

PLUCK

Specs' Disguise.

By H. CLARKE HOOK.

The Lost Clue.

A Tale of CAPTAIN FRANK FERRETT, Detective.

1^d



"ARE WE READY? GO!" CRIED FUCHSIA. AND BEFORE LAWRENCE KNEW WHERE HE WAS, THE PRETTY GIRL GENTLY BUT FIRMLY KNOCKED HIM DOWN.

NEW SCHOOL TALE.

YOU CAN START NOW.



THE RIVALS OF ST KIT'S

By Charles Hamilton

BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

This story opens at a football match at St. Kit's. The captaincy for the season of the first team practically rests between Eldred Lacy and Arthur Talbot, the respective captains of the two teams. Talbot wins the match.

Pat Nugent, an Irish and a new boy, arrives at the school just after the match. He is at once "collared" by the juniors, who try to exact a promise from him that he'll vote for Arthur Talbot as captain. He won't promise, so they bind him up and shut him in a cupboard in Lacy's study.

He goes to sleep, and on waking up, he hears voices—the voices of Eldred Lacy and his brother, Rupert Lacy, the squire of Lynwood. "You must ruin and disgrace Arthur Talbot, and drive him from the school. He is a menace to me—to both of us. But, ruined, disgraced, driven forth into poverty and obscurity, I shall no longer fear him!" Pat is released from the cupboard, and after the election, which is decided in favour of Talbot, becomes great chums with Blagden and Greene. The three plot together that Lacy shall receive the contents of a pail of whitewash intended for themselves by Trimble and Cobb. There is also great trouble over the sharing of a study; but Pat solves the difficulty by ousting a boy named Clove. Now go on with the tale:

A Ghostly Figure.

"I shouldn't wonder. Trimble will find it exciting, too, if Lacy gets on his track," said Pat serenely. "The only question is, how to work the wheeze."

Blagden and Greene looked at one another. They were generally up to some mischief themselves, but the new boy rather took their breath away. But they were not the kind to hang back. As Pat said, they had old scores to settle with both Trimble and the prefect, and the opportunity was too good to be lost.

"You see, the passage is so dark," said Pat, "those bouncers up there can't possibly see who passes underneath, and they can't know Lacy's here, or they wouldn't dare to be up to that game at all. Lacy isn't given to taking baths this time of the evening, but from his look when I saw him, I fancy he's had a spill on his bike, and gone down in a puddle or a ditch. Now we've got to fetch him out to be whitewashed, before they get tired of waiting."

"How are you going to do it?"
"Easy enough. Turn the light out."
The gas was extinguished. Then Pat stole out silently, and stopped at the door of the room where Lacy was. The splashing had ceased, and the prefect was dressing himself.

Pat knocked at the door.
"Who's there?"
The junior did not reply, but continued to knock. Twice again Lacy's exasperated voice was heard inquiring what was wanted, and no reply was vouchsafed. Then the prefect tore open the door in a state of fury. But Pat had nipped back to where his comrades were waiting, in the dark bathroom, and the prefect glared forth and saw nobody.

He retired and shut the door again. The next minute Pat was rapping on it.

Again Lacy wrenched it open. It had dawned upon him now that somebody was making game of him, and he was breathing vengeance. But Pat had promptly disappeared.

Lacy finished dressing with the door open. The expression upon his face boded ill for the joker when Lacy discovered him. He turned out the light and left the bathroom, and went along the dusky passage.

The three juniors hugged themselves with joyful expectation.

Lacy was stamping along in a bad temper, really as if he wished to warn the ambush that somebody was coming.

Trimble and Cobb had been growing impatient. Cobb had proposed more than once to give it up as a bad job, but Trimble was obstinate. So they waited; and as they heard the footsteps coming along the dark passage below, Trimble nudged his companion.

"Look out! He'll be just under in a sec."
"Right-ho," whispered Cobb.

They waited breathlessly. Right underneath sounded the footsteps, and over tilted the bucket. There was a wish as the contents swooped down upon the hapless prefect.

Lacy gave a terrific yell. For the moment he did not know what had happened; he only knew that he was slopped from head to foot in some horrible sticky, clammy mess.

His yell rang far and wide, and Trimble and Cobb gasped with terror, and the bucket fell from their hands and clattered on the landing at their feet.

"Lacy!" muttered Trimble.
"Holy smoke!" gasped Cobb faintly. "Cut it! He'll half murder us for this."

Trimble was already running, as if for his life. Cobb followed fast, and they vanished down the back stairs.

Lacy staggered against the wall, gasping. He was simply smothered and soaked, and beside himself with rage. His yell brought a dozen people to the spot, and someone lighted the gas.

"Scissors!" gasped Brooke major. "Who is it? What is it?"

"It's Lacy, I believe," said Haywood. "It looks like a ghost, and it smells like whitewash; but I believe it's Lacy."

"Somebody has slopped this whitewash over me!" yelled Lacy. "I'll break his neck when I find him! I know who it was, too!"

"Who was it?" asked Talbot, who had just arrived on the scene. The captain of St. Kit's tried hard not to grin. Lacy's appearance was comical, and everyone was laughing.

"Who was it, Lacy? This is a bit more than a joke."
"It was that young bound, Nugent."

"Nugent! Did you see him?"
"No; but I know it was he."
"I don't see how you could know it if you didn't see him. The stuff must have been chucked from the upper landing, and—why, here's Nugent."

Pat and his companions had quietly joined the crowd unnoticed. They were looking as innocent as lambs.

"Did you want me, Talbot?" asked Pat.
"Yes; Lacy thinks you threw this stuff over him."

"I know he did!" hooted Lacy.
"I didn't," said Pat.
"Have you been on the upper landing?"
"Certainly not."

"He's telling lies!" snarled Lacy.
"Rot!" broke in Brooke. "If he had been on the upper landing, he couldn't have come down without our seeing him, and if he had gone the back way, he couldn't have got here by now. It wasn't Nugent."

This was unanswerable, and even Lacy had to admit it.

"Well, I'll find out who it was," he snarled, "and I'll half kill him! Some of you go and look up there."

The upper landing was searched. The overturned bucket was found, but no trace of the culprits. Trimble and Cobb had made good their escape.

"It's no good," said Brooke. "The fellow's gone, who"

NEXT SATURDAY:

"MUTINY AT ST. JIM'S."
A Tale of Jack Blake, Piggins & Co.,
By Charles Hamilton.

AND

"STO EN GOLD,"
A Tale of Adventure,
By H. Clarke Hook.

IN "PLUCK," 1^d.

ever he was. It's hard cheese, Lacy. But it's no good going for a chap who had nothing to do with it."

Lacy snarled, and went back to the bath-room. He wanted cleaning badly. Pat and his chums hurried to their study, and there, safe within closed doors, they gave full rein to their mirth, and laughed till their ribs ached.

The Silver Box.

"I confess I am interested in the lad," said Squire Lacy, looking at the doctor through the blue haze from his cigar. "I should like to know more of him."

The squire of Lynwood had dined with the Head of St. Kit's, and now they were chatting over their cigars. The squire had skillfully brought the conversation round to the subject of the captain of the school.

It was a topic not at all distasteful to the doctor. He was proud of his protege, and gratified by his success in winning the captaincy.

"You will remember," continued the squire, "that I thought I knew him, the other day, at the football match, but that was hardly possible. I think I must have known his father, for certainly his features are very familiar to me."

"It is quite possible," assented the doctor, looking interested. "There can be no harm in telling you the facts, if you care to hear them. If your supposition is correct, it may even be of use to Arthur Talbot."

"I should be very glad to hear the story."

"There is very little of it," smiled the doctor. "I am greatly in the dark myself. Talbot was placed in my charge by a friend now dead. When I say a friend, I mean a man who had once been my friend, as a matter of fact. He belonged to my college, but I had lost sight of him for years, and he had gone to the bad, to tell the truth. I still had a kindly remembrance of him, though, for he was rather weak than wicked, and I pitied him. I did not hesitate for a moment to accede to his request."

"And you took the boy, knowing nothing of the facts?" asked the squire in wonder.

Dr. Kent nodded. "Yes, as Norroys refused to explain, or else did not know them himself. He was very mysterious about it; and although he gave me a name for the boy, he as good as admitted that it was not his true one."

"That was very strange."

"Decidedly! He said—so earnestly that I could not fail to believe him—that the boy's life was in peril if he were found by certain parties, and that he would fall a victim to their hatred unless his existence was kept a dead secret. This seemed to me like romancing; but he was in such deadly earnest, as I have said, that I believed him. I took charge of the boy, and he has grown up in my care as Arthur Talbot, and—well, he has repaid me for the trouble I have taken."

And the expression of the good old doctor's face grew very soft.

"That must be a cause of great satisfaction to you," the squire remarked. "Then I take it that Talbot's real name and parentage will never be known?"

Dr. Kent smiled. "No, that is not correct."

"You possess a clue to them, then?"

"Talbot does. Norroys gave me, at the same time, a silver box which, according to his account, contained the papers necessary to establish the boy's identity when he should be old enough to take care of his own safety."

The squire's eyes gleamed strangely. "But have you not examined the contents of the box, my dear sir?"

"That was impossible, as he exacted a pledge from me that it should not be opened till the boy was twenty-one. Then he would be able to claim his own, and hold it."

"And it has never been opened?"

"Never!"

"Then you have only the word of this Norroys that it contains the papers described?"

"Yes; but I have not the slightest doubt that he told me the truth. When Arthur is twenty-one the secret will be revealed. Until then he is my son."

"Naturally, he is anxious to learn what the mysterious box contains?"

"Yes; but he is quite content to wait."

"It is possible that some property is involved in the matter," suggested the squire. "The opening of this box may prove your protege to be a rich man."

Dr. Kent laughed.

"I have little expectation of that. Of course, it is possible; but I don't think Talbot allows such visionary possibilities to disturb him. He is working hard to prepare to make his own way in the world, and he thinks a good deal

more of his chances of winning the Dunraven Scholarship than of the possibilities of the silver box."

"Yes, I suppose so. That is a sensible view to take of the matter," the squire assented. "I suppose that the box is lodged, for security, in a bank?"

"Oh, no! No one is likely to attempt to steal it," smiled the doctor. "I gave it into Talbot's possession when he was sixteen, and he has taken care of it ever since."

"But the enemies of whom Norroys spoke—"

"They have made no sign all these years, so, if they still live, it is clear that they have not the faintest knowledge of the boy's whereabouts."

"Yes, that is clear. Talbot and the box will be quite safe until the time comes for the secret to be revealed."

"Undoubtedly!"

The squire lighted a fresh cigar. His face was carefree enough, but his eyes were gleaming.

"But does anything I have told you give you a clue?" asked the doctor.

Rupert Lacy shook his head. "No. I suppose it is, after all, only a chance resemblance that struck me," he replied.

The doctor looked at him with a sudden intentness.

"I think I can explain it," he said, smiling.

"How so?"

"It is strange that it did not occur to me before," went on the doctor. "Arthur Talbot bears a resemblance to yourself. Mr. Lacy."

Rupert Lacy gave a violent start.

"To me?"

"Certainly! Now that I remark it, it is quite plain. He is more like you in feature than your brother Eldred."

"That is very curious," said the squire, with a peculiar note in his voice. "I should certainly never have hit on that myself."

"A curious coincidence, that is all. Of course, there can be no relationship."

"No," said the squire, laughing. "That is not likely."

After that the conversation turned from Arthur Talbot; but while the Squire of Lynwood chatted easily and freely, the thought of Talbot was still in his mind. And when he left the doctor, to take his homeward way to Lynwood, his brow was dark with gloomy thought.

"So I was not mistaken," he said to himself. "My first suspicion was correct, and matters are even worse than I supposed. This, then, is the meaning of that half-uttered confession, that confidence unfinished when death sealed my father's lips. This makes all clear. I knew it—I felt it when first I saw the boy!"

He set his lips hard. A picture had risen up in his mind—a vision from the past. A picture of a man fallen in the hunting-field of a face ghastly with the imprint of swift-coming death, of a broken, muttering voice, a half-spoken confession of wrong and treachery. And that dying man was his father, the last Squire of Lynwood!

What the stumbling, unfinished mutterings of remorse had implied, Rupert Lacy had not fully understood at the time; but he understood now—now that he had heard the story of Arthur Talbot. It rested with him to right the wrong of the past. His lip curled bitterly at the thought. It was not likely.

"I must have the silver box!" he muttered. "That is where Eldred can help me—and shall help me! When that is in my hands, Talbot will never know the truth, and I shall be secure!"

Pat is Persuasive.

"Comfy, isn't it?" said Pat Nugent, glancing round the study with an eye of pride.

Pat had quite settled down in his new quarters. He had brought his books and other belongings there, and had just finished arranging them. He had laid out a considerable portion of pocket-money in adding to the embellishment of the study. A new square of carpet, containing all the colours of the rainbow, a looking-glass, and a clock gave quite a home-like finish to the room. It was, as Pat said, comfy.

"Jolly comfy," said Blagden, "only—"

"Only what?"

"Suppose you ain't allowed to dig here with us? It's much nicer for Greene and me to have you here instead of that bouncer Cleeve. But—"

"Well, having kicked out Cleeve, sure I'm entitled to his place by right of conquest," said Pat, laughing.

"Only if he brings the Form-master into it, you'll have to shift. And Trimble will very likely put him up to it, out of spite now you've licked him."

"Faith, we shall have to see about that," exclaimed Pat.

"I'm here, and I've come to stay. Cleeve can go into No. 9 along with Hooper and Jones, and they'd rather have him than me, after our little skirmish. We must persuade the bounders not to—"

Hallo, Greene!"

Greene came hastily into the study.

"Hallo! You've made this look nice," he said, looking round. "It's comfy, and no mistake. But I'm afraid it's no go, Nugent."

"Why not?"

"Trimble's got Cleeve in his study, and he and Cobb are persuading him to go to the Form-master and complain about being turned out of his study."

Blagden nodded glumly.

"I told you so, Paddy," he remarked.

"Then there's no time to lose," said Pat. "I dare say we can do something in the persuading line ourselves. Come along!"

"Where are you going?"

"To call on Trimble."

And Pat hurried out of the study. Blagden and Greene exchanged glances, and followed him. They did not know what his intentions were, but they were already getting accustomed to following Pat Nugent's lead.

Trimble's door was half open, and as Pat approached it he could hear Cleeve's voice inside, and the threatening tones of the bully of the Upper Fourth.

"But I don't want to stay in the end study, Trimble. I shall be all right along with Hooper and Jones."

"No, you won't. I'm not going to have you turned out of your quarters, Cleeve."

"But I don't mind; I really don't mind in the least."

"Well, if you don't, I do. You're going to Mr. Slaney to complain. Do you hear?"

"But I—I don't want to."

"That's got nothing to do with it. It's that, or take a licking."

"But Nugent may go for me if I do, and—"

"Well, I shall go for you if you don't, and so will Cobb. Here, Cobb, we'd better give him a lesson. Hold him while I touch him up."

"Oh, don't, Trimble! I'll—"

Pat kicked open the door and strode into the study.

Trimble and Cobb glared at him.

"What do you want here?" snarled the former. "What do you mean by shoving yourself into my quarters? Get out!"

"All in good time," smiled Pat. "Come in chaps."

Blagden and Greene entered the room, and Pat closed the door.

Trimble and Cobb looked rather alarmed.

"What are you up to?" growled Trimble. "You'd better clear out."

"I hear that you're doing some persuading here," exclaimed Pat. "We've come to lend a hand. We're great at persuading."

(To be continued.)

Your Editor's Corner.

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

"MUTINY AT ST. JIM'S."

Charles Hamilton is contributing the first long, complete story to our next issue of PLUCK, dealing with the adventures of Jack Blake, Augustus, and Figgins & Co. Needless to say, the tale's a good one. The same remark also applies to our second story a tale of adventure, by H. Clarke Hook, entitled

"STOLEN GOLD."

Please do not fail to order your copies in advance.

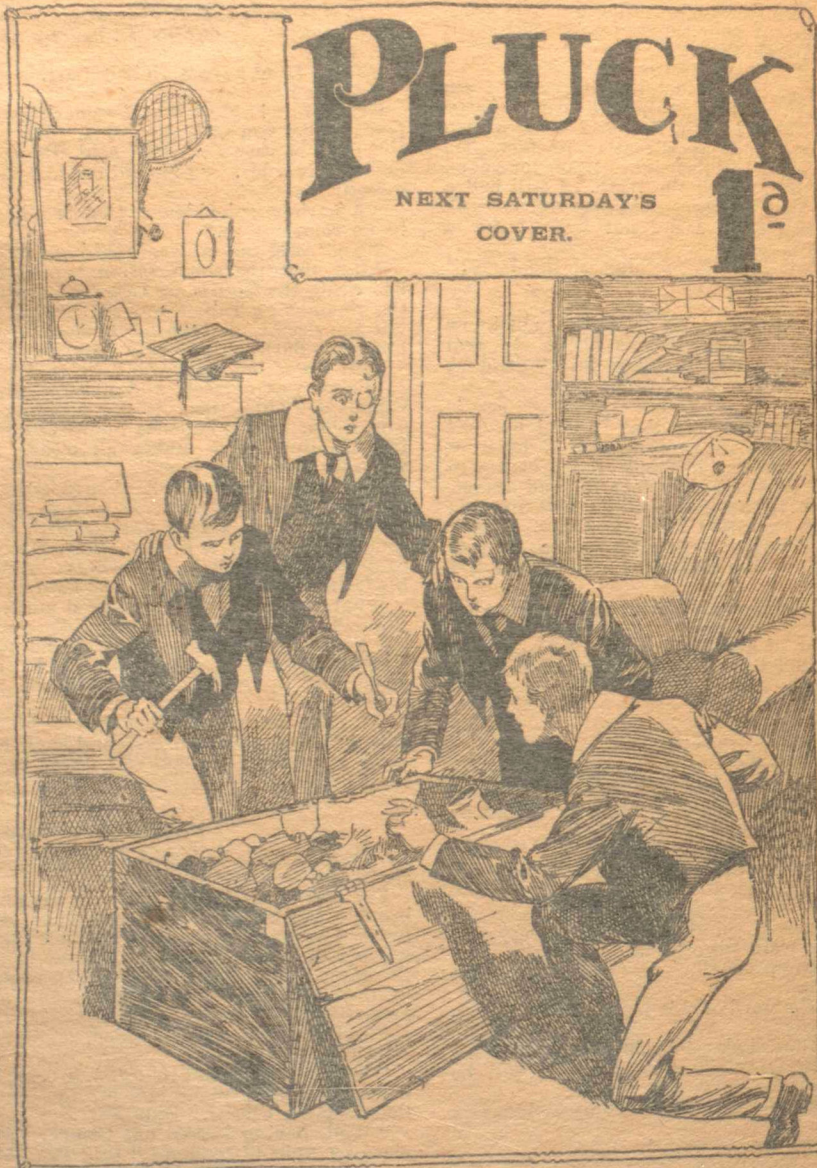
"THE BOYS' FRIEND" THREEPENNY LIBRARY.

I want this week especially to draw the attention of my friends to the fact that yet another two issues of "The Boys' Friend" Threepenny Library are now on sale. These are Nos. 11 and 12. No. 11 is a magnificent story, entitled "The Pride of the School," by popular Henry St. John. It is one of the best school stories ever written, and I am certain will receive a very strong welcome at the hands of all my friends. No. 12 is entitled "Guy Prescott's Trust." I think this story is going to be as popular as any which has so far been published.

I would like especially to emphasize to my friends the importance of getting these complete books. They are, as they must well be, a ware, marvellous value for the money; for in them they get long, complete stories of a greater number of pages, and containing more words, better written, at a price which used to be charged in the old days for much inferior work and much shorter stories.

No boy need be ashamed of being seen with these volumes in his hand. There is nothing in them to offend the most susceptible or the most particular parent; and, therefore, I have every confidence in recommending this Library to my supporters. The last two numbers—11 and 12—are now on sale, and can be obtained from any bookseller.

YOUR EDITOR.



PLEASE ORDER "PLUCK" IN ADVANCE!

This picture depicts an incident from "Mutiny at St. Jim's," by Chas. Hamilton, one of the two complete tales for next Saturday's PLUCK. 32 pages. Price 1d.