the great building of St. Winifred's.

Night had fallen upon the old school, and Locke was busy in the study which he shared with Fisher and the new boy. As yet he was alone there. Fisher had been detained by Mr. Neill, and the new boy was somewhere with Pye.

The blind was drawn, and though it did not cover the whole of the window, the effect was very cosy. The gas was lighted, and the brilliance of the incandescent burner was undeniable. That incandescent burner was Locke's idea, and he was justly proud of it. Fisher had expressed doubts. Sometimes books would fly about the study, and then, what price a fourpenny-halfpenny mantle, Fisher had said. When a common or garden burner got a knock, nobody was hurt; if the bracket got a little bit twisted, it was no great matter;

in fact, it might even be supposed to add to the ornamental effect to have a trust or two in it. But an incandescent burner that was billed was simply done in.

"Well, I'm standing the blessed thing," said Locke, in reply; "and if it busts up, we can always go back to the old burner. Nothing like starting the term in good style, anyway."

"Oh, have it your own way!" said Fisher cordially. "I thought it was coming out of the study funds, you see."

"Well, it isn't; it's my treat."

"Then have it your own way, and I hope it will last over the week, old chap," said Fisher encouragingly.

And Locke had had his own way.

As yet the burner had received no knocks worth mentioning; and the light was all—or nearly all—that could be desired.

Locke was quite proud of it, and he glanced up at the burner with great satisfaction every now and then as he moved about the study.

The fire was glowing cheerily, and the kettle was singing on the hob; and Locke took up the frying-pan, and began to rub it out with some old exercise paper.

The table was laid for tea, and on the table, in a paper, lay three fat herrings, which were to grace the meal in Study No. 7.

To flank the chef d'œuvre there were sardines, neatly turned out of their tin into a clean soap-dish; and jam, which was contained in a half of a coconut-shell, which made an effective, and really artistic dish.

A whole loaf looked quite imposing; and there were three cups and saucers, sugar in a paper, and a tin of condensed milk. It was not every study in St. Winifred's that could boast such a table, and Locke had reason for looking pleased.

He heard the school clock boom out the hour as he rubbed out the frying-pan; and he made haste to grease the inside of the utensil with margarine, and put the herrings on to cook. Locke wanted to have tea ready by the time his chum came in; and it was also his intention to ask the new boy to tea. Clive Lawrence, as an equal sharer of the study, was entitled to any little polite attention that could be bestowed, and Locke was anxious, too, to have all things of a friendly footing. There was nothing like a feed to heal ill-feeling between schoolboys, Locke knew that.

The frying herrings sent forth an appetising odour. It cooped from the study for a considerable distance, as a matter of fact, and reached to the nostrils of two Fifth-Formers who were coming along the passage.

Kendal stopped to sniff.

"Hallo! What's that?" he exclaimed.

Keene sniffed, too, in a very suspicious way. They knew perfectly well what it was, and their remarks were for the benefit of the Fourth-Formers within hearing.

"Something wrong with the drains, I should think, Kendy!"

"Sniffs like it. It's really too bad of Esmond. He might have the sanitation of the place seen to before we came back for the new term," said Kendal.

"Well, it was careless of him."

"Now I come to think of it, it's a smell like rotten fish," said Kendal; "perhaps it's not the drains, but only some of the horrid stuff these Fourth Form kids gorge themselves upon when we're not looking after them."

"Look after rats!" broke in Sugden indignantly, glaring at the two Fifth fellows from the door of his study. "I—"

"I think you must be right, Kendy," said Keene, taking no notice of the indignant Sugden; "it is certainly fishy in flavour, now you speak of it."

"Very ancient sort of fish, ain't it?"

"That's it!"

"Seems to come from Study No. 7," Keene sniffed. "I suppose it's our duty as seniors to look into it."

"Oh, yes, of course!"

"Mind your own business, asses!" shouted Sugden to the door of Study No. 7, and Kendal opened it.

The chums of the Fifth took no notice. They were in the ceremony of knocking.

Locke looked up, expecting to see Fisher or Lawrence and glared at the two Fifth fellows, as he saw who they were.

"Nothing," said Kendal. "We just looked in to see there was anything wrong with the drains. There's nothing rotten in this study."

"Yes, there is; get out!" said Locke.

This rather smart retort took Kendal somewhat aback. Keene chuckled.

The captain of the Fifth gave his chum a freezing glance. "What are you cackling about, Keene?" he asked. "You got a crick in the neck?"

"No, I haven't," said Keene, turning red.

"Then what do you mean by that idiotic cackle? It's a pain in the tummy?"

"Look here, Kendal—"

"Oh, get out," said Locke; "I can't have you boys putting here."

The Fifth-Formers glared at him.

"We've got to look into this matter," said Kendal. "You're going to gorge yourselves on that stuff in this study. It's our duty to stop you, for the good of your health."

"And confiscate the fish," said Keene.

"Yes, confiscate the fish, of course."

Locke looked alarmed.

"You'd better not touch my herrings," he exclaimed. "I'll bash you with the frying-pan if you come near, so look out!"

"Right-ho, Locke!" said a voice in the doorway, and Fisher looked in. "What have you got these animals for, kid?"

"Oh, they strayed in," said Locke. "I expect the keeper left the door of their cage open, or something of the sort."

"I'll cage you!" howled Kendal. "We're going to confiscate that fish."

"Are you?" said Fisher grimly. "Asses! Get out! I'll whistle up the Fourth, and we'll frog-march you along the passage, and roll you downstairs."

Several juniors looking in from the passage greeted the suggestion with a cheer. Kendal and Keene looked rather alarmed. They were in the enemy's country, and the odds against them were innumerable. The only thing to be done was to retreat, putting the best face possible on the matter.

"Oh, that's all right!" said Kendal. "We were only joking, of course. As a matter of fact, we wouldn't touch that shrieking fish with a poker."

"Or with a barge-pole," said Keene.

"Not much! We—"

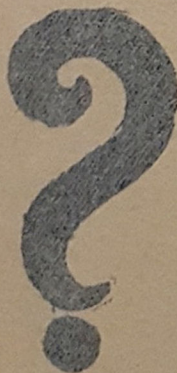
"Oh, get out!"

"We'll go when we like," said Kendal defiantly.

"Then you'd better like at once, unless you want to go on your necks," said Fisher threateningly.

"Oh, come along, Keene! Upon the whole, it's been our dignity to argue with these kids," said Kendal left.

"That's true enough, Kendy."



Please turn to

"Your Editor's Corner."

NEXT SATURDAY:

"MERRY MINOR'S CHUM,"  
A Splendid Long, Complete School Tale,  
By Jack North.

AND

"A RANCH IN THE 'BAD' LANDS," IN "PLUCK,"  
A Thrilling, Complete Story of Adventure,  
By the Author of "A Way in the Rockies."

the chum of the Fifth walked out of the study. The other members in the passage let them pass, but they looked at them with a derisive hoot and hiss.

Keene and Keene walked on in affected unconsciousness, but they could hardly pretend not to hear when Sugden pronounced the night he came to St. Winifred's, and the members of the Fourth Form joined in it with all the force of their

There are two kids called Kendal and Keene, they're the funniest freaks I have seen; they'll make it so warm for these freaks and their Form, that they'll soon knuckle under, I ween!"

The limerick, more or less altered, had been howled at a hundred times since its composition. It followed with a deep chant as they walked away now with pink lips and flushed cheeks as he closed the door of the study.

Fisher laughed as he remarked. "Those boys I came along, Locke," he remarked. "Those boys will rip you."

"I think they're done nicely, Fishy," said the gratified Locke. "This one got a little bit scorched while I was talking to those rotters, but I'll have that myself."

"I see you've got three," said Locke, rather hastily. "One's for the new kid," said Locke, rather jolly well, Locke, "you seem to be getting on with him jolly well, Locke, you don't make a mistake."

"Well, he's in our study," said Locke apologetically. "I don't believe in jumping on a fellow. He doesn't mean to harm you know."

"I don't care what he means, so long as he keeps his mouth shut. I'm not going to have him set up as cock of the walk because he happened to get the better—slightly the better—of that little tussle in the gym."

"I shouldn't back him up in taking your place, Fishy, unless you wanted him to."

"I'm not likely to want him to, I suppose?"

"No," said Locke, "I suppose not."

Fisher looked at him quickly. "I don't quite catch on, Locke. There's not much supposition about it, I suppose. If you suppose that I suppose—"

"It's all right, Fishy. Make the teapot hot, there's a good chap. The water's on the boil," said Locke.

Fisher took up the teapot with a very thoughtful expression upon his face. He opened his lips several times to speak, and closed them again. His chum glanced at him curiously.

"Got anything on your mind, Fishy?" he asked.

"Not exactly," said Fisher.

He made the tea, and set it near the fire to draw. He closed up the biscuit-tin that served Study No. 7 for a teacaddy, and put it thoughtfully on the mantelpiece.

"I say, Locke!" he said suddenly.

"Yes, what is it? I wish Lawrence would come. The herrings oughtn't to be allowed to get cold," said the captain chief rather anxiously.

"Mum won't be allowed to get cold," said Fisher warmly. "I'm not going to wait for my tea for anybody in the Fourth Form at St. Winifred's."

"Oh, all right, Fishy! But what were you going to say?"

"Oh, about that new kid, Lawrence. Do you know a lot of the fellows are saying he would make a better leader for the Fourth Form than I should?"

Locke looked at him rather dubiously. He had not exactly expected Fisher to take this line, yet he realised that Fisher was in point of fact only anticipating the inevitable. Clive Lawrence seemed destined to become Form captain or not. Many of the fellows in the Fourth Form were already discussing the possibility.

"Well, what do you think?" said Fisher abruptly. "I don't like the idea of holding on to my position by the skin clear out and make room for a new captain."

"Well, that wouldn't be a pleasant position, of course," agreed Locke. "But—"

"Suppose I resign?" said Fisher. "I wouldn't mind. Then we could settle the question by a new election in the Fourth Form-room—"

Locke brightened up. "Well, that's not a bad idea, Fishy. The Form could settle it then the way it liked best, and you or Lawrence could have the captaincy as the Form voted."

"It would be more satisfactory in many ways," said Fisher, with a nod. "After all, Clive Lawrence has kept his end up very well against the Fifth, and Kendal and Keene have been made to sing smaller since he came here than we've ever heard them sing before. And he doesn't knuckle under even to Courtney and Carne. He's got pluck."

"That he has!" said Locke heartily. "Let's have an election in the Fourth Form, then, and settle the question that way. And now—"

The opening of the study door interrupted Locke. Clive Lawrence came in, with a healthy glow and a cheerful smile upon his face, and sniffed appreciatively the scent of the herrings.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "I like that. I say, I'm as hungry as a hunter!"

"Tea's ready," said Locke.

"Well, that's good news."

The herrings were speedily dished up, and Fisher poured out the tea. The fragrant smell of tea and herrings filled the study. And the three juniors sat down to tea with very amiable faces. There was nothing like a good feed to promote good-feeling, and all three faces were very cordial and friendly.

Clive Refuses.

"Fag!"

The call echoed along the passages, and there was a distinct sound of scuffling feet in more than one place. It was Courtney of the Sixth who was calling, and all the fags within the sound of his voice hastened promptly to place themselves beyond it.

But in Study No. 7 the call was not even heard. Clive Lawrence, Locke, and Fisher were discussing the herrings with the keen appetites of healthy juniors, and thinking of anything but Courtney and fagging.

"This is ripping!" Clive remarked, as he finished his herring. "I say, Locke, old fellow, you do know how to cook."

"Well, I can cook herrings," said Locke modestly.

"You can, rather! That makes a fellow feel more comfy. Anything more in the pot, Fishy?"

"I'll shove some more water in."

"Good! Weak tea is better than strong tea any day, for an athlete, anyway," said Clive cheerfully. "I think we shall have some ripping times in this study."

"I don't see why we shouldn't," agreed Fisher. "if—"

He broke off, colouring a little. He was going to say, if the new boy at St. Winifred's kept his place; but after what happened in the gym, he felt that the remark was better unuttered. But Clive Lawrence understood.

"If I keep my place," he said, with a laugh. "Now, I don't want any misunderstanding on that point, Fisher. I came here finding you the captain of the Fourth Form, and the leader against those bounders in the Fifth. We've had a row, and hammered one another. That's all right. I'm not the chap to want any other fellow's place. I'm not going to try to take the Form captaincy away from you. You're skipper, and I back you up."

Fisher's eyes glistened. "Well, that's jolly decent!" said Locke. "What do you say now, Fishy?"

Well, let 'em think it, and be blowed!"

"Well, it's decent," said Fisher. "All the same, I keep to what I said to you, Locke."

Clive looked at him questioningly.

"May I know what that is?"

"Certainly. I'm going to resign."

"Resign!" exclaimed Clive Lawrence.

Yes, but you think it, too!"

"I" said Locke, rather taken aback by this direct accusation.

"Yes, you," said Fisher.

"Oh, I don't see that I've given you any reason to say that, Fishy," said Locke, rather red in the face. "I'm sure I haven't said anything to that effect, and you know I'm willing to back you up as captain of the Form through thick and thin."

"Yes, but—but it's not only that the fellows are beginning to look up to Lawrence; it's—you see—"

"Well, I'm beginning to have doubts myself," confessed Fisher. "I know I ain't first-class as a Form-captain—"

"Oh, you're all right, Fisher! I always said you were all right."

"But there's room for improvement, all the same," said Fisher. "As a matter of fact, I've been thinking things over, and I have my doubts."

AND

Next Saturday: "MERRY MINOR'S CHUM." A splendid Long, Complete School Tale, by Jack North.

"A RANCH IN THE 'BAD' LANDS." IN "PLUCK," 1<sup>st</sup>! A Thrilling, Complete Story of Adventure, by the Author of "Awar in the Rockies."

"Yes, and have a fresh election. Some of the fellows think you would make a good Form captain. I want to take it settled and done with."

"But I don't want—"  
"You wouldn't refuse the position, I suppose, if the fellows elected you?"

"Well, no, I couldn't vary well, could I?"  
"And I shouldn't want you to. Anyway, it's just as well to have the question settled fresh at the beginning of a new term. It stops all cavilling on the subject."

"There's something in that," said Locke.  
"Well, I agree to that," said Clive, after a pause. "If the Form elected me, I should not refuse, but I shouldn't like you to get the idea into your head that I was trying to chisel you out of it, you know."

"That's all right. If the Form elect me, I shall expect you to back me up, and keep your place. If you're elected, I'll do the same for you."

"That's a bargain."  
The door of the study opened, and Carker of the Fourth put his head in. The three juniors looked at him.

"Hallo! What do you want?"  
"Nothing. I thought Lawrence was here."

"Well, here I am," said Clive, setting down his tencup.  
"What's wanted?"  
"You are."

"How's that?"  
"Who wants me?"  
"You're Courtney's fag, aren't you?" said Carker.

"I suppose so."  
"Well, he's standing at his study door calling 'Fag' at the top of his voice, and getting into a fearful temper," said Carker. "Thought I'd look in and tell you."

"Thank you!" said Clive dubiously.

Carker withdrew, and closed the door. Clive Lawrence looked at his two friends.

"Am I bound to go?" he asked.

Fisher gave a whistle.

"By Jove, I should say so! That's the way the seniors summon their fags here. You're Courtney's fag, and you have to go when he wants you."

"It's rather rough, taking up a chap's time like this."

Fisher and Locke laughed.

"You'd find it rougher if you bucked against it, my pippin!" said Fisher. "Shove the rest of that tart into your mouth, and buzz along as quick as you can!"

"Well, I've finished my tea. But I don't like it. Still, if you tell me it's the rule, I suppose it's no worse for me than for others."

"Just so. Buzz off!"

(An extra long installment next Saturday.)

# Your Editors' Corner

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

"MERRY MINOR'S CHUM" is the title of our next long, complete SCHOOL TALE.

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How would you like a tale of Spec, the Ventriquist?

# PLUCK

NEXT WEEK'S COVER! 1<sup>d</sup> ORDER IN ADVANCE!



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