

# PLUCK

BRIAN AT THE FAIR.

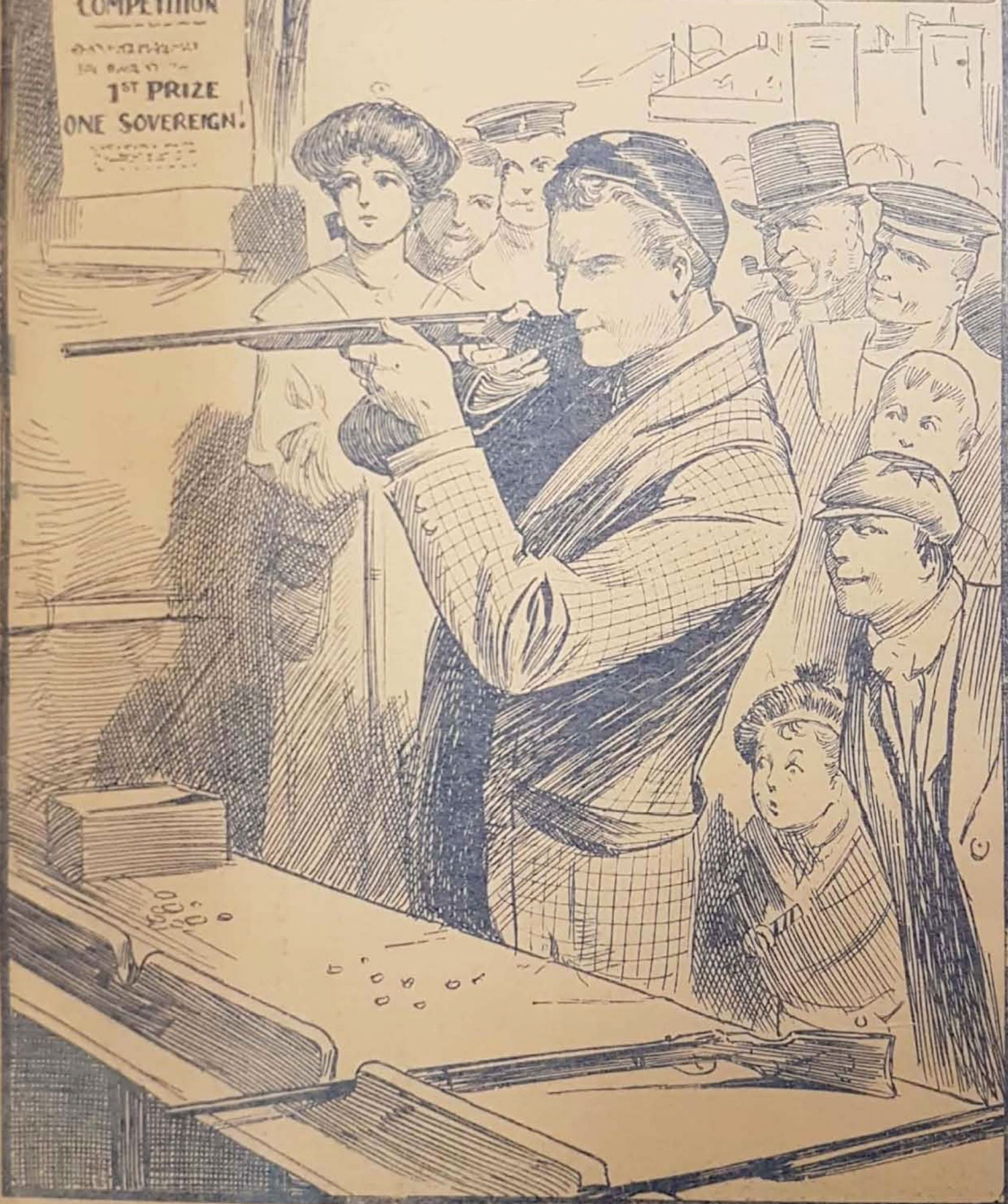
A Splendid Complete Tale of Schoolboy Adventure.  
By LEWIS HOCKLEY.

MARSDEN'S RAID.

A Tale of the Australian Bush.

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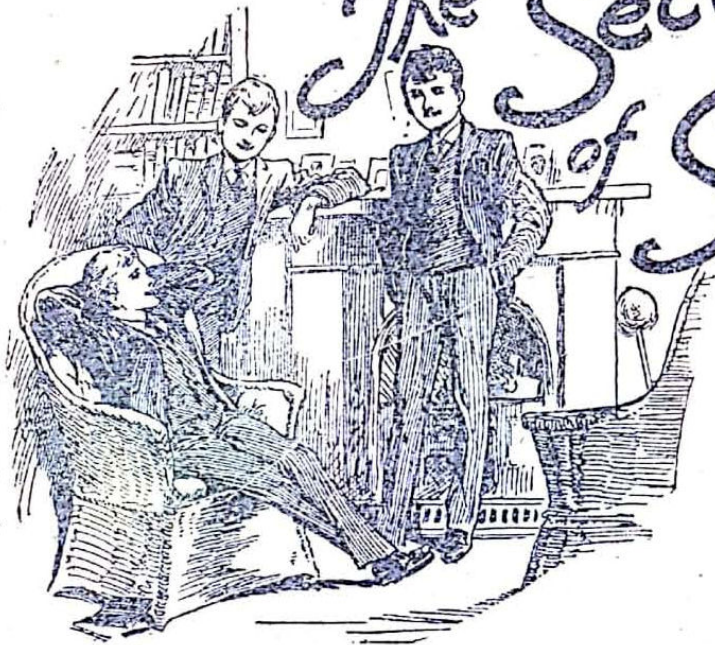
GRAND  
MARKSMANSHIP  
COMPETITION  
1ST PRIZE  
ONE SOVEREIGN.



BRIAN'S FINGERS TIGHTENED UPON THE TRIGGER. ALL EYES FLEW TO THE TARGET, AND THE ECHOES OF THE BELL, WHOSE RINGING DENOTED A BULL, WERE DROWNED BY A MIGHTY SHOUT.

SPLENDID NEW SCHOOL TALE!

The Secret of St Winifred's



By MARTIN CLIFFORD.

Author of the famous tales of Tom Merry & Co. now appearing every week in "The Gem" Library.

CHAPTER I.

Back to the School.

Young Clive Lawrence sat squeezed in a corner of the crowded railway-carriage. That carriage was supposed to carry ten passengers, but at the present moment there were fifteen crowded into it, and there was just room enough to breathe.

It was opening day at St. Winifred's, and the boys were returning to the school in force. On such an occasion the train was certain to be crammed from end to end when it steamed into Ferndale Station.

Clive Lawrence was a new boy, going to St. Winifred's to join at the new term, and he did not know a soul in the carriage. But there was nothing shy or contrained about Clive. The carriage buzzed with voices, most of the boys talking at once, and Clive looked and listened with interest, eager to learn as much as he could about his new home and the fellows he was to associate with there.

The noise was really deafening. All the boys in the carriage were juniors, and they seemed to be in high spirits. The end of the holidays, and the return to the old school, did not seem to be a depressing event to the young gentlemen of St. Winifred's.

At every station the train passed through they crowded at the window and yelled to the people on the platform, and waved their caps. In the intervals between these exuberant demonstrations they ate tarts, drank ginger-pop, and sang songs. One youth, with a sturdy frame and a fair, good-tempered face, was playing a flute, and the noises he extracted from that flute were really remarkable.

"I say, Fisher," exclaimed a lad with red hair and freckles, presently, "give us a five-bar rest, old chap! Blessed if I know what you want to keep on playing 'The Honeysuckle and the Bee' for, time and again!"

Fisher left off playing, to fix a withering glance upon the remonstrating junior.

"You utter ass!" he said. "You—you utter ass! That wasn't 'The Honeysuckle and the Bee.'"

"What was it then—'The Zuyder Zee'?"

"You—you ass, Pye! It was 'Gounod's Serenade,'" said Fisher scornfully. "You've got no ear for music."

"I suppose I haven't—that kind of music," agreed Pye. "I believe that flute's got the asthma, or something. Chaps, I put it to you, hasn't that fearful row gone on long enough?"

"Rather!"

"Quite!"

"Passed unanimously."

The exclamations on every side proved that Pye had the majority with him. There was only one youth who stood up for the flautist.

"Keep on as long as you like, Fishy!" he exclaimed. "Let 'em rip! Keep on, old chap!"

"I'm going to," said Fisher—"I'm going to, Locks, old son. If these kids don't like music, they can change into another carriage at the next station."

"Not much room for changing carriages in this blessed train," said Pye. "I'm going to write to the company about this scandalous state of over-crowding, if I can borrow a stamp when I get to St. Winnie's. It's always the same at the beginning of the term. Fisher, old chap, don't start that again!"

"Rats!"

Fisher recommenced the flute. Pye took off his cap and flicked the flute away, and it disappeared among a wilderness of legs and feet. Fisher started up in wrath.

"You cheeky young rotter! I'll give you the thickest ear you ever had! I'll—"

"Sit down!" exclaimed Sugden. "No room for scrapping here. Look out! You're treading on my feet."

"Hang your feet!"

"Sit down! Sit down!"

"Shu'n't!"

The wrathful musician scrambled towards Pye. He fell over a leg purposely put in his way, and sprawled headlong. His head plumped in Clive Lawrence's lap, and his army-clutch round the new boy, and the back of Clive's head came with a sharp rap against the wood behind with the shock.

"Ow!" exclaimed Clive. "You ass! Get off!"

Fisher was on his feet in a moment. He fixed a freezing glare upon the new junior.

"Did you speak to me?" exclaimed he.

"Yes, I did," said Clive, putting his silk-hat straight.

"And what were you pleased to say?" asked Fisher, with ominous politeness.

"I was pleased to ask you to get off," said Clive calmly.

"I was also pleased to call you an ass, for talking on me like that. You gave my head a crack."

"I expect I shall give it a few more before I'm done with you," Fisher remarked. "You're a new kid at St. Winifred's. I've never seen your chivy before."

"I'm going to join this term."

"Ah, then you probably don't know the name of the Fourth Form."

"Oh, you're Fisher, are you?" asked the new boy, apparently not much impressed. "What is your name?"

There was a giggle in the carriage. Fisher glared at the new boy, hardly realising for a minute that this new comer, this rank outsider, had dared to make a pun upon his name, instead of being properly impressed and awed by it.

"I'm Fisher!" roared the indignant Fourth Former at last. "I'm captain of the Fourth—"

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"I'm going to join this term."

"Ah, then you probably don't know the ropes! I'm Fisher."

"Oh, you're Fisher, are you?" asked the new boy, apparently not much impressed. "What do you fish for?"

There was a giggle in the carriage. Fisher glared at the new boy, hardly realising for a minute that this new comer, this rank outsider, had dared to make a pun upon his name, instead of being properly impressed and awed by it.

"I'm Fisher!" roared the indignant Fourth-Former at last. "I'm captain of the Fourth—"

"Oh, my fishy," said Pyc; "don't tell the new kid about me! You know I'm captain of the Fourth. Don't you believe him, young innocent."

"I'm captain of the Fourth," repeated Fisher, with a look of defiance. "It's one of my duties to keep new kids in their place, and teach 'em not to be cheeky to their elders and superiors. I can see that Pyc's some teaching to do here."

"Well, Clive Lawrence, this is where you apologise, in the most humble possible way, for speaking of your Form as an ass," said Locke. "Put him through it, Pyc."

Fisher and Locke were evidently chums, and backed each other up in everything. Clive looked from one to the other, but did not speak.

"Now," continued Fisher, "as you're an ignorant, backward new kid, I'll just explain to you what you're to do. You'll repeat this after me—I am a silly young ass—"

"You're a silly young ass," said Clive demurely. The whole carriage giggled, even Locke joining in. Fisher turned very red.

"You utter idiot! Haven't you a grain of sense?" he exclaimed. "You're to speak in the first person, and say what I tell you. Say, 'I am a silly young ass.'"

"Yes; I understand."

"Now—I am a silly young ass, and I humbly apologise to Fisher, and hope that he will be kind enough to forgive me for speaking to him disrespectfully." You understand?"

Clive cocked his head thoughtfully. "Say it again," he said.

"I'm a silly young ass, and I humbly apologise to Fisher, and hope that he will be kind enough to forgive me for speaking to him disrespectfully!" shouted Fisher.

"I don't quite catch on. Say it again."

"I am a silly young ass—"

The roar of laughter in the carriage made Fisher stop, as he realised that the new boy was not so stupid as he pretended to be, and in fact was only "pulling his leg."

"Go on, Fisher," said Clive innocently. "You are a silly young ass—"

"You cheeky rat! Are you going to apologise?" roared Fisher.

"Apologise! Oh, no!"

"You—you're not!"

"Certainly not! It's you who owe me an apology; first, for torturing me with that fearful instrument, and then for lambing on me like a silly ass."

Fisher gasped.

"Well, you've got it this time, where the chicken got the clopper," said Pyc, laughing. "What the new kid says is quite correct, fishy. All the same, I don't approve of so much to say in a new youngster, and I shan't interfere if you give him beans."

"Beans?" gurgled Fisher. "I'll give him beans; I'll give him a regular bean! You young ass—to talk to me like that! Come out of it!"

He seized Clive by the shoulders, and tried to jerk him out of his place in the corner of the carriage. To his surprise, the new junior did not budge an inch. He tore at him again, with the same result. Fisher was one of the stalwarts of the Fourth, and the new boy must have exerted considerable strength to keep in his place unmoved by that powerful jack. Yet he never turned a hair, and he remained quite cool and smiling as he looked at Fisher.

"Come out!" roared Fisher.

A third time he pulled at the new boy with all his strength, and this time Clive suddenly yielded; so suddenly that, as he rose, Fisher fell backwards, taken by surprise, lost his hat, and sat down upon Pyc's knees.

"Here, get off me!" roared Pyc indignantly. Pyc had a couple of jam-tarts on his knees, just taken from a paper bag, and Fisher had sat upon them, squashing them.

"Get off!" yelled Pyc.

Fisher rose. The two jam-tarts were clinging to him, but a considerable quantity of the jam was clinging to Pyc.

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled Sugden. "He's got your tarts, old Pyc."

"You ask!" roared Pyc, trying to wipe away the jam with his handkerchief, and making that useful article and his face in a horribly sticky state. "You—you lunatic! What do you mean by sitting down on my jam-tarts?"

"I—I couldn't help it," gasped the confused captain of the Fourth. "It—it was all the fault of that beastly new kid."

"Oh, I like that!" exclaimed Clive. "It was your own fault, Clumey."

"You like it, do you?" exclaimed Fisher. "Perhaps you'll like that, too!"

He plunged towards Clive, letting out with his right. Clive dodged quickly, and Fisher's knuckles crashed on the back of the seat. He gave a wild yell.

"Ow, ow! Oh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Pyc. "You're clumsy to-day, fishy. You'd better let the new kid alone. He's too good for you."

Fisher sucked his knuckles furiously.

"Hallo! Have you hurt yourself?" exclaimed Clive, apparently surprised. "I'm—"

He was interrupted. Fisher, who had quite lost his temper by this time, fairly flung himself upon the new boy, hugging him as if he loved him, and trying to get his head into chancery.

Every junior in the carriage expected Clive's downfall then, but it did not happen. Clive had got his elbows against Fisher's chest, and he exerted a steady pressure which forced the captain of the Fourth to relax his hold, and finally to let go, and fall back; and once more he sat in Pyc's lap.

Pyc was ready for him, however, and he shoved him off in a twinkling, and Fisher sat on the floor of the carriage, among a collection of feet. Locke lent him a hand to get up.

Before the row could go further, a slackening of the train was followed by a roar from the juniors.

"Ferndale!"

Ferndale was the station for St. Winifred's. The train slowed down alongside the platform. Hostilities in the carriage ceased at once.

"I'll settle with you another time, Lawrence!" exclaimed Fisher.

Clive nodded coolly.

"Whenever you like, my fishy friend; but I don't want a row. Why not let it drop?"

"I'll let you drop! Just you wait!"

"Oh, I'll wait," said Clive carelessly.

The train came to a halt. Fisher flung open the carriage-door before it had stopped, and looked out. The other carriages were also disgorging their contents. Two rather tall youths, belonging to the Fifth Form at St. Winifred's, were walking along the platform as Fisher jumped out.

"Hallo!" exclaimed Fisher. "There's Kendal and Keene back again, as funny as ever. Give 'em a yell, kids!"

The Fourth-Formers gave Kendal and Keene a yell. It was a terrific yell, and might have done credit to a troop of Red Indians on the warpath.

Kendal and Keene looked round, and then shrugged up their shoulders in a superior way, and walked on majestically.

CHAPTER 2.

The New Boy Takes the Lead—How the Fourth Form Arrived at St. Winifred's.

Clive Lawrence looked on at the Fourth Form demonstration with some surprise. It was evident to him that there was some kind of hostility between Kendal and Keene of the Fifth, and the Fourth-Formers. Locke turned to him indignantly.

"You boulder! Why didn't you yell?"

"What was there to yell about?" asked Clive.

Locke sniffed.

"Oh, of course, you don't know; you're a new kid. We're at daggers drawn with the Fifth, at St. Winifred's, and Kendal and Keene are the heads of the Fifth."

"Oh, I see!"

"You see," Locke went on to explain, rather condescendingly, "the Fifth are two Forms above us—the Shell comes between—and they fancy themselves no end. They like to put on the airs of full-blown seniors towards us, just as if they were in the Sixth. Of course, we're not going to stand that!"

"Of course not!" exclaimed Clive, feeling warlike at once.

"I should say not!"

"So we're at daggers drawn," said Locke. "We're always having rows with the Fifth, and I can tell you, it sometimes makes things pretty lively at St. Winifred's."

"Good!" said Clive. "I like things to move. Kendal and Keene look good natured sort of chaps, though."

"So they are," grinned Locke; "so are we. We have a few fearful rows, but there's no real ill feeling about it. All right, fishy, I'm coming! I was just explaining to the new kid—"

"Let the new kid go and eat cocoanuts! Come along, or those boulders of the Fifth will have collared the brats, and we shall have to wait!"

"My hat! Buzz off, then!"

Fisher and Locke tore away. Pyc, and a crowd of Fourth-

NEXT SATURDAY-

"THE HEAD BATTLE" Grand Double-length School Tale. By Jack North.

PRICE 10

Formers followed. Clive Lawrence felt rather lonely and lost, but he thought that he had better follow on. He seemed to be plunged, all of a sudden, into the midst of the rather complicated politics of St. Winifred's, and he had little time to think. But it was pretty clear that he ought to stand by his Form, and as he was going into the Fourth Form at St. Winifred's, his course was clear. The Fourth were his friends, and the Fifth his deadly foes, and if there was a row, Clive Lawrence was quite ready to take his part in it, and his share of the hard knocks.

"Hallo, you youngsters!"  
The rushing Fourth-Formers, pouring pell-mell towards the station exit, stopped all of a sudden. A handsome young fellow of about eighteen had stepped from the train, and his voice had called the halt. Clive wondered why the fiery Fourth-Formers had become tame all of a sudden, and whom the tall young fellow could be who seemed to possess so boundless an influence over the wild throng.

"Hallo, Trelawney!" exclaimed a chorus of voices.  
"Who is that?" Clive asked.  
Pye looked at him, with a gleam of contempt in his eyes for one who was so hopelessly ignorant as not to know whom "that" was.  
"That's Trelawney!"  
"But who's Trelawney?"  
"Head of the Sixth—captain of St. Winifred's," said Pye briefly.

Then Clive understood somewhat.  
That big young fellow, who looked a veritable giant to him, was the captain of the school, and the head of the highest Form—the Form to which the youngsters looked up with awe and respect.

Clive thought he looked very handsome and fit and good-natured, and so he did. Oswald Trelawney, captain of St. Winifred's, was one of the best.  
"Where are you dashing to, in such a hurry?" asked Trelawney, glancing over the crowd of juniors, and letting his eye fix on Fisher.

The captain of the Fourth coloured.  
"We're in rather a hurry to—to get to St. Winnie's," he explained.

"Yes, I know you are," said Trelawney, laughing. "You would be! Now—"

"Well, the fact is, we're afraid the brakes will be gone. You know there's never enough, Tre.; and if the Fifth get them, we shall have to walk."

Trelawney laughed again.

"I thought there was something of the kind. Now, what's the matter with walking half a mile through a pleasant lane on a fine, dry winter day?"

(Another extra long instalment of this splendid story next week.)

THE RIVALS OF ST. KIT'S.  
A Tale of School Life.  
Captain of St. Kit's (continued).

Nothing could be clearer, even if the squire's confusion had left room for doubt. Arthur Talbot was Arthur Talbot, Squire of Lynwood. No wonder St. Kit's was amazed. No wonder the chums of the end study, Pat Nugent, Blagden, and Greene, plumed themselves upon the result of their investigations.

Exactly how much of the great result was due to the committee of investigation of the end study it would be difficult to say, and the juniors did not attempt to decide. They settled the matter by calmly appropriating the whole of the credit to themselves. The way they patronised the Fourth Form made the seniors smile to see it.

They had manfully stood by Talbot in the hour of adversity, and the Form had sent them to Coventry. As we know, they had in return promptly sent the Fourth Form to Coventry, much to the amazement and indignation of the Form.

The discovery that the chums had been in the right all along brought the Form round—all the more easily because Trimble was gone.

The Fourth-Formers owned up that they had been, in Pat's graphic words, "a silly, blithering set of asinine spalpeens." The chums were then kind enough to forgive them; and forgiven they were accordingly.



NEXT WEEK'S COVER!

They took it meekly. They were proud of the three chums, who had done so much to bring credit on the Form. Arthur Talbot was more popular now than he had ever been, and naturally those who had stood by him in adversity shared his popularity. Pat, Blagden, and Greene were the heroes of the hour.

"And now," said Pat one day to his chums, "it's time we made Talbot—I must call him Talbot—captain of the school again."

"Right-ho!" grinned Blagden. "Now that Lucy's gone, and Brooko has resigned, it's time Talbot took the captaincy again. Very decent of Brooko to resign."  
(To be concluded.)

"YOUR EDITOR'S CORNER."—Owing to pressure of space, I have had to forgo my usual weekly chat. There will be one splendid double-length complete Christmas story next Saturday, entitled "The Rivals of Wycliffe," by Jack North. Please order your copy of PLUCK in advance.—YOUR EDITOR.

