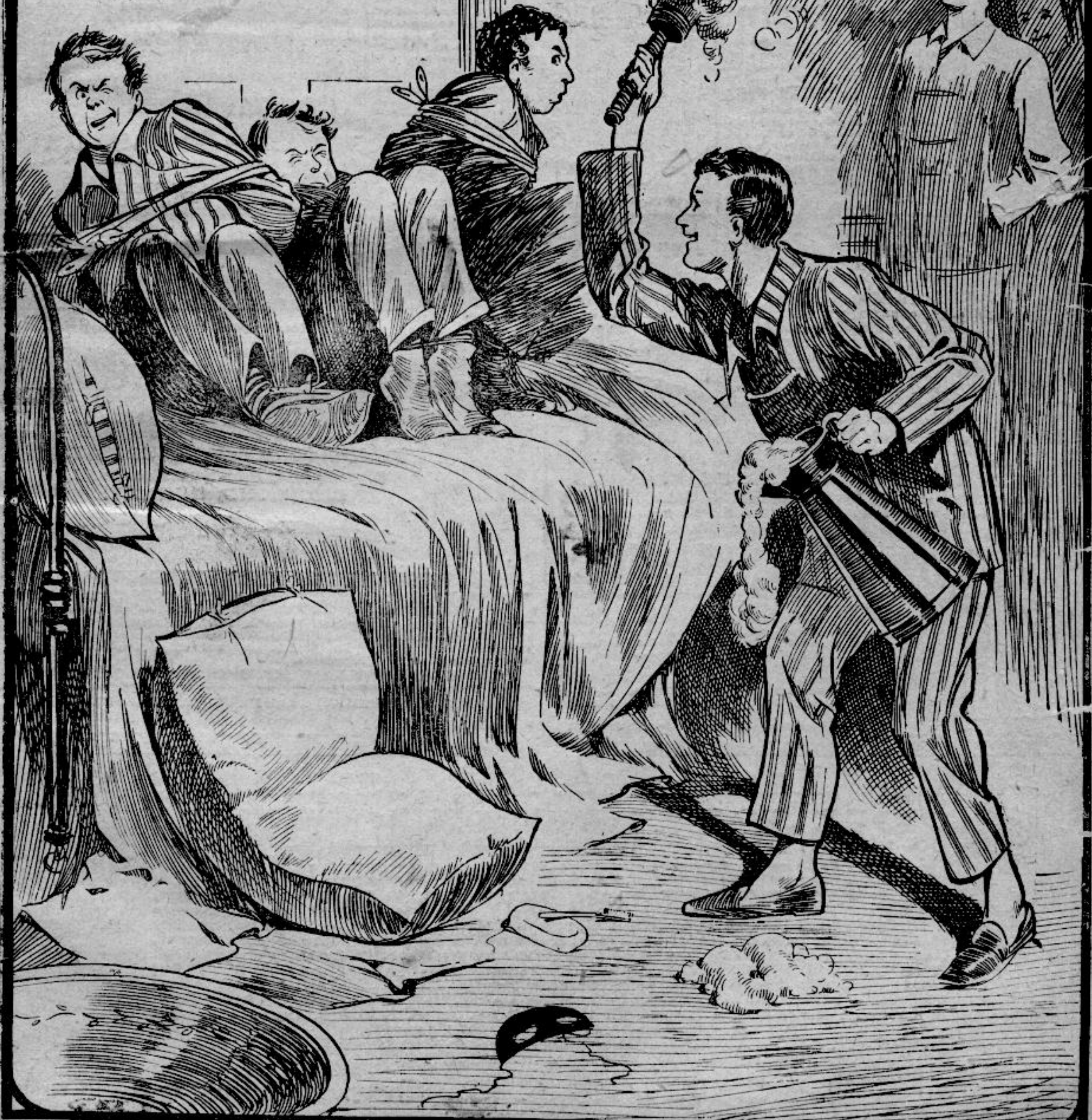


School and Adventure Stories in this Issue

PLUCK

DEC. '93
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THE RIVALRY OF ST KIT'S



BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE FIRST CHAPTERS.

When Pat Nugent arrives at St. Kit's, an election is taking place for the captaincy of the school between Arthur Talbot and Eldred Lacy. Talbot gains the victory, but afterwards resigns his position on account of a mean plot instigated by Eldred Lacy and his brother, who is Squire of Lynwood. Soon after the election for the position of captain, which Talbot has vacated, draws near, and Talbot's chum Brooke, who opposes Lacy, is elected captain of St. Kit's. One morning the Head discovers he has been robbed of £80. He calls a meeting in the hall, and Arthur Talbot is openly accused of the theft. His study is searched, and the notes are found hidden beneath the carpet; but Arthur declares he is innocent. He is sent to Coventry by the whole school except Nugent, Blagden, and Green, three chums, who believe in his innocence, and who are determined to stand by him. They form themselves into a committee of investigation and put the whole school to Coventry. One night the chums overhear Eldred Lacy and Seth Black, a tramp who poses as Arthur's father, talking. Lacy tells Black that he knows that Arthur Talbot has decided to run away from the school. "He is not going!" cried Seth Black angrily. "If he was gone I shouldn't have your brother, the squire, in my grip any longer!" "How so? You —" "Never mind how it is! It's my affair and the squire's. You keep Talbot at the school as I tell you! Good-night!"

(Now go on with the story.)

The Committee Catch It!

Lacy went slowly towards the door. Pat Nugent realised that he had been quite long enough at

Blagden gave a grunt of relief.

He slid down into a sitting position, and Greene did the same on his shoulders, and Pat was able to jump lightly to the ground. Then Greene landed on his feet.

"Cover!" whispered Pat. "No time to scoot!"

They darted into the shadow of an outhouse. Not a moment too soon!

The door by which Eldred Lacy had entered reopened, and the prefect came out. Without a glance about him, he crossed to the gate, and went out of the inn garden, and turned into the village street.

He set off at a rapid pace, but he did not go in the direction of the school. His destination was Lynwood, the home of his brother, the squire.

And after him, like bloodhounds on the trail, went the committee of investigation!

"Eldred, what are you doing here at this time of night?"

It was Squire Lacy of Lynwood who uttered the words.

Eldred Lacy started. He had almost reached Lynwood, when the tall figure of the squire loomed up in his path, and Rupert Lacy stopped him with the sudden question.

"I should have imagined locking-up time at the school was long before this," said Rupert Lacy, looking at his brother keenly. "Were you coming to Lynwood?"

"Yes."

"To see me?" asked the squire.

"Of course! It is lucky I met you here, or I should have missed you, and then all the fat would have been in the fire," said Eldred Lacy.

"What has happened?"

"That's what I was coming to tell you, and I don't know what's to be done. Perhaps you can find a way out of the difficulty; I can't."

"Sit down here, and tell me all about it."

The squire threw himself down upon the grassy bank beside the lane, close to the gates of Lynwood. The prefect sat down by his side.

"Now, what has happened since this morning?" asked the squire.

"I have seen Seth Black."

"What of that? Stay a moment. Were you alone just now?"

"Yes," said Lacy, in surprise, "I should hardly bring a companion at such a time."

"I thought I saw something. Imagination, I suppose. Go on."

"You're not looking well, Rupert," said the prefect, with a glance at his brother's face, upon which a gleam of starlight fell. The face of the squire showed up strangely white, almost haggard. "Is anything the matter with you?"

"What should be the matter?" said the squire harshly. "Go on!"

The prefect obeyed.

"I have seen Seth Black. He has somehow learned all that has happened at the school——"

"I told you to tell him nothing."

"I have told him nothing; but he has learned. I dare say he has seen Talbot. And now he has taken a hand in the game in a way I never expected. To be brief, he says that Talbot must be cleared, and allowed to stay at St. Kit's."

The squire gave a hard, mirthless laugh.

"He does not ask much, truly!"

"He threatens that if his demand is not complied with, he will explain enough to the Head to make him sure that Talbot is innocent."

"Oh! He says that, does he?"

"Yes. Unless he is assured in the morning that Talbot is to remain at St. Kit's, he is going up to the school to see the doctor."

Squire Lacy's eyes glittered strangely.

"He will not go up to the school in the morning," he said.

"He swears——"

"Never mind that. You can rely upon my word. He will not carry out his threat, and you have nothing to fear from him," said Squire Lacy, in a low, even voice.

Eldred Lacy looked relieved, but puzzled.

"Are you sure of that?" he asked. "He seems to me to be very obstinate, and he says plainly that it isn't a case of money. When he sees you to-night——"

The squire gave a start.

"Did he tell you he was going to see me to-night?"

"Yes; at ten o'clock."

"You will be careful to mention that to no one, Eldred."

"Of course; but——"

"It is very important. More important than I can possibly explain to you. No one must know that I have any appointment with Seth Black for to-night."

There was something in Rupert Lacy's tone that made his brother shiver with a sense of foreboding. He stole another look at the squire's colourless face.

"I will be careful, Rupert," he said, stifling down his uneasiness. "Of course, I should not mention it in any case; but I will be very careful."

"Neither must you speak of having met me here to-night," said the squire. "As a matter of fact, I am supposed to be over at Westwood."

"Yes," said Lacy, more and more surprised; "I will bear that in mind."

"Have you anything more to tell me?" asked the squire abruptly.

"No; only——" Lacy hesitated.

"Only what? Speak out!"

"You don't seem to quite comprehend Black's attitude. It is not money he wants. He is determined that Arthur Talbot

NEXT SATURDAY:

"THE BULLY'S FAG."

A Splendid Long, Complete School Tale,
by H. Clarke Hook;

AND

"WHO DID IT?"

A Thrilling Story of John Smith, Detective,
by Mark Darran.

IN "PLUCK," 1st

shall not be driven from St. Kit's. I think you will find it harder to deal with him than you think. When you see him to-night you will find him obstinate and determined."

Rupert Lacy gave a singular smile.

"I shall be able to overcome his obstinacy and determination, I think."

"Then you are certain that I need not fear his giving me away to the Head?"

"You need not have the slightest fear on that point."

"Then, as regards Talbot—"

"Everything is to go on as we planned. Nothing has come to light to cast a shadow of doubt upon his guilt?"

"Nothing."

"The money—"

"Not a trace of it has been found."

"Mind that it is not found. You have nothing more to tell me?"

"No."

"You had better return to the school, then. What explanation will you give for having stayed out so late?"

"I shall not need to give one. As a prefect, I have a key to the little gate, and can come in and go out as I choose."

"That is fortunate. You had better go back now, though. Mind, not a word of our meeting!"

Eldred Lacy rose to his feet. The squire rose also, and stood with the starlight still on his face, showing up how

deadly white it was. Lacy looked anxious. Cold and selfish as he was, there was a spark of affection in his breast for the brother who had done so much for him, and had been generous itself towards Eldred, if towards no other living being.

"I say, Rupert," he said, in a low voice, "you're not looking yourself, old man. Is this affair of Talbot weighing on your mind?"

"Yes! No, no; I'm all right!"

"There's nothing to be uneasy about, as far as I can see, if you can only persuade Black to hold his tongue; and you say you are certain that you can do that."

The squire broke into a jarring laugh.

"Yes; I am certain on that point."

"But you're not yourself, Rupert. Can I do anything—"

"No! Don't mind me, Eldred," he said, in a kinder tone; "I'm worried, that's all. When this affair is over I shall be easier in my mind. I hope to induce Black to leave the neighbourhood. Possibly neither of us will ever see the scoundrel again." He drew a quick, hard breath. "Good-night now, Eldred. And, remember, not a word!"

He grasped his brother's hand, and turned away.

Another fine instalment next Saturday.)

Your Editor's Corner

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

"THE BULLY'S FAG."

This is the title of next Saturday's first special story. It is written by H. Clarke Hook, and must not fail to read.

The second, entitled:

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is a tale of a great mystery, and deals with the adventures of John Smith, detective, of Daring Mark Darran.

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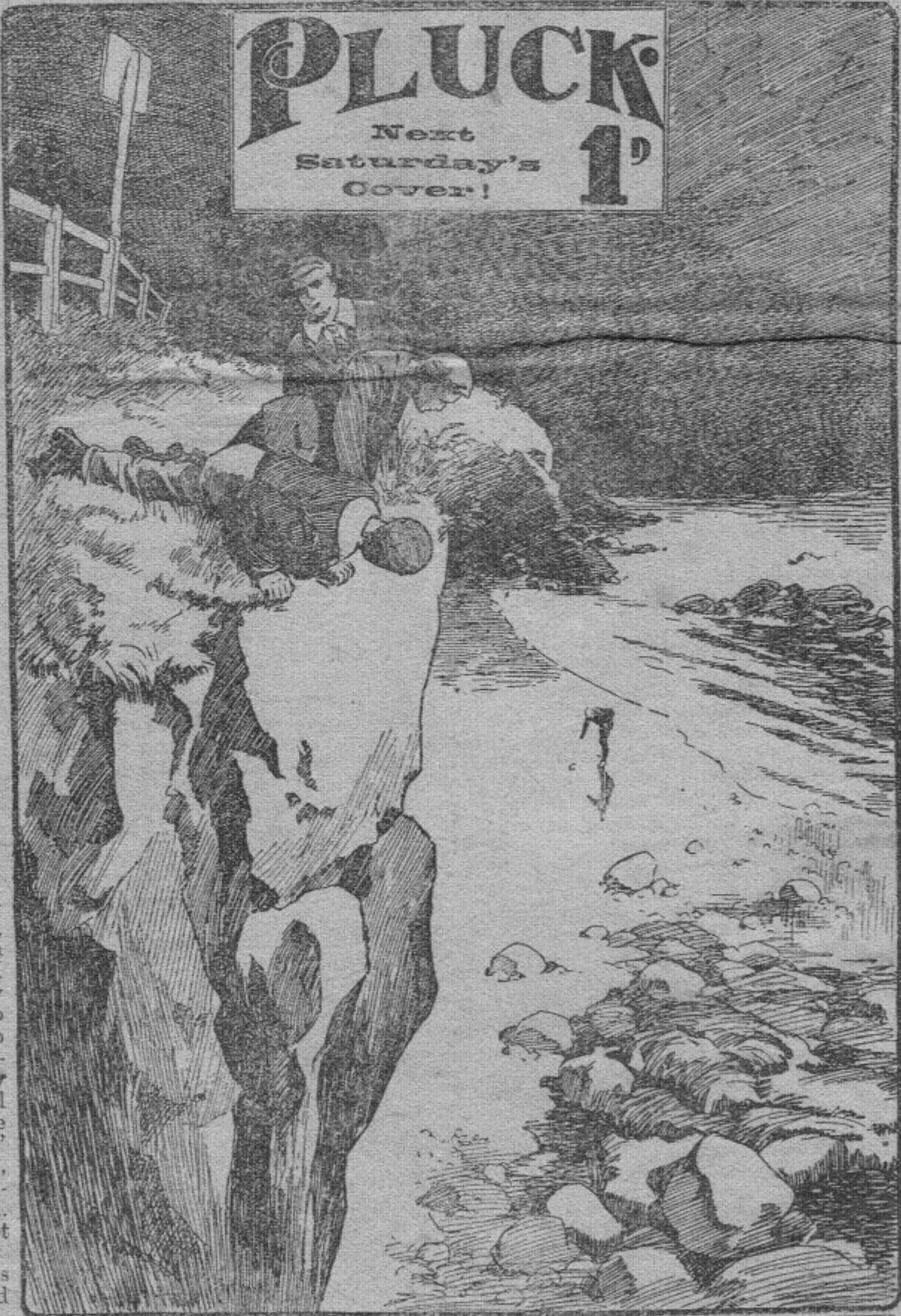
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