

Specs, the Ventriloquist, on Tour!

PLUCK

A GRAND SCHOOL TALE

1^d

BY H. CLARKE HOOK.



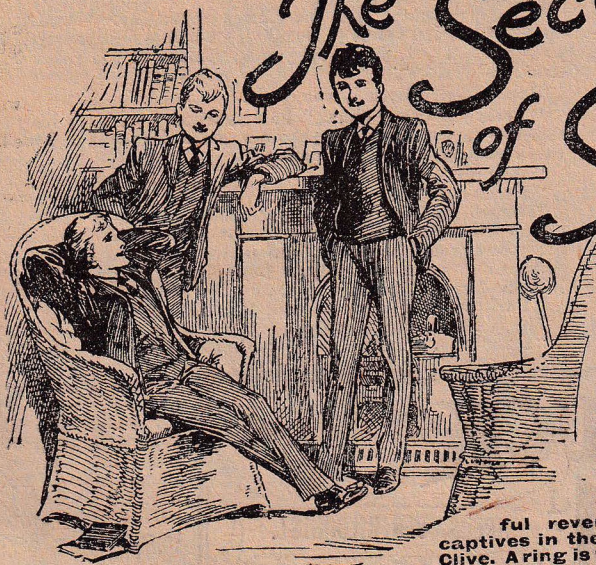
THE UMPIRE'S REVENGE! "Out!" cried Martini, the ventriloquist; and for a moment Specs and the players were thunderstruck.

New School Tale.

A SPLENDID SCHOOL TALE

By MARTIN CLIFFORD, Author of
THE TALES OF TOM MERRY
appearing in "The Gem" Library.

The Secret of St Winifred's



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. Napper. He overhears a plot between Napper 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. Ultimately there is a Form election, and Clive is elected Captain of the Fourth. The Form celebrate the occasion and capture Kendal and Keene. In playful revenge Clive decides to let his followers toss their captives in the blanket. Kendal loses his temper and challenges Clive. A ring is formed and the fight goes on. (Now go on with the Story.)

Caught in the Act.

"I may as well own up," said Kendal, at the end of the ninth round. "You've licked me. I fancy it would work out a bit differently if we tried it over again; but I suppose it's easy to say that. You've licked me. You could have knocked me out in the eighth round if you had liked, but you didn't. You're a cheeky young rascal, but you're a decent chap, and I don't mind shaking hands with you."

And he gave Clive Lawrence a firm grip of the hand. And Clive returned the pressure cordially enough.

"Good!" he said. "I'm jolly glad to see you take it like that, Kendal. We shall have plenty of rows yet, I expect, but that's no reason why we should be enemies. I'm glad you gave me your fist."

"Kendal's not a bad sort," Fisher remarked, as Clive Lawrence walked away with his chums, the crowd following and discussing the fight. "Only a little bit cocky. I dare say we shall get on with the Fifth better after this."

"I dare say we shall get on with them worse," grinned Locke.

"Well, it doesn't matter which, anyway. Feel pretty done up, Lawrence?"

"Done right up," said Clive. "I don't know if I could have stuck out a tenth round, even if Kendal could have done it. But I'm jolly glad I won!"

"Coming down to the cricket?"

It was Fisher who asked the question, as the Fourth Form at St. Winifred's came out of their class-room the following afternoon.

Clive Lawrence shook his head.

"No, I'm going down to the village, if I can get a pass out of bounds. My new bat was to be ready for me to-day."

"Not much good asking Courtney for a pass," said Locke, shaking his head. "He wouldn't give you one, unless it was to go to the Jolly Seaman to get him some smokes."

"I was thinking of asking Trelawny."

"It's the custom for a junior to ask the fellow he fags for, if the fellow happens to be a prefect."

"Yes, I know, but Courtney would refuse. Trelawny knows the footing we stand upon, anyway, and he knows it would be no good my asking Courtney. If you fellows will wait for me, I'll slip up and see if Tre is in his study."

"Right you are!"

Clive Lawrence went upstairs, and quickly along the Sixth Form passage. The door of Trelawny's study was closed, and Clive tapped at it. He heard a sudden sound within the room.

"Trelawny's at home," he murmured to himself.

He was rather surprised at not being bidden to enter. The sound in the study had followed his knock so directly that he felt sure he had been heard. He waited some moments, and then tapped again.

Still there was no reply.

Clive was puzzled. He knocked a third time, and waited to be told to come in, and the silence made him conclude that he was mistaken about Trelawny being at home. The sound might have been made by a cat, perhaps. Anyway, there was no harm in looking into the study, after knocking, to make sure, and so the junior opened the door.

Then he gave a start of surprise. There was someone in the study; but it was not the young captain of St. Winifred's. It was Franz Stossel who stood there, in full view, with an expression on his face which showed how furious he was at being discovered.

Clive stared at him in blank amazement. The German returned his glance savagely, and their eyes met. Clive did not recede. He remained where he was, looking steadily at the German.

"Lawrence! Always you!"

The German muttered the words half aloud, unconsciously.

"I came here to speak to Trelawny," said Clive Lawrence.

"He is not here."

"I can see that."

"Well, go."

"I want to speak to him when he comes," said Clive Lawrence quietly. "I may as well wait in the room."

And he came a step further in. His keen eye had roved round the study for a moment. He saw the drawer of the table half open, and the lid of a box raised. A swift suspicion had shot into his mind. The words spoken between the German and Mr. Napper at the Jolly Seaman were fresh in his memory. Trelawny should not be robbed if Clive Lawrence could help it.

The German master's eyes blazed.

"I have told you to go, Lawrence."

"Why may I not remain, sir? I want to wait for Trelawny."

"I am waiting for him," said Herr Stossel. "I have to consult him upon an important matter."

Clive's lip curled slightly. Only a guilty conscience could have made a master descend to giving an explanation to a junior.

"You hear me!" said Herr Stossel harshly. "I do not choose to be troubled by your presence. You may go."

Clive Lawrence hesitated for a moment. It was difficult to disobey a direct order from a master. Besides, the powerful German could easily have removed him from the study by force.

"Very well, sir," he said quietly.

He left the study, and hurried down the passage. Baker's door was open, and Clive Lawrence knocked quickly and went in. The Sixth-Former started, and almost dropped the cricket-bat he was examining.

"Lawrence, what do you mean by bolting into my study like that?" he rapped out.

NEXT SATURDAY: "THE VENTRILOQUIST'S HOLIDAY."
A Splendid Tale of Specs, the Twins, AND
& Co. By H. Clarke Hook.

"TOM SHERRATT, SHIP'S STEWARD." IN **"PLUCK," 1D.**
A Thrilling Tale of the Sea.
By Clabon Glover.

"Do you know where Trelawny is?"

"No, I don't; I believe he has gone out. I——"

"Herr Stossel is waiting for him in his study."

"Let him wait."

"He was there, when I went there just now, with the door closed," said Clive Lawrence, with a peculiar note in his voice that caused Baker to look at him more attentively.

"What are you driving at, kid?" exclaimed the Sixth-Former. "I suppose Herr Stossel wasn't doing any harm in Trelawny's study?"

"The drawer of the table was open——"

"What?"

"And the lid of a box open, too."

Baker stared at the junior uneasily. Back to his memory came that incident of the German master listening at the captain's door, and of Franz Stossel's intense curiosity concerning the old parchment.

"All right, Lawrence," he said shortly.

He laid down the cricket-bat, and went along the passage. Clive Lawrence followed him with his eyes till he saw him enter Trelawny's study. Satisfied that he had done all he could do, the junior went downstairs to rejoin his chums. Baker went right into his chum's study without knocking, as he had a right to do, and his eyes fell instantly upon the German master. Herr Stossel was bending over the drawer of the table, which was wide open now.

"Ahem!" coughed Baker.

Herr Stossel started violently. His sallow face went a shade whiter as he saw Baker staring straight at him. The Sixth-Former took very little trouble to hide his disgust. Then a deep tinge of red crept into Franz Stossel's cheeks.

"I—do you know where Trelawny is?" he stammered.

"He is out."

"Ah! I want to see him very particularly."

"And, meantime, you are amusing yourself by turning out the drawer, I see," said Baker, in cutting tones.

Such words from a junior would probably have been answered by a blow; but from the stalwart Sixth-Former the German master was compelled to take them quietly. He gritted his teeth hard.

"Trelawny has some botanical specimens here," he remarked. "I was looking them over to while away the time."

"It is a custom to ask permission before opening a private drawer."

"You are insolent!"

"I am speaking plain English. If you call it insolence, and care to report me to Dr. Esmond, I am quite ready to justify my words in his presence."

"You have placed a misconception on my action Baker."

"It was very open to misconception, at all events."

"You need not repeat your insolence. I am waiting here for Trelawny——"

"So am I," said Baker, seating himself in Trelawny's chair.

"You need not remain——"

"I may as well, I think."

"Listen to me!" said the German savagely. "You have spoken to me in terms of insult, for which a junior would be chastised. I will not allow you to remain in the room with me. Go at once!"

Baker settled back in the chair.

"Trelawny is my chum," he remarked. "I have his permission to use the study as if it were my own. I don't think you have that permission."

"Will you go?"

"I prefer to remain."

Herr Stossel looked for a moment as though he would spring upon the Sixth-Former. But he realised that such a proceeding would be worse than useless. He muttered something in German in a savage undertone. Baker took up a book and settled himself to read.

"I will make you repent this, Baker!"

The Sixth-Former yawned.

"I don't see why my presence should incommode you," he said.

"There is another chair, and another book. Or we could pass the time with light and interesting conversation, while we both wait for Trelawny."

The German turned to the door.

"You are not going, Herr Stossel?"

The German did not reply. He strode from the study, and shut the door violently behind him. Baker grinned, and read his book. A quarter of an hour later the door reopened, and Trelawny looked in.

"Hallo, Baker! I've just heard from Lawrence, of the Fourth, that you were waiting for me in my study. Anything important?"

Baker closed the book with a snap.

"No," he said. "I found that Herr Stossel was waiting here to speak to you, so I thought I'd wait also. It was Lawrence gave me the tip."

Trelawny looked startled.

"What, does Lawrence know about it?"

"Ask me another. He knows something, for he gave me the tip. As a matter of fact, old fellow, Stossel was rummaging through the drawer of your table."

"The cad!"

"That's the word. We were not mistaken, he was here, looking for it."

(Another long instalment of this splendid School Tale next Saturday. Please order your copy of PLUCK in advance.)



Next Saturday's two long, complete stories: "The Ventriloquist's Holiday," a splendid tale of Specs, the Twins & Co.; and "Tom Sherratt, Ship's Steward," a tale of the sea. Order your copy of "Pluck" in advance. Price 1d.