

DICK ROSS, VENTRILOQUIST!

See the Long Complete Tale of
Specs & Co. by
H. CLARKE HOOK.

PLUCK

1^d

COMPLETE SCHOOL STORY.

THRILLING DETECTIVE TALE.



The master gave a gasp of astonishment as he entered, for a youngster he had never seen in his life before was seated in his chair, his not over-clean boots on the mantelshelf, and sucking an orange!

A SPLENDID SCHOOL TALE

By MARTIN CLIFFORD, Author of
THE TALES OF TOM MERRY.

The Secret of St Winifred's



A Curious Quest.

Clive Lawrence sat quite still in the high-backed chair. He was still fatigued, still dreamy from heavy sleep, and in a strange state, between sleeping and waking, he remained silent and motionless, while the words from the room came to his ears with little meaning in them.

There were two voices—one, a sharp, thin, somewhat vulgar voice; the other, deep and heavy and somewhat foreign.

"The treasure!" It was the foreign-sounding voice that repeated the words. "Ach, we have not found it yet!"

"But you are expecting to find it."

"True, or I should not be here. But we will talk about the division of it when we have found it, my friend Napper."

"Plain words, mister," said the sharp, thin voice. "Tell me truly, and fair and square, do you really believe in the existence of the galleon's treasure?"

"Mein Gott, have I not said so?"

"Yes; but—" Mr. Napper's words and tone implied a far from profound faith in the habitual veracity of his companion.

"Ach, I tell you that I am here for the very purpose of finding it, and for no other purpose whatever!"

"What did you know about it in the first place?"

"That's my secret."

"If I am going to help you, there's going to be no secrets between us, my pippin."

"Bah, it is nothing! I heard of it—that suffices. But what you have told me about the Trelawneys interests me. A word, though. Are you sure that we cannot be overheard here?"

"Of course I am. I do all my business here."

"You understand that a word to Oswald Trelawney might spoil all."

"I know that as well as you do."

Clive Lawrence started into full wakefulness.

Oswald Trelawney! The captain of St. Winifred's! His name on the lips of these two habitues of the disreputable Jolly Seaman! What did it mean?

"In the first place," went on the German, for such Mr. Napper's companion evidently was, "is it certain what you tell me about the Trelawneys?"

"Yes. It's known all up and down the country-side. There was a Trelawney in the fleet that scattered the Spanish Armada," said Napper, "and he helped to chase the galleon which was afterwards wrecked on the coast."

"So I have heard before, but—"

"It's true enough. It's an old tale about these parts, and there seems to be enough truth in it. I know for a fact that Captain Trelawney had a command in that fleet; and I know he was the ancestor of the present Trelawneys. I am a native of this part of Devon, though most of my life has been spent in London. I know the tale, and how much of it is to be believed. The Trelawney at St. Winifred's is the

READ THIS FIRST.

The train containing the boys of St. Winifred's slowed down alongside Ferndale Station platform. "You bouncer! Why didn't you yell?" Locke, a Fourth-Former, shouted the question to Clive Lawrence—a new boy, but one in no way shy or constrained. "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, who are standing over there, are the heads of the Fifth." Clive joins the party of Fourth-Formers, and they eventually get to the school by capturing the Sixth Form brake. Clive is told to share a study with Fisher and Locke. 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 and told to wait for a Mr. Napper. He falls to sleep before the fire, and is awakened by the sound of voices. (Now go on with the story.)

lineal descendant of the Captain Trelawney of Queen Elizabeth's time, and you could see as much in any County Families directory. He's the last of the race, too, except for some very distant connections, and poor as a church mouse."

The German gave a chuckle.

"Then it would be a stroke of fortune for him to find that treasure, and restore the ancient glories—ha, ha!—of the Trelawneys."

"He's not likely to do it—a schoolboy!"

"But the clue."

"Ah, there you come to the doubtful part of the tale! The story goes that Captain Trelawney discovered either the wreck of the galleon, and carted away the gold to some secret place, or else the Spaniards did it themselves, in the hope of getting it away afterwards, and Trelawney found out where they had hidden it in the caves. Perhaps he didn't move it away for fear of the Government coming down on him for the loot. He may have just helped himself when he wanted the money, and left the treasure where it lay, with a document written out for the guidance of his descendants."

"That is the tale, is it not?"

"That's the tale. But the Trelawneys are an uncommon close-tongued race, and they never talk about their affairs; and the boy at St. Winifred's is like the rest. It's certain that the treasure has never been recovered, and if the Trelawneys possessed the clue, as tradition has it, it can't have been a complete one, you see."

"Not to them; but to one who already had some knowledge of the matter, it might point out the way to the treasure."

"True enough."

"You tell me that you know the country round here perfectly."

"Like a book. I lived here all my young years, and used to explore the caves, in the hope of finding the treasure, thirty years ago," grinned Mr. Napper. "I never found it. Why, it may have been found and carted away before now by someone who knew how to hold his tongue."

The German shook his head.

"That is not likely. Such a discovery could scarcely remain a secret. I am certain that the treasure has never been discovered. When I met you down here—"

Mr. Napper interrupted him with a laugh.

"Did you think I was here in search of the galleon?"

"No; I knew you were here for no good purpose."

"Exactly the thought that came into my mind with regard to you," said Mr. Napper. "When I found that you were at—"

"Never mind that. We have renewed our old acquaintance, with mutual profit, I hope. If Trelawney has the clue—"

"He is not likely to let us have the use of it."

"He may not have the choice about that."

NEXT SATURDAY: "THE GHOST OF THE DOMINICAN,"
A Powerful Long, Complete School Tale,
By Michael Storm.

AND

"THE RIVER PIRATE,"
A Thrilling Story, dealing with the adventures
of Jim Lee, the Virginian.
IN "PLUCK," 1D.

Mr. Napper gave an expressive whistle.

"Oh, I see! You think you will get an opportunity—"

"I shall make it a point to do so."

"Good idea. You may be able to work the trick."

"And then the matter will be simpler. As for anybody's right to the treasure, it is the property of whomsoever finds it."

"Subject to the Government's claim."

"I should keep it secret."

"My idea, too. It would be perfectly easy to ship it away in the Scud if we found it; though, as a matter of fact, my friend, I feel very doubtful about doing that."

"I have every hope of success."

"Then that means that you have some knowledge of the matter which you have kept to yourself," said Mr. Napper.

"And I say again, if we're going into this thing, cards on the table, partner."

The German seemed to hesitate.

"If we don't go into it together," went on Mr. Napper, with marked emphasis, "you will find me against you—and me and my friends. And how much chance you will have of success then, I dare say you know. In the first place, I could give you away where you are."

"There is no question of that. We are together in the matter."

"Then show your hand, as I show mine. No secrets."

"Very well. I—"

The German broke off suddenly.

During the talk, Clive Lawrence had not made a sound or a movement.

Clive was the last fellow in the world to listen to a conversation not intended for his ears, but he had really had no choice under the circumstances.

He had heard the first part of the talk in a dreamy state between sleeping and waking, and then, when the name of the captain of St. Winifred's had been mentioned, and he realised that he was in the presence of two men who were plotting against Trelawney, he had been in great doubt as to what to do.

That both the men were rascals, was certain, and the boy remembered that he was in a lonely inn close to the sea, and entirely at the mercy of the precious pair, if they discovered his presence and took it amiss.

But the difficulty was settled for him without a movement on his part. A cinder had fallen from the fire close to his foot, and he dared not move, for fear of making a sound. The smell of scorched leather assailed his nostrils, and naturally reached those of the two men at the table also.

The German started to his feet with a foreign oath.

"What is that? Who is that? There is someone in the room!"

Mr. Napper was on his feet also, looking alarmed. Clive's heart beat hard. The German's hand grasped the back of the chair to swing it out from the fire. Clive's brain worked quickly. What his danger might be he knew not, but he knew that it might be great. He slipped from the chair as the German swung it away, and made a desperate spring for the door. The lamp was close to him on the table as he passed, and, acting on a sudden inspiration, he shot out his fist and knocked it to the floor.

The light was instantly extinguished. The German, springing after Clive in the darkness, collided with Mr. Napper, who was running round the table for that purpose. They met with a terrific shock and reeled to the floor. Mr. Napper sat down on the smoking lamp, and there was the sound of a breakage; then a German oath.

Clive had the door open, but he heard the fall, and did not hurry himself. He grinned as he heard the growling voices in the darkness. Coolness was Clive Lawrence's strong point, and he was quite cool again now.

He remembered the note for Mr. Napper in his pocket. He jerked it out, and threw it towards the figures struggling to rise in the dark.

"A letter for you, Mr. Napper," he said cheerfully. Then he slammed the door and was gone.

To cut along the little passage, to open the outer door and slam it behind him, and to dash away into the night, occupied Clive Lawrence less than a minute.

Out into the windy night he dashed, and he paused at a distance to look back. A light was gleaming from the side door of the inn, and two dim forms could be seen running out. Clive broke into a run again, and dashed away towards St. Winifred's.

Whether pursuit was made or not he could not tell, but certainly neither Mr. Napper nor the mysterious German came up with him. Fagged with a rapid run, but greatly relieved in his mind to have got out of harm's way, he arrived at the school, and stopped at the little gate.

Clive inserted the key and unlocked the gate, and entered, and the next moment reeled back with a gasp, as a strong pair of hands seized him and shook him violently.

The First Night of the Term.

"YOU young hound! Where have you been all this time?"

It was Courtney's voice.

Clive had been startled almost out of his wits by the rough reception in the darkness, but he quickly recovered himself.

"Let me alone!" he said quietly.

Courtney shook him again.

"Where have you been?"

"Where you told me to go. To the Jolly Seaman."

"Quiet, you fool! Suppose someone heard you?"

"Someone will be pretty certain to hear me if you don't let me go," said Clive, between his teeth. "I'm not going to stand this much longer."

Courtney muttered something, and released him. The junior's tone was enough to show the bully of the Sixth that he was in earnest, and it was a very awkward moment just then for Courtney to think of quarrelling with the new boy.

"What has made you so long?" he demanded. "Do you know you've been nearly two hours?"

"It couldn't be helped."

"You stayed in the public-house, you—"

"Don't judge me by yourself, please," said Clive sharply. "I'm not fond of public-houses, though you seem to be."

"None of your cheek, you young scoundrel! What made you stay so long, then?"

"Mr. Napper wasn't there, and I had to wait for him."

"He is always there at this hour. Well, he may have gone out. I didn't think of that. Where did you wait?"

"In Mr. Beasley's parlour. You told me not to give the note to anybody but Mr. Napper, so I thought I'd better not give it to Beasley."

"Quite right," said Courtney, more good-humouredly; "you've got some sense. I shouldn't like that fellow to get hold of any writing of mine. You waited till Jim Napper came in?"

"Yes, I fell asleep, and—"

"Did you give him the note all right?"

"Yes. He came in with somebody else, and they were talking, and didn't see me," explained Clive; "when they found I was there, they jumped to the conclusion that I was listening, though I didn't mean to, and they were going for me, and I cut it."

Courtney muttered something savagely.

"But the note—didn't you give that to him, after all? You said—"

"I stopped in the door and threw it back, and called out to Mr. Napper that it was a note for him. He must have had it."

"I suppose so. Confound you, I might have known you would make some bungle of it. I might have known better than to trust you, a fool of a new boy."

"You'll know better next time," said Clive. "You can trust someone else with your next note to that low den, for I sha'n't take it."

"Eh? What's that? You'll do as you're told."

"Nothing of this sort, though. I'm not going to the Jolly Seaman again, and so I tell you plainly, and you can make the best of it," said Clive determinedly.

Courtney looked for a moment as if he would spring on him; but he changed his mind and turned abruptly away, muttering something under his breath. A dark figure moved from under the elms and joined him.

Clive recognised Carne; he had not noticed his presence before. The two seniors walked away together; and, as Clive was going in the same direction, he followed.

"I'd have wrung the little beast's neck for his cheek, Courtney," Carne remarked.

"No, you wouldn't," growled Courtney. "No good rowing with him to-night. I don't want him to spread the story of where he's been all over St. Winifred's."

"Ah, yes, I forgot that! But—"

"I'll take it out of him in time, never fear. I don't think any junior ever set his back up against me and bragged much about it afterwards!" Courtney turned round suddenly. "Are you there, you whelp—spying?"

Clive Lawrence flushed indignantly.

"I'm not spying," he exclaimed, "and only a cad—"

"Oh, you've got so much of your lip! Cut on ahead. And mind, you've got to show yourself in the hall. They'll be breaking up there soon, and they've been inquiring for you already. Mind what you tell them."

Clive Lawrence hurried on ahead, leaving the seniors to follow at their leisure. He wondered what the inquiry had been made about him for. It could not be Fisher and Locke to whom the Sixth-Former had referred, as they knew where he was gone. He had hardly thought that a new boy was of sufficient importance to be inquired after the first night of the term.

He had reached the school when Fisher and Locke came.

out. Fisher uttered an exclamation of relief at the sight of him.

"Thank goodness, here you are!" he exclaimed. "I began to think that something had happened to you. I said so to Locke."

"That you did," agreed Locke.

"There's a lot of rough characters hang out at the Jolly Seaman," explained Fisher; "I was afraid you might have fallen foul of some of them. I was really beginning to think about speaking to Trelawney."

"Oh, that's all right!" said Clive smiling. "I had to wait for the chap I was taking the letter to, that's all." He paused a moment, wondering whether he should tell the two juniors of the curious happening at the inn. While he was thinking it out, Fisher grasped him by the arm and led him in.

"Come on," he exclaimed; "you're wanted!"

"They've been asking about you," added Locke. "Some of them were mighty curious as to where you had got to, too!"

"Do you mean that the masters—?"

"Ha, ha! No. It's the reciting, you know."

Clive Lawrence looked bewildered.

"The what?" he exclaimed, in wonder.

"Oh, of course, you don't know!" said Fisher patronisingly. "You're a new kid. I forgot that. You've never heard of it, of course."

"What is it," asked Clive; "some custom at the school?"

"That's it," said Fisher. "Every new kid has to stand up in full hall, and either sing or recite something on the first night of the term. It's usually reciting, you see, because new kids are very often nervous about it. If they try to sing they break down, but they can usually manage to stutter through something in the recitation line."

"I see. Have the other new boys gone through it?"

"Yes, they've wriggled through it somehow, and a greener, more frightened lot of moonies, you never saw!" chuckled Fisher. "I think you'll have more nerve."

"Oh, I've lots of nerve!" said Clive cheerfully. "What's the good of being scared at having to recite? If they don't like it they can say so, I suppose?"

"Of course they can, and you can bet that they will, too! They'll say so in pretty plain language if they don't like it."

"Let 'em; I don't care!"

"Well, that's the right spirit, anyway! You might have been passed over, as you were absent, but for Kendal and Keene. They want to bring you forward, so that they can hiss and chip you, to pay you out for collaring the Sixth-Form brake at the station, and racing them to the school, and leaving 'em in a ditch. It will be a long time before Kendal and Keene get over that."

"They can chip me as much as they like. What shall I recite?"

"Anything you like. 'The Charge of the Light Brigade,' or 'The Little Boy that Died,' or 'The Tragedy of the Lighthouse,' or anything. Any old thing will do."

"It always makes a furor, though, if you can work off anything original," remarked Locke. "I remember last term Kendal put a new kid up to spouting some verses against the Fourth. He was a new kid in the Third, you see, and awfully clever. I forgot what the verses were, but he slated us a treat. But it was all Kendal's doing!"

"I suppose you are not any hand at making up verses, Lawrence?" said Fisher anxiously. "It would be a screaming joke to work off something against the Fifth, after Kendal and Keene insisting like this that you should recite!"

Clive Lawrence laughed.

"I don't know," he remarked. "You say any old thing would do. I can sling rhymes together, but whether the result is good or not—"

"Oh, anything will do, so long as it hits up against the Fifth!" said Fisher eagerly. "If you could— But here we are!"

A shout greeted the entrance of the juniors.

Most of the Fourth Form were there, and nearly all the Fifth. There were a good few of the Sixth, too—looking very haughty and important—who had condescended to stay for the last recitation. Among the lower Form fellows the new boys could be seen, looking very red and flustered after the ordeal they had been through.

"Hallo," exclaimed Kendal, coming from a group of chatting Fifth-Formers towards the new boy and his companions—"Hallo, young Lawrence! Where have you been hiding yourself?"

"You're wanted," said Keene; "you've no right to stick away from hall like that; We've been waiting for you!"

"That's all right," said Clive cheerily; "it will do you good—teach you to be patient, and all that, you know."

"Quite so," chimed in Pye; "all the same, you ought to have been here! Get up on your hind legs and recite something!"

"You mind your own business, Pye," said Fisher; "I'm looking after this! We—"

"Rats! As head of the Fourth—"

"Don't start that again! Run away and be quiet, Pye! Now, Lawrence, are you ready?"

"Certainly," said Clive, with perfect coolness.

"Then get on a chair, and—"

"On the table," exclaimed Kendal—"on the table, where we can all see him!"

"Oh, that's rot," said Fisher, determined not to have the arrangements taken out of his hands by a Fifth-Former; "you can see him very well on a chair!"

"On a table is the rule," said Kendal, who had his own reasons for insisting. "I appeal to the captain, Trelawney! Trelawney!"

But Oswald Trelawney was gone.

"Baker! Where's Baker? I say, Baker, you're a giddy prefect, so please come and decide this knotty point. Isn't the new kid to stand on a table to recite?"

"Isn't he to stand on a chair?" shouted Fisher.

"On a table!"

"Or a chair!"

"Oh, do be quiet!" said Baker. "As the other kids stood on the table, I don't see why Lawrence can't do the same. Get on the table, young shaver; and for goodness' sake be quick, and get it over!"

"Look here, Baker, if you always back up the Fifth—"

"Hold your tongue, Fisher! Get on the table, Lawrence!"

"Oh, I don't mind!" said Clive. And he got on the table. Round the table was a throng of curious faces, and every eye was bent on the new boy. He did not seem at all disconcerted by it. He noticed that Kendal, Keene, and some other Fifth-Formers were whispering together. They stood a little back from the table, and a number of lower Form boys were between them and Clive Lawrence.

Several of the Fifth-Formers had their hands in their pockets. Some of them passed something to one another in a furtive way; but they were careful about it, and Clive, whose mind was fully occupied, did not note it.

"Begin," shouted Kendal—"begin!"

"I am going to recite—"

"Thank goodness, he isn't going to sing! Buck up!"

"Buck up; this suspense is killing me!"

"I'm going to recite a limerick."

"Oh, rats! We've been fed up with limericks lately. Can't you make up something?" Pye demanded.

"I've made up this limerick."

"Get on!" said Baker, the prefect. "A limerick will do—anything will do, so long as you get it over quickly. Buck up!"

"Silence, then!" said Clive calmly.

The room was in a buzz of talk. The boys stared at Clive.

"My hat; what cheek!" exclaimed Pye. "Fancy a new kid asking for silence while he recites a rotten limerick; I never heard of such nerve!"

"Silence!" shouted Fisher, in stentorian tones. "Fair play's a jewel! Silence for the chair—I mean for the table!"

Some of the buzzing died away. Clive looked round the crowded room and began:

"There are two kids called Kendal and Keene—"

"Are there?" exclaimed Keene wrathfully. "Kids? I'll give you kids! Why, you cheeky young scoundrel—"

"Silence!"

"Order!"

"Shut up!"

Baker, the prefect, looked round warningly. Kendal caught his eye and shut up, but he looked very excited.

"There are two kids called Kendal and Keene,

They're the funniest freaks I have seen—"

Kendal and Keene gave a simultaneous yell.

The Fourth-Formers were roaring with laughter. Some of the Sixth were laughing as heartily as the juniors. Even the Fifth grinned. Kendal and Keene had insisted, for their own reasons, on a recitation from the new boy; they were getting it now, and, as Pye remarked, they were getting it in the neck!

"Freaks!" yelled Kendal.

"Freaks!" yelled Keene.

"I'll freaks you! I'll—"

"So will I! I'll—"

"Shut up!" exclaimed Baker. "You know the rule—a recitation is never to be stopped, and you can give your opinion when it's finished. Play the game!"

This appeal to the sporting instincts of the Fifth had its