

157
Our One and Only Ventriloquist!

PLUCK

THE BOY VENTRILOQUIST.

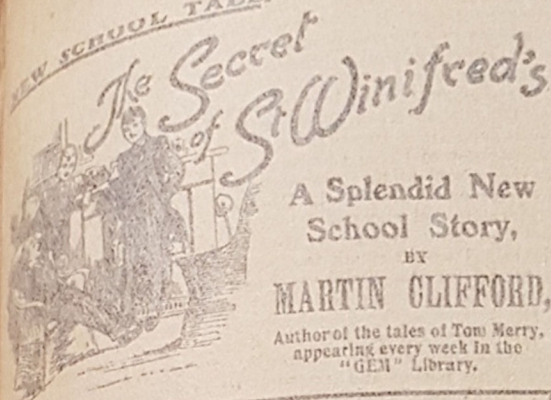
1^d

BY H. CLARKE HOOK.



**SPECS AND
HIS CHUMS
ALL GAZED
ADMIRINGLY
AT TUCKER'S
DRESS SUIT.**

NEW SCHOOL TALE.



The Secret of St. Winifred's

A Splendid New School Story,

BY
MARTIN CLIFFORD,

Author of the tales of Tom Merry,
appearing every week in the
"GEN" 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 Seaman, a public-house in the village. Clive arrives at his destination, and is shown into a back room to wait for a Mr. Mapper. He overhears a plot between Mapper and a German, whom he afterwards recognises as Herr Stossel, 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, and Clive knocks Fisher out. One fine afternoon, Baker of the Sixth finds Trelawney, the school captain, poring over a parchment which is supposed to contain the clue to the whereabouts of some treasure which one of Trelawney's ancestors took from a Spanish galleon.

(Now go on with the story.)

An Eavesdropper.

"But what's the use of a clue that one can't understand?" said Trelawney, with a laugh. "I know this shore as well as anybody between Ilfracombe and Mount's Bay, I think, but I have never seen the cave mentioned in this rag."

"It's a pity it isn't all there," remarked Baker, glancing at the parchment.

"Yes; the rest of it would have been valuable, but it has been like that ever since I knew it. I don't suppose the other piece of the parchment is still in existence."

"And it says—"

"Oh, I can tell you what it says by heart," laughed Trelawney. "I have been over it often enough for that."

"Go over it, then, and let's see if we can make anything of it," said Baker. "Nothing like pegging away, you know."

"Just as you like."

Baker stopped swinging the cricket-bat, and listened. The shouts from the cricket-field, where the St. Winifred's juniors were busy with bat and ball, came in at the open window on the summer breeze.

Trelawney, without even glancing at the parchment lying on the table, recited the words that were faintly legible on it.

"When ye lord of Trelawney shall need ye gold, let him seek in ye cave by—there in ye sand—Spanish gold."

Baker whistled.

"Certainly it's not very complete. The part about needing the gold is curious."

Trelawney laughed.

"My ancestors did not need it," he said. "Nor probably might they have been allowed to keep it if they had made public the fact that they had won the spoils of the wrecked galleon. Some, at least, of it would have been taken away."

"No one could have a better right to it than Captain Trelawney, who fought the Armada under Drake's flag, and drove that galleon to wreck."

"That is true; but right did not count for everything, even in the days of the good Queen Bess," said Trelawney.

"Besides, that brave old sea captain was a man of simple tastes, who fought the Spaniards rather for the love of the thing than for their loot. He drove that galleon ashore, and he looted the wreck, and he placed the gold where it would be in safety, and then he wrote on this parchment that the secret might be known to the Trelawneys if ever they should stand in need of the gold."

"They could never need it more than they do now," said the captain of St. Winifred's, with a sigh. "The family remains to them. My father left nothing—nothing more than barely sufficient to pay for my education here. What's in my pocket. The Trelawney lands are in the hands of strangers—I am the last of the race, and when I go, the name will be heard of no more in this part of old Devon. It is hard."

"And if the galleon's gold turned up—"

"That would make all the difference."

"The Government would claim a proportion as treasure-trove."

"Let them. What was left would be enough for me."

"And you still firmly believe in the existence of this lost treasure?" said Baker thoughtfully.

"Firmly."

"Of course, there is no doubt that it existed," Baker remarked. "Captain Trelawney undoubtedly looted the galleon and buried the treasure somewhere in the caves on Penwyn Beach. But centuries have passed since then—"

"That is true, but—"

"But you feel certain that the treasure has never been recovered?"

"I am sure of it. If the Trelawneys, with the clue they possessed, could not find it, how then should a stranger succeed in doing so?"

"There is something in that."

"It was not likely to be hidden in a place that would be discovered by chance. And the discovery would make some noise, too. The country people would get to hear of it. Yet the legend of the lost galleon remains unchanged since the days of Queen Elizabeth."

"True. As for the missing part of the paper, that is probably destroyed."

"Probably. It may be in existence, but in that case I doubt if it furnishes a clue to the galleon's gold. When it was lost no one seems to know, but it was long ago. I suppose it is of no use thinking about the thing at all; yet one is reluctant to give up even the vaguest chance of a fortune."

"Yes, rather!"

"But I suppose—"

Baker held up his hand.

"Is that someone at the door?" he whispered.

Trelawney's face changed. The thought that someone might be listening while he read out the parchment was not pleasant.

"If we have been overheard—" he muttered.

Baker shook his head.

"I think not—but I fancy someone came quietly along the passage just now, and stopped outside—"

"Open the door and look, old fellow."

Baker elid quietly from the table, crossed to the door, and threw it suddenly open. Then he uttered a sharp exclamation.

"Herr Stossel!"

Franz Stossel, the German master of St. Winifred's, stood on the threshold of Trelawney's study, biting his thin lips.

Herr Stossel is Disappointed.

Herr Stossel stood quite silent for a moment. The German master was usually quite cool and collected, but at this moment he seemed to be taken aback. The scorn that flashed from Trelawney's eyes perhaps brought the colour to his cheeks. Colour he did, a deep unpleasant red under the sallow skin.

"Herr Stossel!"

The German did not require more than a few seconds to recover himself, however.

"You startled me," he said. "I was about to knock when you threw open the door."

"I am sorry I startled you."

Baker was puzzled. It seemed impossible to suspect a master of St. Winifred's of playing the eavesdropper. His idea had been that it was some curious fag listening outside the captain's door. The sight of Herr Stossel standing there had amazed him.

"I came to speak to you, Trelawney," said Herr Stossel, looking across at the captain of St. Winifred's. "If you are otherwise engaged, it does not matter."

Trelawney smiled grimly.

In his heart he felt that the German, for some reason best known to himself, had been playing the spy; and he was not disposed to let him escape so easily.

"Not at all!" he said. "Baker only dropped in for a minute. Come in by all means, Herr Stossel."

The German master entered the study. Baker looked at Trelawney.

"I'll get along," he said.

NEXT SATURDAY: SPECS THE VENTRILOQUIST.

"No don't go. Herr Stossel can speak before you, I suppose."

"Oh, certainly!" said the German, laying one hand on the table, and looking at the captain of St. Winifred's. "It's about—about the new boy, Clive Lawrence."

The words would have surprised Trelawney another time. But just then he believed that the German master was simply inventing an excuse for having come to the study.

"Indeed, sir!" he said. "Let me see—I believe there is a new boy of that name, in the Fourth Form, I think."

"Yes, that is the boy I am alluding to."

"Really, I did not think he had attracted your notice so much," said Trelawney. "I am curious to know what you can have to say about him to me?"

"He is——" The German broke off, and a strange burning came into his eyes, that startled the captain of St. Winifred's.

The German master's glance had wandered; and Trelawney followed it, and started as he saw that it rested upon the parchment on the table.

For a moment the German was too struck to be able to conceal his feelings. He reached out his hand half-unconsciously towards the old parchment.

But Baker, who was watching him, picked it up with an exaggerated air of carelessness, and slipped it into his pocket. Franz Stossel's eyes burned again.

"Excuse me," he said thickly; "I saw an old parchment—I am curious about such relics. I should like to see it."

Trelawney coloured.

"I must ask you to excuse me, sir," he said. "As a matter of fact——"

"You do not wish me to see it?"

"It is a private family paper."

The German nodded.

"Oh, in that case, of course, I cannot ask to see it. I imagined that it was simply an old parchment of no particular interest, save for its antiquity."

"In that case, I should have shown it to you, with pleasure."

"But about Clive Lawrence," resumed the German master. "He has taken up a line that is not very suitable for a junior in this school; and he falls in respect to his elders, and even to the masters."

Trelawney looked surprised.

"Then, surely Lawrence is the proper person to speak to, sir; and not me!" he exclaimed. "Or else Mr. Neill, his Form-master."

"I hear that Lawrence is backed up in some of his insolence by members of the Sixth Form," said Franz Stossel pointedly.

Trelawney flushed angrily.

"Are you alluding to me, sir?"

"I need not specify any names——"

"I think you should. If I am mean, I deny the utterly. I certainly should never back up any insolence to a master or a senior. But I never did not observe the slightest trace of insolence in Lawrence."

"Then you cannot have observed him closely."

"On the contrary, I think I have done so. A boy is my view of Clive Lawrence. He is one of the finest at the school at this moment, as I should judge from I have seen of him," said Trelawney warmly.

Herr Stossel sneered.

"You may think so; but that is not my opinion. I thought I would speak to you on the subject, that it is bad for the school, and bad for the junior himself, him to be encouraged to defy proper authority. That all!"

And Herr Stossel left the study. Trelawney and Baker looked at one another curiously. Baker took the parchment out of his pocket and passed it to Trelawney.

"Thank you!" said Trelawney quietly. "Another and he would have read it, Baker. Did you notice how looked when he saw it?"

"Yes. It is curious."

"I am certain that he was listening, too. He looked exactly like a man covered ears with his hands, per as you would the door."

"I thought so, too, but——"

"I feel certain of it. Yet it seems almost impossible that Franz Stossel, the German master at St. Winifred's, can take any interest in the gold of the Spanish galleon—or even know anything about it," said Trelawney, with a puzzled look.

"Things seem always what they seem," said Baker oracularly. "Like

PLUCK

NEXT **1^d** SATURDAY

THE BOY VENTRILOQUIST.



Next Saturday's two long, complete stories: "Trouble at Lyneroft," a splendid tale of Specs and Co., by H. Clarke Hook; and "Jack Norton, Cadet," a story by John West. Please order your copy of "Pluck" in advance. Price One Penny.

SPECS, the Ventriloquist. Next Saturday.

That splendidly safe, local, old chap, and one of the new lot in the Sixth walk together. Trelawney's master and thought.