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**ST. FRANK'S**  
**IN THE "TALKIES!"**

Edward Oswald Handforth shows 'em how to act! An amusing incident from the magnificent long complete fun and adventure yarn inside, featuring the cheery chums of St. Frank's.

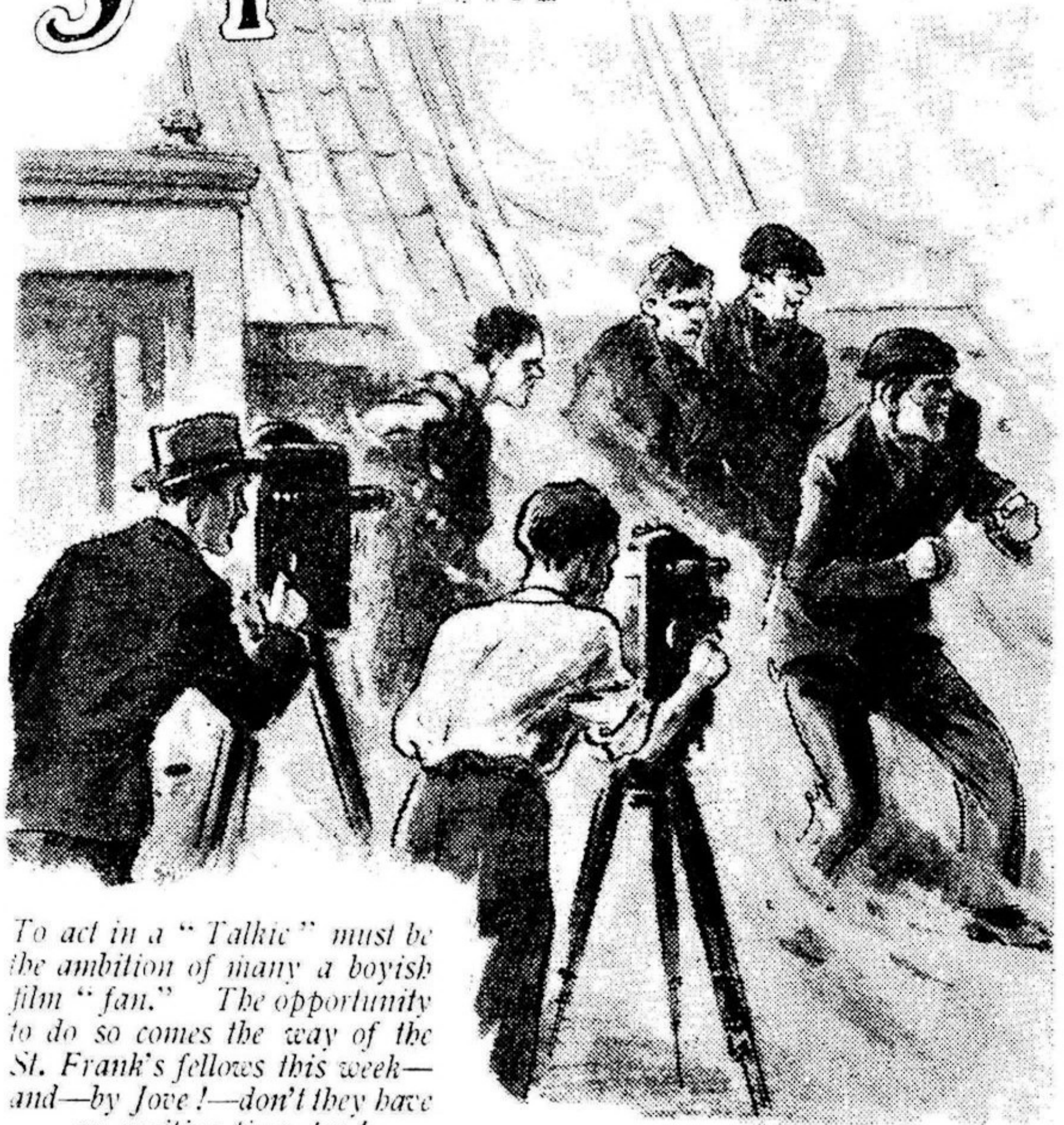
New Series No. 169.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

July 27th, 1929.



# ST FRANK'S IN



*To act in a "Talkie" must be the ambition of many a boyish film "fan." The opportunity to do so comes the way of the St. Frank's fellows this week—and—by Jove!—don't they have an exciting time, too!*

## CHAPTER 1.

### A Peppery Customer!

**W**ILLY HANDFORTH, of the Third Form at St. Frank's, looked round inquiringly and then picked the golf ball out of the little clump of  
firs.

"Might as well take this, you chaps," he remarked. "I dare say it'll come in useful."

"How do you know it doesn't belong to somebody?" asked Chubby Heath dubiously.

"My dear ass, you can always find golf balls on the links," said Willy. "They don't belong to anybody—they're lost balls.

If I don't grab this, some caddy will come along and nab it."

He looked round again, and the only person in sight was a solitary individual in plus fours, about two hundred yards away. This gentleman was approaching, his golf bag slung over his shoulder.

At present, the St. Frank's School Team was "parked" in the Southampton district, and to-day being a half-holiday, the three Third-Formers were out for a ramble. They were in the Royal Chase, or Common—which is a great area of primeval forest-land, and really a portion of the Royal Forest of Bere. This great natural park is unspoiled, and



# THE "TALKIES!"



*A Magnificent Long Complete  
School-Adventure Yarn*

By

**EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.**

beautiful beyond description. And its value to such a thickly-populated place as Southampton is difficult to estimate.

It is really a wonderful area of wooded country, with elm, oak, birch and pine—with picturesque thickets of holly, hawthorn and firs. The golf links was not actually in the Royal Chase.

The fags had left the latter place behind, and had wandered casually on to the links.

Willy was tossing the golf ball carelessly in his hand when the gentleman in plus fours arrived close at hand. The fags could

now see that he was rather elderly, with white hair, and a big, bristling moustache.

"Good gracious me!" he ejaculated, coming to a sudden halt, and pointing a mid-iron straight at Willy. "How dare you, sir? Put that ball down at once! Of all the infernal impudence! How dare you interfere with that ball?"

"What's the matter, sir?" asked Willy, in mild surprise. "I'm not doing it any harm."

"Harm!" thundered the other. "You impertinent young puppy! That's my golf ball! What are you doing here? Who gave



you permission to come on the links? Drop that ball at once, and go away!"

Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon, Willy's inseparable chums, looked on rather uncomfortably. They had felt that some trouble would come of Willy's action in picking up that ball. The trouble had come even sooner than they had anticipated.

"Do you hear me?" roared the angry man. "Do you want me to lay this club across your shoulders?"

"Go easy, sir," protested Willy. "This isn't your golf ball."

"Rubbish! I distinctly saw it fall in this direction——"

"That's right, sir," nodded Willy. "There it is—lying just over there, in that little hollow."

He pointed, and Chubby and Juicy grinned. There, sure enough, was a white golf ball, showing plainly in the short grass.

"Well, upon my soul!" ejaculated the elderly gentleman. "I am sorry, my boy! For the moment, I thought that you had picked up my ball!"

"That's all right, sir—I knew it wasn't yours," said Willy. "I saw yours come rolling down, and I wouldn't dream of touching it."

"H'm! I'm not so sure of that," said the old gentleman. "However, I'll say no more about it."

He turned aside, in the direction of his ball, but suddenly he checked himself. Then he turned back, and looked at the three juniors contemplatively.

"Doing anything?" he asked bluntly.

"Nothing in particular, sir," said Willy.

"Then you'd better come and caddy for me," said the old fellow. "My name is Owen—Colonel Charles Owen."

"Yes, sir," said Willy. "Right-ho! We'll caddy for you, if you like."

"Good boys—good boys," said the colonel. "Splendid! I couldn't find any infernal caddies when I started out. Don't know what the boys are coming to nowadays!"

He turned towards his ball, after dropping his golf bag.

"I say, this is a bit thick, isn't it?" muttered Chubby. "We're not caddies, you know!"

"I should think not!" protested Juicy Lemon. "It's like his nerve to get us on the job! What does he take us for?"

"Cheese it, you fatheads!" muttered Willy. "There's no harm in doing the old boy a good turn. If you don't like it, you can jolly well clear off."

The colonel was looking over towards the green, the flag of which could just be seen over a rising knoll.

"The cleek or the mid-iron," he muttered. "Don't quite know which. Fairly long distance. Yes, the cleek."

He selected the cleek from his bag, took his stance, and puffed a bit.

He swung the club up, brought it down, and a clod of earth shot into the air, the golf ball travelling about two yards. Colonel

Owen danced up and down, his face working with fury.

"Confound!" he bellowed. "I knew that would happen if I used that wretched cleek! The thing's no infernal use whatever!"

He threw it aside, grasped the mid-iron, and tried again.

This time he succeeded in getting a good drive, and the ball went hissing away towards the green.

"Absurd!" said the colonel, glaring at Willy. "Absolutely ridiculous! Seven! Seven strokes to get here—and the bogey for this hole is only five! Heaven knows how many I shall take to do it!"

"That's all right, sir," said Willy. "You're only practising, aren't you?"

"What difference does that make, you young idiot?" retorted Colonel Owen. "I play worse when I'm playing in a match! Much worse! A confounded lot worse! What the deuce do you know about it, anyhow?"

"All right, sir—let's be getting on," said Willy coolly. "I've spotted where your ball went. I know exactly where it lies."

"Oh, you do?" said the colonel approvingly. "Good boy—good boy! My long sight isn't what it used to be. I'm hanged if I can see the ball when I get in a good drive. Heaven knows that I don't get in many! A wonderful game, golf! A marvellous game!"

Willy shouldered the bag, and they all went off towards the green. They found the ball lying rather badly, just behind a tuft of turf, in a shallow hollow. The green was just down a little slope, about twenty yards away.

"The mashie, I think, sir," said Willy.

"Mashie?" said the colonel. "Nonsense! Arrant nonsense! Good gracious, boy, are you trying to teach me how to play golf?"

"I was only making a suggestion, sir," said Willy modestly.

"Then you can keep your suggestions to yourself!" puffed Colonel Owen. "This lie is a tricky one. The niblick, sir! Give me the niblick!"

"Just as you like, sir," said Willy. "But if you use the niblick, I'm afraid you'll drop too short. It'll loft the ball too much. I haven't played golf, but I've often caddied for my pater."

"Give me the niblick, and don't presume to argue!" fumed the colonel.

Willy handed over the niblick, and the colonel took his stance—this being quite a long procedure with him. Finally, after much puffing and blowing, he swung the niblick down, got it well under the ball, and lifted it high into the air. It fell with a thud only about ten yards farther on.

"I knew it!" he bellowed. "I knew what would happen if I used this infernal club! That ball ought to have been on the green!"

"Try again, sir—and use the mashie this time," said Willy, unmoved.

The old gentleman snorted, said nothing, but took the mashie when Willy handed it



to him. And this time he made a perfect stroke, and landed within a yard of the hole, on the green.

"Gad! That was better!" he shouted joyfully. "That was better, boy! Splendid! Best stroke I've made this afternoon!"

Arriving at the green, the colonel took the putter from Willy, and succeeded in holing in the ball in one more stroke. He was immensely pleased. All his bad temper had gone, and he beamed upon the fags with joy.

"We're getting on!" he said boisterously. "Upon my word, young man, your advice was good! It's like your confounded cheek to give me any advice—but it was good! Distinctly and positively good! Where's the next tee? Eh? What's the matter with this confounded course? Where's the next tee?"

"Isn't that it, sir?" asked Willy, pointing.

**O**N the tee the colonel glared when Willy handed him the wooden driver.

"I don't want that!" he said impatiently. "Give me the iron!"

"I hardly think so, sir," said Willy, shaking his head. "You'll get in a much better drive with the wooden club. It's not an iron shot, I'm sure, sir. There aren't any bunkers in the way, or any hazards, and it's a clean drive."

The colonel looked thoughtful.

"Gad! Do you think so?" he said wonderingly. "I've a mind to try it, boy! Yes, give me that wooden driver!"

Willy stuck a little wooden peg in the ground, teed the ball, and stood aside. And Colonel Owen got in a most beautiful drive.

There came a soft "click" as the head of the club struck the ball dead true. Then the "zing" as the ball went winging on its flight through the air. It fell in the far distance, quite near apparently to the green.

"Splendid! Splendid!" shouted Colonel Owen, dancing up and down in his excitement. "The best drive I've made for weeks!

And I wouldn't look at that wooden club. I wouldn't touch it. Boy, you've brought me luck! What's the bogey for this hole?"

"Five, sir," said Willy, glancing at the sand box.

"Five!" roared the colonel. "With luck I ought to do this hole in par. Come along. Don't stand about there. Bring my clubs. Upon my soul! The best drive I've made for weeks!"

He was so pleased that he went striding along at a great pace. Willy winked at Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon, and they were all beginning to enjoy themselves. There was something rather attractive about this peppery old customer. The experience was rather novel, too.

"There's your ball, sir—only about thirty yards from the green," said

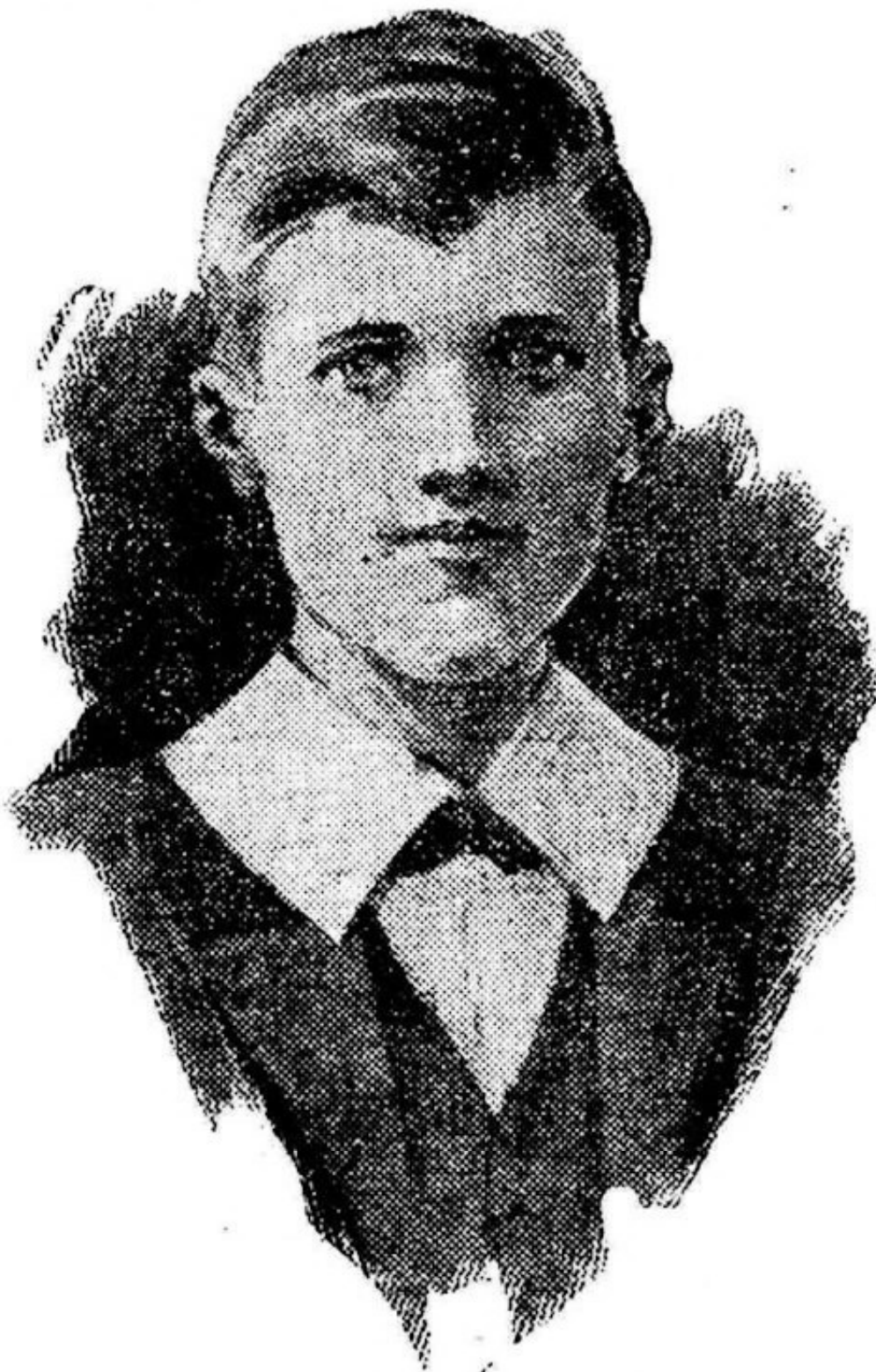
Willy, pointing. "That was a lovely drive of yours."

"Don't speak to me!" puffed the colonel. "Let me concentrate on this. Give me the brassey."

"Not the brassey, sir," protested Willy. "If you use the brassey you'll hit the ball miles too far. You want the mashie."

"I want the brassey, boy!" frowned the colonel. "Confound your impudence!"

## WHO'S WHO AT ST. FRANK'S.



ALAN CASTLETON.

**Remove Form.**

**Study S**

*A thorough bad lad was Castleton when he first came to St. Frank's, but now he is true blue and one of the best. A keen sportsman, being exceptionally clever on the football field.*



Willy handed him the mashie-iron.

"What's this?" bellowed Colonel Owen. "Here, confound you, I'm not going to have — H'm! Perhaps you're right, though!" he added in surprise. "Boy! I believe you are right!"

He took his shot, and he nearly went purple with excitement when the ball dropped beautifully on the green and stopped nearly dead.

"Two! On the green in two!" he shouted thickly. "Boy! Give me the putter! Quickly! Let me have the putter!"

"Take it easily, sir," advised Willy. "You'll spoil everything if you get excited now. This is the time to go coolly at it."

They went on the green, and Willy looked at the closely-clipped turf with a keen eye.

"If I were you, sir, I should aim about eighteen inches to the right of the hole," he said. "The ground rises a bit that way, and if you give it the right impetus it'll curl in."

"Nonsense!" said the colonel, looking at the hole. "Stuff and nonsense! What rubbish!"

"All right, sir—you see," said Willy. "Don't forget that I've brought you luck, sir—that's what you said yourself."

"Upon my word, so you have!" muttered the colonel. "I'll try it, boy!"

He took the putter, wasted nearly half a minute in hesitation, and then took his shot. The ball rolled gently along, curved round in a beautiful half-circle, and dropped neatly into the hole.

## CHAPTER 2.

### Colonel Owen's Invitation!

**C**OLONEL CHARLES OWEN executed a dance of triumph.

"Three!" he shouted excitedly.

"By gad! I've done this hole in three, boy! Two under bogey!"

"Yes, sir," said Willy, nodding. "Jolly good, sir!"

The colonel started.

"Good! And it was your doing!" he said, looking at Willy in amazement. "If it hadn't been for you, I should have driven off that tee with the iron. If it hadn't been for you, I should have used the brasseys instead of the mashie. And if it hadn't been for you—"

"That's all right, sir," grinned Willy. "I was only making a few suggestions. I don't want to be impertinent—"

"Impertinent be hanged!" interrupted the colonel. "During the last six months I've had no less than four professionals coaching me, and not one of them has done me as much good as you have! Never knew such a thing in all my life! Amazing! Staggering! Here, boy, take this!"

He pulled a pound note out of his pocket and held it towards Willy.

"Not likely, sir!" protested the fag. "I've done nothing to earn a quid!"

"If you don't take it, young man, I'll tear it up!" roared the colonel. "Where's the next tee? Come along! You've brought me luck!"

Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon were amazed. But Willy took it all very calmly. As he had said, he had often caddied for his pater, and he knew quite a good deal about golf. If he had no actual experience of it he had seen plenty of it, and he knew the theory all right.

Colonel Owen was evidently one of those gentlemen who took golf very seriously. While he was on the links everything else in life was dismissed from his mind. He was a golf fiend. He was the kind of man who will, after making a bad stroke, smash his club across his knee and fling it away. And this, of course, is a most unfair proceeding, because the club isn't to blame in the least. Golfers are frequently apt to blame their clubs for their own bad play.

At the next tee the colonel made another good drive—with the wooden club again. In all probability Willy's advice was quite superfluous. But in some psychological kind of way he had given Colonel Owen fresh confidence. And, as a natural result, the colonel's play was vastly better. In golf one plays badly if one lacks confidence. But if one gets a feeling that everything is going well, then there is generally an improvement.

And so great did the colonel's confidence become that before he had finished his practice he was three or four hundred per cent better than when he had started. And he put this all down to Willy's presence.

"Never in my life have I played so well!" he declared at length. "Never! And all through a mere boy! The thing is ridiculous—preposterous! But it happens to be true. Boy, I shall need you again. I shall need you to-morrow. I'm playing in a match to-morrow, and you must caddy for me—yes, and give me your advice!"

"I wouldn't presume to do that, sir," said Willy. "I'm only a schoolboy, and—"

"I don't care what you are!" broke in the colonel impatiently. "I don't care if you're a Hottentot! Young as you are, you've got a shrewd head screwed on your shoulders. You've an uncanny way of knowing what to do. You're better than all the professionals lumped together. Haven't I had a demonstration of it? Haven't you shown me? My boy, I never played so well before! Never!"

"Well, I'll try to get off if I can, sir, but I can't promise," said Willy. "It's a half-holiday to-day, but it's not a half-holiday to-morrow."

"Stuff and nonsense!" said the colonel. "What do I care about half-holidays? Where do you live? What is your school?"

"St. Frank's, sir," said Willy. "We're from the School Train, you know."

"Ah, yes, to be sure!" said Colonel Owen, nodding. "I've heard about it. The School Train, eh? Well, give me the name of your headmaster. I'll see him—I'll arrange this



"I'll give you ten pounds to come with me to-morrow. Ten pounds, young man!"

"If you'll make it all right with Mr. Lee, sir, I'll be glad enough to come," replied Willy cheerfully. "But I'm not so sure about the ten quid. I don't think I ought to take it."

"Where are you going now?" demanded the colonel, ignoring Willy's reference to the money. "Going back to the train? No? Yes?"

"Well, we thought about doing so, sir, although it's not necessary yet," said Willy. "Plenty of time before calling-over—"

"Hungry?" barked the colonel.

"Rather, sir," grinned the three fags in one voice.

"Good! Then come with me! Come home with me!" said Colonel Owen.

"Thanks awfully, sir," said Willy. "We'd love to. But I was just wondering about that slice of yours."

"Slice?" ejaculated the colonel, as though he had been stung.

"I rather think you've developed a slice lately, sir," said Willy, with the air of a golf professional. "I've noticed a tendency now and again—"

"Don't tell me!" broke in the colonel, with a heavy frown. "Don't I know it? I'm always slicing these infernal balls!"

"You're inclined to lift your shoulder a bit when you drive, sir," said Willy. "That won't do, you know. Have a shot or two now, and my chums will stand a good way off, and retrieve the balls. Practise driving for a bit, sir!"

The colonel grunted and his eyes sparkled.

He practised driving—and Willy gave him one or two tips. In the meantime, Willy was chuckling gleefully to himself. There was something quite farcical in this situation—a mere junior schoolboy giving advice to a peppery old colonel like this, particularly as Willy had never played golf in his life.

Uncannily enough, however, Willy's advice was sound—not because he knew a great deal of golf, but because the colonel was automatically improving his play. He was really responsible for it—not Willy. It was merely Willy's presence which had brought about this improvement.

"Astonishing—that's what it is," said the colonel, after a while. "Positively astonishing! By gad, boy, I've never felt happier in all my life!"

"That's the spirit, sir," said Willy, nodding.

"Never felt happier in all my life!" repeated Colonel Owen. "Sir Henry thinks he's going to beat me to-morrow—and I thought he'd beat me, too; but he won't, by gad! Not now! He won't beat me!"

"Of course he won't, sir!" agreed Willy promptly. "You're going to slosh him into the middle of next week!"

"I shall certainly slosh him—Eh? I shall do no such thing!" frowned the colonel. "But I shall beat him, boy! Make no mistake about that! But you must be with me as my caddy. Do you understand?"

"What time does the match start, sir?"

"After luncheon."

"I'm afraid I shall be at lessons, sir—"

"Hang lessons! Confound lessons!" roared the colonel. "I'll see your school-master about this! And now—come along!"

They went towards the club-house, and, having arrived, Colonel Owen took his golf-bag in, and then joined Willy & Co. again. A big car was waiting.

"Jump in!" invited the colonel boisterously.

He was as good as his word. Evidently he meant to take Willy & Co. home, so that he could give them a good time. And they, of course, made no objections.

THE colonel's country home, it seemed, was situated well within the New Forest, and the fags enjoyed a motor-run of five or six miles before their destination was reached. Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon were wondering how they would get back; but Willy did not concern himself over such a detail as this.

The colonel drove the car himself, and the three fags occupied the rear seats. Willy's eyes widely open all the time—watching the various aspects of the countryside.

"So this is the New Forest, eh?" commented Chubby Heath. "Don't think much of it."

"You wouldn't!" said Willy tartly.

"Well, it's not a forest at all!" protested Chubby. "Look at the open country—the



wide expanses of grassland. I thought the New Forest was all trees."

"Rats! The real meaning of the word 'forest' is a tract of land in its wild, natural state," said Willy. "It doesn't follow that every bit of that land must be covered with trees."

"Well, what about animal life?" put in Juicy Lemon. "There's nothing here—not a giddy rabbit, even! I haven't spotted a living thing since we came along."

Willy sighed.

"I don't blame you, Juicy," he said patiently. "You were born without brains, so I can't expect you to—"

"Here, cheese it!" protested Juicy.

"Born without brains!" insisted Willy. "Why, you silly chump, you didn't expect to find an open-air zoological garden here, did you? The inhabitants of these woods and heaths have a habit of making themselves invisible when human beings appear.



They're naturally shy. There's plenty of wild life in this forest, if you only know where to look for it, and if you only go about it in the right way."

Willy was quite right. The New Forest is, in its true sense, a great national park. It is a large tract of really wild forest.

And, as Willy had hinted, one cannot actually see the real beauties of the forest by following the roads which run through it. One must get off these roads, and go *into* the forest itself. And when one goes into these wilds there is very little chance that one will be disappointed.

But care must be taken, since it is easy enough to get lost in this great sixty-thousand-acre wilderness.

**O**RIGINALLY, when the New Forest was appropriated by William the Conqueror, its boundaries extended from Southampton Water on the east, the sea coast on the south, and the River Avon on the west, and to the north it extended more or less to a line drawn between Salisbury and Winchester. At that time the forest could not have been much less than one hundred and fifty thousand acres in extent. But during the centuries its area has been gradually diminished by encroachments, and now it has shrunk to about ninety-two thousand acres, and of this total over sixty thousand acres remain national property, every part of which is unenclosed and free to the public.

And here can be found almost every aspect of sylvan and rural beauty. In no other part of the country is there a greater variety of wild bird life to be found. There are some wonderful walks and drives in which to indulge through the forest glades, and round about Lyndhurst and Brockenhurst there are some charming rambles to be had.

At Stony Cross, near the Shovel Maker's Cottage, a prospect of thirty miles can be surveyed. At Piper's Wait, on Bramble Hill, there is a magnificent view of the whole forest in all its full luxuriance. On Longcross Plain the spire of Salisbury Cathedral can be seen, and on Cut Walk Hill, near Lyndhurst, a wonderful view of the Dorset coast, the Needles, and Southampton is possible.

Not that many of the St. Frank's fellows were keen on this sort of thing. They were more interested, perhaps, in the busy life of Southampton, in the shipping, and so forth. The New Forest was rather too quiet for them, too peaceful. They wanted something more lively.

Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon were rather bored by the beauties of the forest; Willy Handforth enjoyed that drive because he was near the homes of the wild things, and Willy's love of animals was so great that he wanted to stop the car, and go off for rambles into the woodland glades.

But he restrained himself, knowing that there was no time for this sort of thing just now. Besides, he was rather hungry.

And ultimately Colonel Owen's home was reached—a fine old country mansion, nestling amidst the trees in a picturesque valley. And the colonel kept his word to the letter. He entertained his young guests sumptuously.

### CHAPTER 3.

#### Willy's Day Out!

"**A**ND now," said Colonel Owen briskly, "what about to-morrow, young man?"

It was time for Willy & Co. to be going, and the colonel had strolled out with them on to the wide terrace facing the big house. He was in an excellent humour, and he had apparently enjoyed entertaining these three young visitors. Mrs. Owen and her two daughters and two small sons, it seemed, were away on holiday, somewhere in the North. The colonel was having a free and easy time of it.

"Well, I'd like to come round with you in to-morrow's match, sir, but I'm not at all sure of it," said Willy, shaking his head. "If I suggest anything like that to my Form-master—or even to Mr. Lee—he'll probably say it can't be done."

"But it can be done—it must be done!" insisted the colonel, with a sudden frown. "What nonsense! Tell your masters that I insist!"

"That won't have any effect on them, sir," said Willy, shaking his head. "But if you come along and see Mr. Lee you might be able to wangle it."

Willy had no doubts regarding his own ability to "wangle" it single-handed; but he was rather keen on having a ride back to the School Train in the colonel's car. It would solve a little problem. He could not very well ask the colonel to drive the three of them back. But, by suggesting that the colonel should come and see Nelson Lee the difficulty was overcome.

"H'm! Perhaps you're right," said the old gentleman thoughtfully. "We don't want any mistake about it. We can't have any blundering. After what I've seen to-day, my boy, I must have you with me to-morrow afternoon. By gad, it'll take ten years off my age if I beat Sir Henry to-morrow. Absolutely ten years! I've never beaten him yet, and didn't think I ever should. But now I'm beginning to hope."

"That's no good, sir," said Willy. "You've got to make up your mind you *will* beat him."

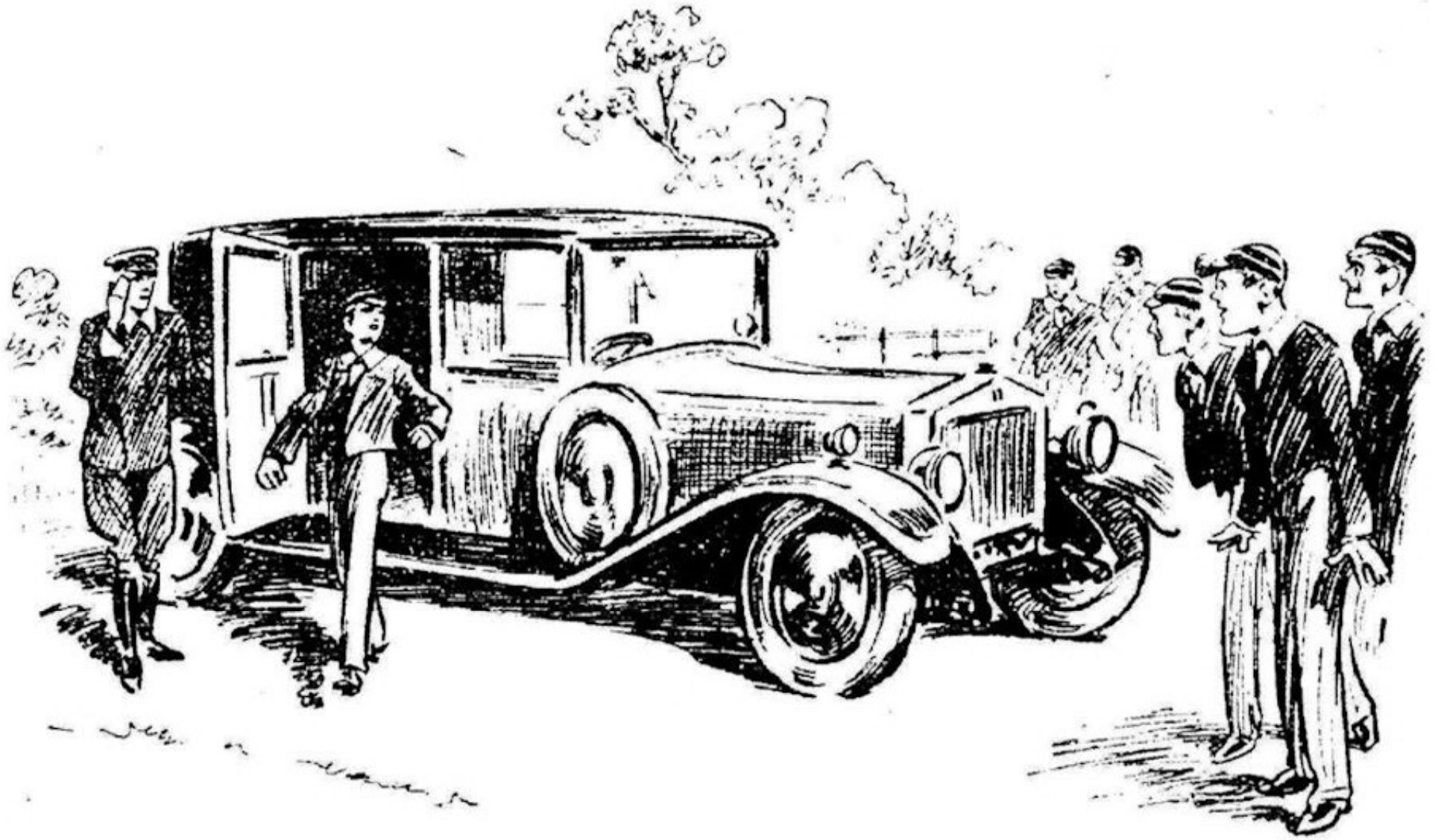
"You're right—you're positively right!" shouted the colonel. "Yes, I'll beat him! By gad! I'll slosh him into the middle of next week, as you have put it."

"That's the spirit, sir," grinned Willy.

"What's more, I'll come back with you now!" went on the colonel grimly. "I'll speak to your headmaster, and I'll arrange this business. You boys might as well come along with me."

"Thanks awfully, sir," said Willy.





Willy Handforth, looking very important, stepped jauntily out of the luxurious limousine as the liveried chauffeur opened the door. "My hat!" gasped Edward Oswald Handforth, staring in dumfounded astonishment. "What's my minor coming to—rolling up in a whacking great car like a bloated millionaire!"

**C**HUBBY HEATH and Juicy Lemon wondered how on earth Willy did it. It wasn't the first time they had wondered, either. Things they could never hope to accomplish Willy accomplished with supreme ease.

As a result of the colonel's suggestion, the three fags arrived back at the School Train in good time for calling over, and naturally they lost no time in spreading the news about their adventure. They rather boasted of it. They had been entertained by Colonel Owen at the latter's stately country mansion in the New Forest. What was more, Colonel Owen had brought them back in his own car.

"What rot!" said Edward Oswald Handforth, of the Remove, when he heard. "You can't kid me with a yarn like that!"

"Nobody's trying to kid you!" said Chubby Heath. "It's a fact."

"It looks like it, Handy," remarked Church. "There's the colonel's car, anyhow."

"And when he drove up he had nobody but these three fags with him," added McClure.

"That proves nothing," argued Handforth. "In all probability the young scamps were trespassing on the colonel's property, and he has brought them here so that he can make a complaint against them."

Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon grinned.

"A complaint?" said Chubby. "Why, you big ass, Willy and the colonel are like long-lost brothers. When the colonel goes away he'll probably kiss Willy good-bye."

"Not for me," said Willy as he joined them. "The colonel's moustache is a bit too bushy. I might get lost in the rough."

"What have you been up to, my son?" demanded his major sternly.

"Everything," replied Willy. "It's simple enough. Colonel Owen is suffering from a disease."

"He looked healthy enough when I saw him," said Church.

"Oh, I think he's healthy enough; but it's a disease, all the same—a hopeless disease," said Willy. "In fact, it's an incurable disease."

"Well, what is it?" asked Handforth.

"Golf."

"What?"

"Golf."

"What do you mean—golf?"

"Golf is a game," explained Willy patiently. "You take a little white ball, and you go on the links and tell yourself that you're going to drive the ball about two hundred yards, and you drive it about twenty; then you go purple in the face, and stamp and rave. That's golf."

"You silly young fathead!" roared Handforth. "Do you think I don't know what golf is?"

"Nobody knows it—until he's played it," replied Willy sagely. "And even after he's played it he doesn't know it."

"But just now you said that the colonel was suffering from a disease."

"Yes—golf."

"But golf isn't a disease, you young lunatic!" snorted Handforth.

"You may not think so, but ask any golfer!" retorted Willy. "Colonel Owen happens to have an extra bad attack of it"



just now, and that's why Chubby and Juicy and I have had such a ripping time."

And he explained the events of the afternoon to his interested listeners. By the time he had finished they were all inclined to grin, and they all agreed that the three fags were "lucky bounders."

**I**N the meantime, Colonel Owen had found his way into Nelson Lee's study on the School Train. Some of the splendidly equipped coaches of this train were divided into compartments, each compartment being a very comfortable little room. Others, of course, were class-rooms, dining saloons, dormitories and so forth.

"I don't want any arguments about this, Mr. Lee!" said the colonel, as he glared at the School Train's Head. "I've told you how that boy improved my game. I want him to-morrow afternoon. Do you understand, sir?"

"But to-morrow is not a half-holiday, Colonel Owen," said Nelson Lee gently. "I do not think Handforth minor can be excused his lessons——"

"Stuff and nonsense!" broke in the colonel, rising to his feet. "Fiddlesticks! Rubbish, sir. I tell you, I've got to have that boy!"

"But do you seriously think that he has any effect upon your game?"

"Think!" retorted the colonel fiercely. "Think! By gad, sir, I don't think—I know! That boy has brought me luck. To-morrow I shall beat Sir Henry Markham. I've never beaten him yet, and until I met this boy I never expected to beat him. But now I know—I can feel it in my bones, sir! With that boy as my caddy I shall achieve the dream of my life!"

Nelson Lee smiled.

"Well, Colonel Owen, I wouldn't like to shatter one of your dreams," he said dryly. "In the circumstances I will give this boy a pass for to-morrow afternoon."

"Splendid!" beamed the colonel. "Thank you, Mr. Lee—thank you a thousand times! I don't pretend to know why this boy gives me such confidence; I can't explain why I want him to be with me. It's ridiculous. It's absurd. And yet, by gad, it happens to be a fact."

Outside the colonel pushed his way through a crowd of juniors and clapped Willy on the back.

"All serene, sir?" asked Willy.

"Yes, it's settled," replied the colonel, with satisfaction. "You're free for to-morrow afternoon, young man. Come over early. Come over to lunch if you like."

"I'll try, sir, but it's a goodish way," said Willy carelessly. "We haven't got our bikes on the School Train, and I don't know if there are any 'buses running——"

"'Buses!" broke in the colonel, frowning. "Nonsense! I'll send my car for you. What time will suit you best?"

"Well, we come out of morning lessons at about half-past twelve, sir——"

"Good!" said the old soldier. "I'll have

the car here by twelve-thirty, and you shall have lunch with me before Sir Henry arrives—unless he gets there early, and has a bite of lunch with us. All the better if he does—all the better. Well, that's settled."

And the colonel shook hands with Willy, waved to the other juniors, and strode back to his car.

"That's the way it's done, my sons," said Willy calmly.

"My only sainted aunt!" ejaculated Chubby, in awe. "How the dickens do you do it, Willy? An afternoon off—lunch with a big pot like Colonel Owen—and a car sent to pick you up! How do you do it?"

"It's a knack," replied Willy cheerfully.

**O**N the following afternoon Colonel Owen's dream came true.

He had not only beaten Sir Henry Markham, but he did it with consummate ease. And the latter gentleman was astonished and rather bewildered. He had looked upon this match as a certainty for himself. And never before had the colonel played such accurate golf. All his strokes were good; his driving was perfect; his approach shots were things to marvel at; and his putting was a hundred per cent better than it had ever been before.

Whether it was pure coincidence, or whether Willy really did have some effect upon the colonel, remained a problem. But the colonel very handsomely attributed his success to the St. Frank's fag.

"The boy's a marvel," he said to Sir Henry, as they left the links. "Absolutely a marvel! Never known anything like it, by gad! Knows exactly what iron to give me, and his very presence instils confidence into me."

Sir Henry Markham laughed.

"You're not telling me, colonel, that your game has improved because of your caddy?" he protested.

"That boy is no ordinary caddy," said the colonel. "He's different. I don't know how he's different—but he is different."

"Well, there's a remarkable improvement in your game," agreed Sir Henry. "I don't mind telling you that I expected to win this match quite easily."

"But I've beaten you, eh?" chuckled the colonel gleefully. "Yes, by gad, I've beaten you!"

He insisted upon Willy coming in for a rather late tea. In the great lounge hall he found a visitor awaiting him, and he frowned. Something seemed to tell him that the full joy of the evening was to be marred.

"Rivers!" he ejaculated, glaring at the visitor. "How do you do? What the deuce are you doing here, sir? You don't tell me that you've come to bother me with business affairs, do you?"

"I'm afraid I have, colonel."

"Then, by gad, you're going to be unlucky. Yes, unlucky, sir!" snorted Colonel Owen.

"It's about this big film," went on the other, quite unruffled.



Sir Henry went upstairs to indulge in a quick tub. Willy remained in the lounge hall, idly looking at the paintings.

At the same time, he turned the name "Rivers" over in his mind. Somehow, it seemed familiar.

"Films, eh?" said the colonel, with a grunt. "I don't want to know anything about films now, Rivers. I've just played eighteen holes of golf, and I've beaten Sir Henry handsomely. Gad! The best game I've played—"

"No doubt, colonel," interrupted Mr. Rivers in an incisive tone. "I knew you were on the links, and I'd like you to remember that I've been here, waiting for you, for nearly two hours. This business *must* be dealt with now!"

Willy turned, and looked at Mr. Rivers with greater curiosity. He knew who the



gentleman was now. Mr. Osbert Rivers, the famous film man—the production manager of the British Bulldog Film Company, Limited. Willy beheld a rather short man, sturdily built, active and alert. His clean-shaven face was full of character—full of vitality and energy. His eyes were twinkling as he beheld the colonel, and yet, at the same time, there was a light of impatience in them, too. Mr. Rivers was a man of action, and to wait here for two hours, cooling his heels, had been rather an ordeal.

Yet he had realised the folly of interrupting this game of golf. Colonel Owen was a rather difficult man to deal with, and Mr. Rivers knew that he regarded golf as of far greater importance than films. The fact that the colonel was chairman of the British Bulldog Film Company, Limited, was a mere detail. Unfortunately, Mr. Rivers had to take this detail into consideration. The chairman was not a business man in any sense of the word, but he had to be reckoned with. He owned over half the shares in the company.

Willy did not stare rudely at Mr. Rivers, but he certainly gave him a very keen inspection. He regarded Mr. Rivers as a much greater man than Colonel Owen. He had read about him in the papers. He was an Englishman who had spent many years in the United States in the film world—and now his experience was benefiting British companies.

"Can't this business wait until tomorrow?" the colonel was asking impatiently.

"No, it cannot!" insisted the other grimly. "I am here, Colonel Owen, and I'll stay

right on this spot until we get this thing settled. No, sir! You won't get rid of me so easily!"

The colonel sighed.

"I suppose not," he admitted reluctantly. "Very well. How long will it take?"

"That depends on you—entirely," replied Mr. Rivers promptly.

## CHAPTER 4.

### Willy's Guests!

IT was a full half-hour before Colonel Owen and Mr. Osbert Rivers came out from the library. They were both laughing, and Mr. Rivers was tucking some papers away into his pocket-book.

"Well, we're going right ahead, colonel," he was saying in his brisk way. "We shall be on location in the Isle of Wight on Saturday. I expect we shall get all those outdoor scenes completed, including the blowing up of the training-ship. When I start shooting, I *shoot!*"

"Er—I suppose it's really necessary actually to blow this ship up?" asked the colonel dubiously.

"Necessary?" echoed Mr. Rivers. "When I make a picture, colonel, I make it thoroughly. Realism is the keynote of film-making to-day. Well, we're all set."

The "human live-wire" thrust out his hand, shook the colonel's, and a moment later he was off. There came the whirr of an engine starting outside, and then the purr of Mr. Rivers' car as it glided off.

"An astonishing man!" said the colonel, shaking his head. "Hardly gave me a chance to say a word, by gad! And he got what he wanted, too, confound him!"

He happened to see Willy, and he started.

"Good gracious!" he ejaculated. "I'd forgotten all about you, young man! Have you been here all the time?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Most careless of me," said the colonel, annoyed. "I ought to have seen that you were comfortable. Forgive me, my boy. An unwarrantable breach of hospitality."

"That's all right, sir," grinned Willy. "I suppose that gentleman was Mr. Osbert Rivers, the big film man?"

"Yes, yes," nodded the colonel. "Production manager of my company."

"Your company, sir?"

"You didn't know, eh?" chuckled the colonel. "I'm the chairman of the British Bulldog Film Company, Limited. Rivers is a smart man—a keen man—but, confound him, he's a man you can't get rid of until he's had his own way!"

Willy was very interested.

"You're making a film now, sir, aren't you—in the Isle of Wight?" he asked.

"I'm not making it—heaven forbid!" said the colonel. "I don't know anything about films!"

"And yet you're chairman of the company, sir?" asked Willy innocently.



"Eh? Oh, yes," said the colonel. "But that's nothing—nothing whatever. Being chairman of the company merely means that I've got more money in the concern than anybody else. And these fellows can't act without my sanction. Not that that makes any difference, either—because this infernal Rivers gets my sanction whether I want to give it or not! Never knew such a man!"

"Is it a big film, sir?" asked Willy.

"One of the biggest talking pictures yet attempted," replied the colonel, with some pride. "A super-production, young man! Not that I'm in favour of these confounded talkies. Don't like 'em. Don't like any films, if it comes to that. However, we're catering for the public, so we must give the public what it wants."

Willy's mind worked rapidly. He had used his ears, and he knew that some scenes in this big film were to be shot in the Isle of Wight on Saturday. And the Isle of Wight was only a comparatively few miles from the location of the School Train. And Saturday afternoon was a half-holiday.

Willy had enough shrewdness to know that if he and any of the other juniors went to the scene of the film-making, they would be promptly sent about their business. A film director will not willingly allow a number of schoolboys to stand about while he is shooting his scenes.

But here was Colonel Charles Owen, the chairman of the company, and Willy was well "in" with him. It was certainly a priceless opportunity.

"Well, come along, my boy—come along," said the colonel boisterously. "Hungry, eh? So am I, by gad! Nothing like a round of golf to give you a good appetite."

**A**FTER an excellent meal, Willy prepared to take his departure. Once again the colonel had insisted that his car should be at Willy's disposal. Nothing, in fact, was too much trouble for this junior schoolboy. The colonel was mightily pleased by his success of the afternoon, and it was for this reason, perhaps, that Mr. Osbert Rivers had found the colonel so easy to handle.

"Well, you'll have to come again, Willy, my boy—you'll certainly have to come again," said the colonel, as he shook hands. "Pity your school isn't permanently situated in this district. A great pity. Put this in your pocket, and give your friends a good time."

He handed over a ten-pound note, and Willy backed away.

"Not likely, sir!" he protested. "I don't want that money."

"Rubbish! I insist—"

"I'd much rather not, sir," said Willy. "I've enjoyed myself immensely. And if you feel that you must give me something, I'd like it to be something different."

"What is it?" asked the colonel. "Anything you like, lad—anything you like."

"A pass to see those film scenes being shot on Saturday, sir."

"Eh? Oh, I see—I see!" said the colonel. "Good gracious, yes! Of course! I should have let you had that, in any case."

"Thanks awfully, sir."

"You'd like to see how these things are done, eh?" went on the colonel, chuckling.

"Well, it's a talking picture, sir—and I'm awfully interested in the talkies," said Willy. "We don't often get a chance of seeing one of them made like this. I'd like to take some of my friends, too. And if we haven't got official permission, we shall be shooed off the set, or whatever it's called."

"I dare say you're right," nodded the colonel. "My boy, you are perfectly welcome! You can take as many friends as you please. What does it matter to me? Go ahead! Tell Mr. Rivers, when you see him, that you have my sanction—"

"I'm afraid that won't be enough, sir—not for Mr. Rivers, anyhow," said Willy.

"He looks like a gentleman who can be pretty determined. I'd much rather have a written pass from you, so that it's official, and all signed and sealed. Just a few words will do, sir—giving my friends and myself full liberty to be on the spot while these shots are being taken."

"Wait a minute," said the colonel.

He tore a sheet from his notebook, wrote the necessary magic words upon it, and signed it with a flourish.

"There you are!" he said boisterously. "That's all you need, young man. Full permission for you and as many of your friends as you like to take, to see these talking pictures being made—to go where you like without hindrance. It is a full, comprehensive pass. And if any of these film people try to stop you, just let me know. I may not know much about films, but, by gad, I am the chairman of this company!"

**W**ILLY was feeling that he had had a very successful afternoon as he drove back to the School Train in style. Ordinarily, he would never have been able to get that pass; but, just because of his luck in the matter of the golf, the colonel was virtually his slave. He could have got anything he liked out of the old gentleman.

And just before reaching the School Train, Willy happened to put his hand in his handkerchief pocket, and he felt something crisp and crinkly. He pulled out the ten-pound note, and he went rather hot with indignation.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" he muttered. "The old boy must have been pretty smart to get that in there without my knowing!"

He smoothed out the creases, and then noticed some pencilled words on the back of the note: "You'll need a good feed for your friends in the Isle of Wight." And Willy grinned. After all, the colonel was right.

"Well, perhaps it'll come in handy," he told himself complacently. "We can make a regular picnic of it—and I'll be the giddy

(Continued on page 14.)



# JUST A LINE OF NONSENSE!



**C**HEERIO, chaps! Unaccustomed as I am to public speaking, and all that—by the way, the gent you see at the head of this bright chat isn't me—I mean I. I rather thought that illustration a reflection on me when the editor showed it me, but he said I ought to be grateful for having a sketch for my chat at all.

However, to resume my narrative, as they say in the best circles, having decided to write a chat the next best thing is to know what to write about.

Now let me see. The title of this effort is "Just a Line of Nonsense!" Oh, it's easy, then; I'll write about Ted. Of course, you're all familiar with him. When he learned that I was to write my worthy views for the NELSON LEE, he made me promise not to say anything that would make him foolish, and I said I wouldn't. And as if anything I said could make him look a bigger fool—

But he's not too bad, even if he does scowl every time I waft into his vision. He had the nerve to call me a cheeky little bounder this morning when I asked him for a little advance to tide me over till the week-end. Like most elder brothers, he's frightfully mean about his money—and I only asked him to *lend* it to me. I eventually made him see the light of reason, by promising to tell you fellows how well he's done in cricket this season. He then slipped me half a crown, and told me not to spend it all at once.

By the way, Ted is awfully keen about Irene Manners. That's his worst fault. He's got such a tender heart, and Irene is his special soft spot. You ought to see the way he moons about whenever he has a tiff with his girl chum. Needless to say, he also becomes a positive danger to the public.

**WILLY HANDFORTH** is not usually given to writing nonsense, and one would hesitate to call this article such. But Willy himself insisted upon this title—and his effort is certainly amusing.

At the slightest provocation he turns into a roaring lunatic and distributes black eyes and swollen noses ad lib.

Oh, I nearly forgot. I promised to say something nice about Ted's cricket—well, it's not too bad. He ought to be fairly good at it, in

fact, after about another ten years.

**N**OW, about my two pals, Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon. Quite a nice pair of children, you know, except when they're naughty, and I'm put to the painful necessity of banging their heads together. On such occasions I'm very impressive, telling them beforehand that this is going to hurt them much more than it's going to hurt me.

Without wishing to blow my own trumpet, I can safely say that I'd make a fine school captain, and make things hum. Unfortunately a large majority of the fellows don't exactly see eye to eye with me, although the fags are with me to a man.

But imagine me as captain. The first thing I'd do would be to abolish fagging. Also I would see that some of the Third were in the School Team. Another alteration I should make would be to introduce another half-hol. every week. Nothing like holidays to make a chap work. And as for Ted, he would have to be kept in his place, even if his brother were captain of the school. Also, I would—

Oh, here come Chubby and Juicy, interrupting a chap when he's doing something worth while. I've a jolly good mind to bang the two fatheads' heads together—no, I won't! We'll go along to the tuckshop and spend Ted's half a crown.

(Next week a number of prominent St. Frank's boys will give you their views on "My Ideal Bank Holiday!" Look out for this entertaining article, chums.)



## St. Frank's In The "Talkies!"

(Continued from page 12.)

best! My only hat! This is going to be interesting."

He had been unwilling to accept that money, and he thought it very decent of the old boy to put it surreptitiously into one of his pockets. Well, if the colonel really wanted to stand the St. Frank's fellows a feed, all well and good. That money should be used for a feed—every penny of it—and for nothing else.

In this way, Willy felt that he could accept it honourably.

**E**DWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH sniffed.

"Here he is!" he said tartly. "My hat! Rolling up in that whacking great car like a bloated millionaire! All by himself, too!"

Willy had arrived back at the School Train; the colonel's car had just driven up, and had come to a stop on the quiet road which ran alongside the railway siding. The chauffeur, having opened the door for Willy to alight, saluted, and continued on his way.

"Well, here we are!" said Willy gaily.

"You're late for calling-over!" said his major, in a stern voice.

"Who cares!" replied Willy. "You ass, I've got a pass!"

"How did the game go?" asked Nipper, smiling. "Did the colonel win?"

"Rather! And he's as pleased as a cat with two tails," replied Willy. "Gave me a whacking great feed, and I've only got to say what I want and he'll supply me. For two pins he'd salaam to me."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Blessed if I can make it out!" said Handforth, scratching his head. "You don't know a giddy thing about golf—never played it in your life—and yet you can twist this old chap round your finger!"

"It's just luck, old man," explained Willy. "I'm not taking any credit. The colonel was making some awful mistakes, and I happened to give him some advice that was useful. After that I could do anything I liked with him. I've now got him so that he'll eat out of my hand."

"Lucky young beggar!" said Buster Boots, of the Fourth.

Willy looked round contemplatively.

"Half a minute, you chaps!" he sang out. "Yes, you Remove fellows! And you Fourth-Formers! And you fags! Gather round!"

More out of curiosity than anything else, these juniors gathered round. There were a good many of them "taking the air" near the School Train. It would be locking-up time soon, and they would all be compelled to get on board, and stay there. The

summer's evening was fine and warm, and it was more pleasant out of doors than in.

"Who's interested in talking pictures?" asked Willy.

"Everybody, of course," said Nipper. "Talking pictures are the thing nowadays."

"How would you chaps like to see some 'shots' of one being made?" continued Willy. "It's a really big picture."

Handforth looked at his minor suspiciously.

"What do you know about talking pictures?" he asked. "And how the dickens can you get us admitted into a talking picture studio?"

"Not a studio," said Willy; "but the British Bulldog Film Company is taking some important outdoor scenes on the Isle of Wight on Saturday afternoon. I'm going along to see these talkies being made, and you fellows are welcome to come, too, if you like."

"What's the good of that?" asked Tommy Watson. "If we show ourselves when they're taking a 'shot,' we'll be booted off."

"Not if I'm with you," said Willy calmly.

"Oh! And what can you do?" asked his major. "You might be able to wangle this dotty old colonel, but you'll never be able to wangle these hard-headed film people."

Willy produced the colonel's pass.

"Here," he said, "I have the 'open sesame.' It's only a short note from Colonel Owen, but Colonel Owen happens to be the chairman of the British Bulldog Company. This is a permit for me to take as many friends as I like to see these talkies being made. What about it? Who's on?"

"By jingo! Let's have a look!" said Harry Gresham eagerly.

"Yes, hand it over, Willy!"

The juniors thought that Willy was attempting to spoof them. But after they had examined that pass they knew differently. This was the real thing.

"Willy, my son, we're on!" said Nipper. "Thanks, my child, for the invitation. You can count on us being with you. It'll be jolly interesting to see some talkies in the making—especially outdoor shots."

"Rather!"

"We're with you, Willy!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Oh, and there's something else," said Willy. "This invitation of mine includes a big feed."

"A which?" went up a general inquiry.

"A feed—in style," said Willy. "I'll pay all the exes, and—"

"You young chump!" interrupted Handforth. "How the dickens can you pay the exes? You needn't think you can come on me for five bob—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Five bob wouldn't be of much use, Ted," said Willy, shaking his head. "This is something bigger—something special. I'll provide the grub, and I'll foot the bill. Anything up to ten quid."

"Rats!"



"Cheese it, Willy!"

"And here," said Willy smoothly, "is the ten quid!"

He carelessly produced his tenner, and everybody thought that it was a fake one—until they examined it. After that they regarded Willy with respect and deference.

"My only aunt!" said Handforth blankly. "You say that Colonel Owen gave you ten quid—just for going round the links with him this afternoon?"

"Not only for that," said Willy. "He had the benefit of my advice——"

"You silly young ass!" roared Handforth.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And he was feeling so pleased with himself because he beat Sir Henry that he whacked out this tenner," said Willy. "I didn't want to take it at first——"

"You shouldn't have taken it!" frowned his major. "I don't approve of it at all!"

"But I didn't take it," said Willy. "I found it in my pocket. The colonel must have stuffed it in without my knowing it, the cunning old bounder. Still, if it's used to provide a feed for the whole crowd, I don't mind so much. That's why I'm inviting you to join in."

"Good egg!"

"The kid has got brains!" said Travers admiringly.

"But how does he do it?" asked Chubby Heath, in a hopeless voice. "Afternoons off—motor-cars to come and fetch him—free feeds—and ten quid notes! How in the name of all that's marvellous, Willy, do you do it?"

Willy grinned.

"I've already told you, fathead, that it's a knack!" he replied sweetly.

## CHAPTER 5.

### Off to the Isle of Wight!

**T**HERE was no difficulty, of course, about Saturday. It was a half-holiday, and it was not even necessary to get permission from the masters to take a trip to the Isle of Wight.

A good deal of the "film" shooting would no doubt be done during the morning, but it was a certainty that there would still be plenty to see in the afternoon.

The school train wasn't moving on until the beginning of the next week, and this was very satisfactory. Saturday broke fine and clear and warm—ideal weather for the film makers.

Willy Handforth was a fellow of very considerable importance that day. He was host. Some of the Removites and Fourth-Formers thought it rather "thick" that they should be the guests of a mere fag, but this was no time or occasion to make any protest.

It was Willy who held that magical pass—and Willy who held, too, that ten-pound note.

As soon as the midday meal was over there was a general gathering. At least forty juniors were included in this crowd. Willy was enjoying himself immensely. This was a novel situation to find himself in—being the host of such a throng.

"Better go easy, you know, Willy," said Chubby Heath. "You'll have to choke some of these chaps off."

"Choke them off?" repeated Willy. "Why?"

"Ten quid is a good bit of money, but it won't go far amongst forty," said Chubby.

"Five bob for each of us," said Willy promptly. "We can get all the grub we need for that money. What are you kicking about?"

"There might be more than forty of us by the time we get there," put in Juicy Lemon.

"Well, what does it matter?" said Willy cheerfully. "If my ten quid won't go round the chaps'll whack out some of their own money. The more, the merrier, I say. Let 'em all come!"

It wasn't so much the inducement of a free

feed which caused the juniors to be enthusiastic, but the prospect of seeing a talking film in the making. This, certainly, was alluring. Like everybody else, the St. Frank's fellows were as keen as mustard on the talkies. Most of them had seen one or two of these films, although there were some fellows who had not even seen one. So the prospect of watching one being made was doubly attractive.

"I think we ought to leave you behind, Ted," said Willy thoughtfully, as he looked at his major.

"You'd better think again!" said Handforth.

"They're making talkies, don't forget—and if you're on the spot the whole film will be ruined," continued Willy. "You know what your voice is like. Talkies aren't like the silent films. There aren't any megaphones or loud noises. Complete quietness is the order. And how the dickens can these film people have complete quietness if you're on the spot?"

"You silly young fathead!" roared Handforth indignantly, as everybody else grinned. "If you talk to me like that again I'll give you a good hiding!"

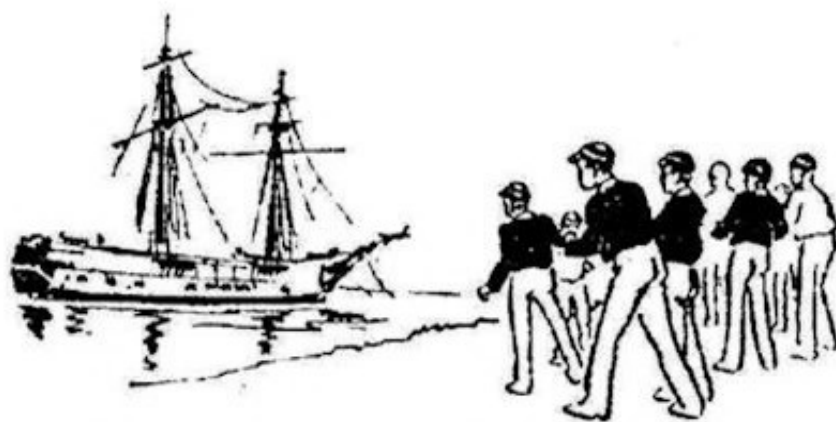
"You can't do that," said Willy. "A guest doesn't give his host a good hiding!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth started.

"By George!" he said thickly. "I'd forgotten that I'm one of your guests!"

"You'd better not forget it again, old man," said Nipper. "Willy is the big noise to-day. Unless we behave ourselves he's





liable to issue a polite hint that we're not wanted."

"Crumbs!" said Handforth.

He found it difficult to realise, and it certainly never occurred to him that Willy was merely pulling his leg. For Willy, of course, wouldn't dream of going without his major, and he didn't care how much noise his major made. It was for the film people to apply the necessary gags.

**N**IPPER and Vivian Travers and Archie Glenthorne and a few others insisted upon helping with the expenses. There was the journey from Southampton to the Isle of Wight, and then a railway trip once they were on the island. And it was necessary, too, to hire a couple of coaches, for the "location" was some distance from any railway station, in the neighbourhood of Brighstone Bay. The Isle of Wight had apparently been chosen because of the superb coastal scenery which was to be found there—rocks and gullies and long stretches of rugged coast.

It is to be feared that the St. Frank's fellows paid but scant attention to Southampton as they went through on their way to the boat. They were far more interested in talkies than in this fine town with its many historical associations.

They hardly gave Bargate a glance as they went along its busy length, and the actual Bargate itself failed to appeal to them, although they went right through its quaint old arch, where there is room for but one tramcar to pass through at a time.

In olden times the Bargate was the main entrance to the town on the north side. It now divides the town's main street into two portions—the northern part being called Above Bar, the southern, High Street. The architecture of the Bargate is chiefly of two periods; Edwardian and Fourteenth Century. This is shown in the arches over the roadway, that in the centre being of the semi-circular Norman type, while the pointed arches of the later date were added to the

original gate to give greater strength. The Bargate is sixty feet in thickness from front to rear, and is an interesting pile.

Then there is Arundel Tower, named after Sir John Arundel, who was Governor of Southampton Castle at the time of the French Repulse, in 1377. Arundel Tower was probably founded at a very early date; parts of it are said to be of Saxon origin. Southampton, in fact, is rich in ancient buildings. The history of the town probably began with the Roman invasion of Southern Britain in the time of the Emperor Claudius—A.D. 41—53.

However, the St. Frank's juniors were in no way inclined to probe into the history of Southampton to-day. All their thoughts were of the Isle of Wight.

They thoroughly enjoyed the steamer trip down Southampton Water, and so across to Cowes. Here they crowded on to a train which took them through Newport and Carisbrooke, near the famous castle of that name, which was built on the site of some Roman ruins. The present castle was commenced early in the Twelfth Century. Some of the arrow slits have been altered to suit cannon, probably at the time of the threat of the Spanish Armada. Charles I was a prisoner at Carisbrooke in 1648.

The train went on through Calbourne and Ningwood, and so to Yarmouth on the Solent, and then to Freshwater. From here it was necessary to go to the "location" by motor-coach.

At last they came within sight of the sea at the end of a picturesque bay. So far all the fellows had been charmed with the beauties of the Isle of Wight; the rural delights of the country scenery had enchanted them, and now they beheld a long vista of rugged coastline, with little bays and the many-coloured cliffs. There were rock pinnacles and rock arches, caves and golden sands. And above the green downs—a really perfect panorama of sea and land.

"There they are!" said Handforth eagerly. "By George! I hope we're not too late! Perhaps they'll have finished?"

"That's not likely," said Nipper. "It came over a bit dull this morning, and now there's plenty of bright sunshine. I expect we shall find them in the thick of it."

In the distance, along the beach, small knots of figures could be seen, and just a little way from the shore there was a quaint old vessel—one of the old "wooden walls" of England apparently.

"I'll bet that ship is the Victory," said Handforth.

"Fathead!" put in Church. "The Victory is moored in Portsmouth."

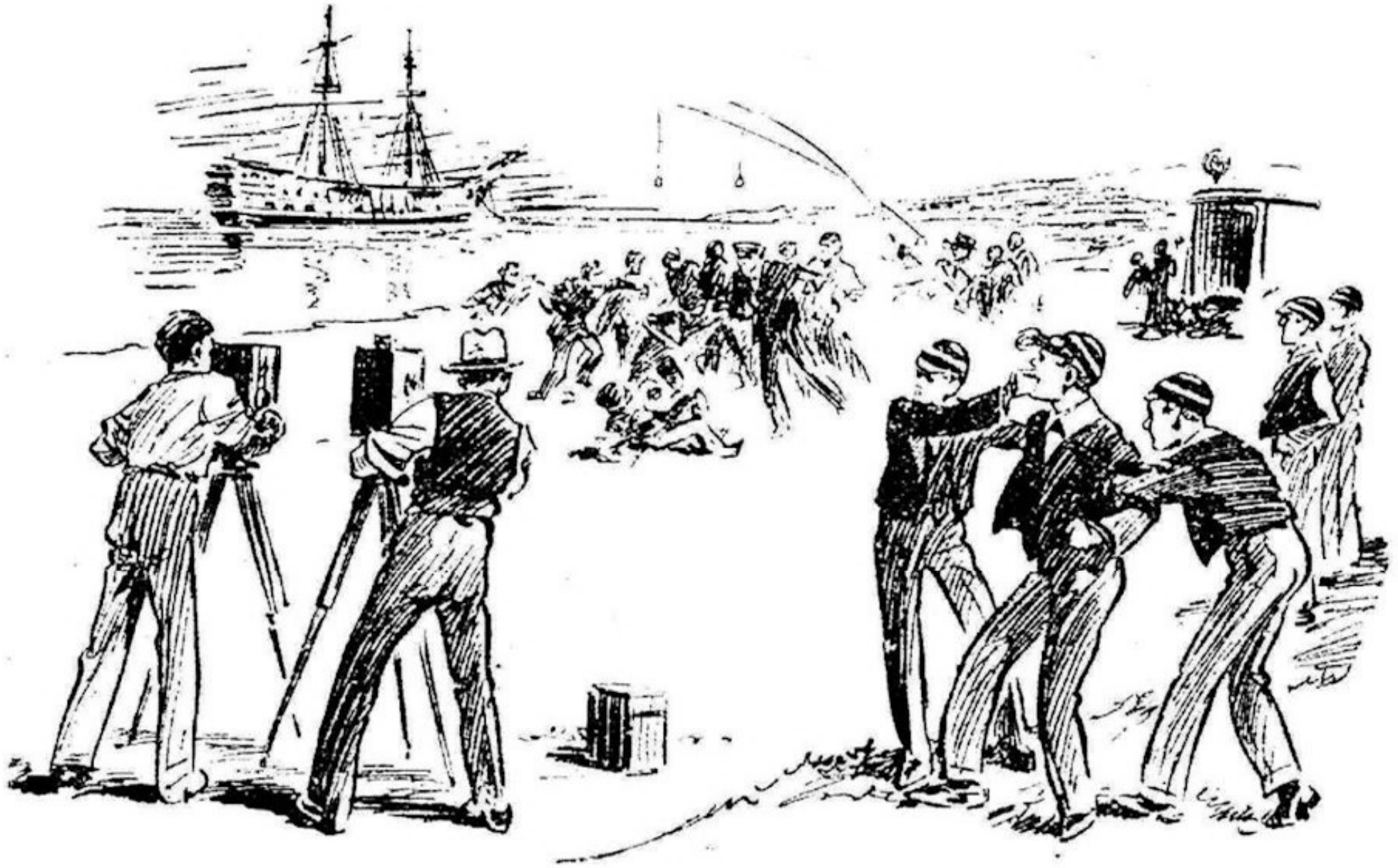
"And moored pretty strongly, too," grinned Nipper. "The Victory is in dry dock—the oldest dry dock in the world, as a matter of fact—and she's not floating in any water at all. She's a permanent fixture there now."

## IF YOU'RE AT THE SEASIDE—

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## HANDSOME FREE GIFT!





Interestedly the juniors watched the "talkie" being filmed. "Doesn't look very realistic to me," began Handforth, and was then promptly shut up as Church slammed a fist over his mouth. "Shut up, you idiot!" hissed that junior indignantly. "Do you want to spoil the film, you chump?"

"Then this ship can't be the Victory," said Handforth. "Perhaps she's a training ship of some kind."

"It's a funny place for a training ship to be moored," said Nipper critically. "Look at this coast! On a winter's day, with a gale raging, that ship wouldn't last half an hour. She'd be flung on the rocks. There's no shelter here—there's no safe harbour. It's all right on a summer's day, but this part of the coast is open to all the gales that blow."

"Well, we shall soon find out," said Willy. "Perhaps she's only here for the occasion. I'll bet she's a ship specially chartered by these film people."

They went on foot for the last mile, descending the cliffs by a steep, rocky path, and finally reaching the beach. But they had not gone far before they beheld a police officer, and one or two other men. The policeman beckoned, and then came forward to meet the big crowd of schoolboys.

"Can't go this way, young gents," he said pleasantly.

"Why not?" went up a chorus.

"They're making films down the beach there," said the officer. "If you went along that way you might disturb them."

"Oh, draw it mild!" protested Handforth. "These film companies can't bar people from the beach, can they? It's public property!"

"All the same, you can't go," said the policeman. "It's a special arrangement for to-day, and——"

"Wait a minute," said Willy. "Have a look at this. We're friends of Colonel Owen."

"Colonel Owen?" said the policeman. "Never heard of him."

"Well, that's not very surprising," said Willy. "Colonel Owen is only the chairman of the film company."

The constable took the permit, read it with suspicion, and then scratched his chin.

"Well, I'm sure I don't know," he said, at length. "This looks all right. But it says here that you and your friends are to be allowed to watch the film-making. Who are your friends?"

"These," replied Willy, with a comprehensive wave of his hand.

"All of them?"

"Yes, of course!"

"Well, I'm not so sure that I can let you pass," said the policeman uncertainly.

"Try to stop us!" grinned Handforth.

The police constable was not so rash. He watched the crowd of St. Frank's fellows pass along the beach, and he scratched his chin again. He had an idea that a little trouble would come of this.

## CHAPTER 6.

### Not Welcome!

AS they grew nearer, they could see that there was a great deal of activity. There were two or three big lorries standing in a little gap near the beach, and all sorts of cables were



running from these lorries—one or two of them leading right into the sea—and towards that old man-o'-war.

"That ship's only a hulk," said Nipper, as he inspected it closely. "A lot of it has been reconstructed, and you can see all the new timbers at the stern. They're not going to take any shots in that direction, I suppose."

"Then it's not a real ship at all?" asked Handforth. "What a fraud!"

"Most of these film scenes are frauds," grinned Nipper. "Sometimes you see the top of a building, and it's not really the top of the building at all—but a fake. But what does it matter, so long as it looks like the real thing in the picture?"

They could even hear the faint hum of the motor generators now, and a scene was apparently being shot on the sands not far off. There was a good deal of apparatus here—cameras, sound machinery, and so forth.

Just near the beach a smart motor-launch was in readiness, with one or two small boats, too.

"Don't make any noise, you chaps," warned Nipper. "Remember, they're taking talking pictures. Better not create any disturbance."

"Might be a good idea to stay here," said Willy. "We can see everything——"

"Not likely!" interrupted Edward Oswald. "I want to go and have a look at everything at close quarters. I'd like to see how they do these things."

"Well, don't shout, then," said Willy. "It wouldn't matter in silent pictures, but——"

"Stop!" came a loud, angry voice from one of the men on the beach, some distance ahead. "Stop! Hold everything!"

The man who had spoken came hurrying towards the St. Frank's crowd. He was tall and lean, and he was in his shirt sleeves. There was an expression of impatience and irritation on his face as he came within speaking distance of the juniors.

"You schoolboys can't come along here!" he said brusquely. "Didn't that policeman warn you? Didn't you see any of my men up there?"

"Yes, but we came past them," said Willy.

"Oh, you came past them, did you?" said the other. "Well, my name's Newton——"

"Pleased to meet you, Mr. Newton," said Willy.

"Eh? You don't understand!" said Mr. Newton gruffly. "You may be pleased to meet me, but I'm hanged if I'm pleased to meet you—or your friends, either! You oughtn't to be here at all!"

Mr. Newton was the assistant-director, and he was rather harassed at the moment. Things had not been going quite right—things seldom do in the making of a film. And a great deal of the work and the worry had fallen upon Mr. Newton's shoulders. It was rather too bad of these schoolboys to come butting in at a crucial moment.

"We've come to watch these talkies being made," explained Nipper. "We shan't get in the way——"

"I'll see that you don't!" interrupted Mr. Newton. "Sorry, young 'uns, but you'll have to go back. We can't have you on this part of the beach."

"Is it yours?" asked Handforth tartly.

"No, it's not mine—but I've got possession of it for the moment," retorted Mr. Newton. "And, what's more, we can't have any of you schoolboys butting in and interrupting——"

"We're friends of Colonel Owen," said Willy sweetly.

"What's this?" demanded Mr. Newton, as that precious pass was thrust into his hand. "You needn't think that—— Hallo! What the—— Well, I'm hanged!"

He had read the words by now, and his expression changed. Here was a note written by Colonel Owen, the chairman of the company! Much as Mr. Newton wanted to ignore it, he felt that he could not do so.

"Where did you get this from?" he asked, looking at Willy.

"From Colonel Owen—a friend of mine," said Willy carelessly. "As you see, he's invited us to come along and see this picture being made. I've brought my friends with me."

"So I notice," said Mr. Newton grimly. "Couldn't you find a few more while you were about it?"

Willy took no notice of the sarcasm.

"Well, is it all serene?" he asked. "Can we go ahead?"

"Not yet," said the assistant-director. "I shall have to consult Mr. Lomax about this. Wait here. I'll let you know something within a few minutes. I'll take this paper, if you don't mind."

"But I do mind," said Willy. "You won't lose it, will you?"

Mr. Newton did not deign to reply. He strode off, uttering all sorts of hectic words under his breath. Another man was coming to meet him—a man who was also in his shirt sleeves, and whose soft collar was unbuttoned. He was rather stoutish, elderly and cumbersome. A big panama hat was perched on the back of his head.

"What's the matter, Newton?" he asked peevishly.

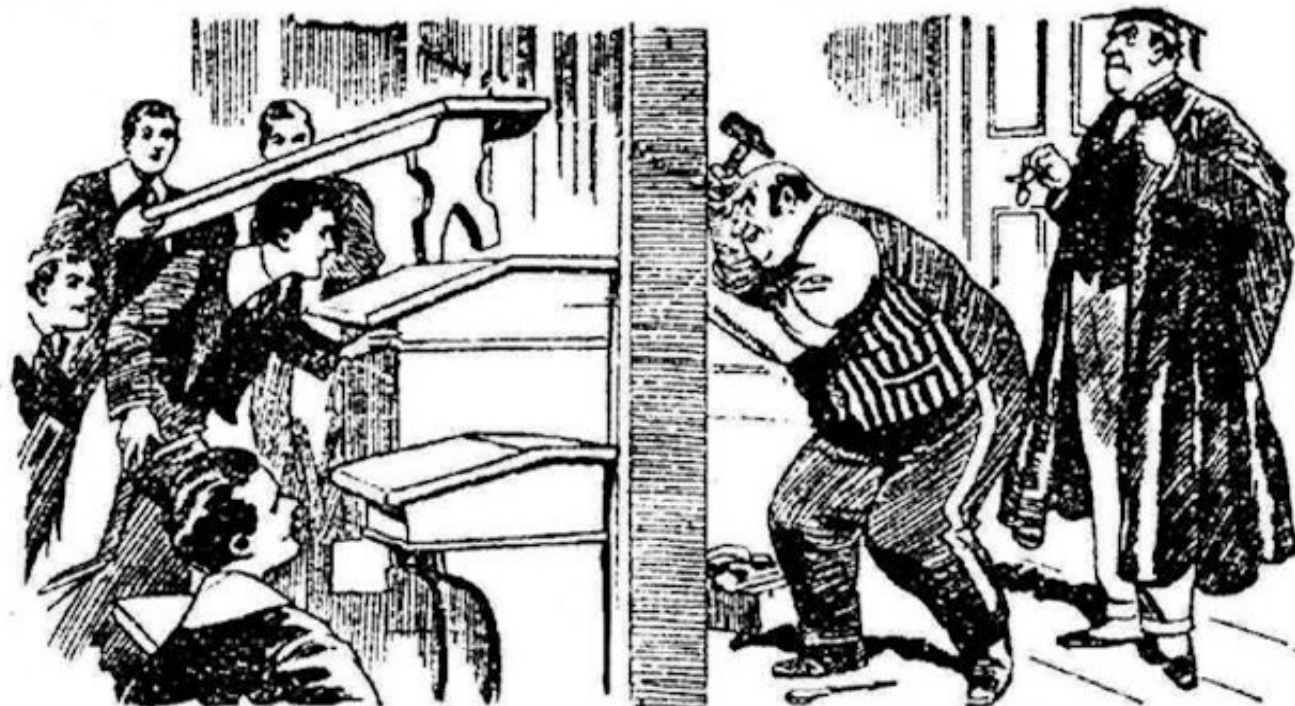
Mr. Lomax was the director, and he was a director, moreover, who hated any kind of interruption during the making of a film. It would be truthful, indeed, to say that he hated making films—for interruptions are all too frequent in this process.

"It's that darned old fool, Owen," growled Mr. Newton. "What do you think he's done now? Given all these schoolboys permission to come along and see this film being made!"

"Ye gods!" ejaculated Mr. Lomax, startled.

He flung his cigarette down, and read the little note.





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"Well, we shall have to let them come along, that's all," he said resignedly. "Heaven only knows when we shall get this picture finished, though! I don't suppose it'll cost us more than a couple of thousand pounds."

"Well, it's the colonel's own money," said the assistant-director. "If he likes to throw it about like this, it's his own concern. Why on earth can't he leave us to get on with the business? It's a confounded nuisance to have all these boys here!"

"You'd better go and fetch Mr. Rivers," said the director. "He'd better see this. On second thoughts, I'm not going to take the responsibility of allowing all these boys to ruin the day. Everything's planned. If we don't take these shots this afternoon, we might not get another chance. The first breeze that springs up will batter that hulk to atoms. We've simply got to take these shots this afternoon. It'll cost us thousands if we miss the opportunity."

Mr. Newton went off, impatient and incensed. It was bad enough to have the

ordinary hindrances, without which film production seems to be impossible, let alone allowing all these boys to barge in and distribute themselves over the whole location, to the confusion of all.

Mr. Osbert Rivers, seeing that something was delaying the action, was coming up from the direction of the motor-launch, and there was an air of grim resolution about his very walk.

"What's it all about, Jimmy?" he asked, as he came up.

Jimmy, who apparently was Mr. Lomax, turned and glared at the manager.

"Just a few friends of the colonel's!" he said, indicating the crowd of schoolboys. "They've come along at the colonel's invitation to watch us at work. How the deuce can we work with these dratted boys on the scene?"

"I'm afraid they'll be disappointed," said Mr. Rivers. "It needs a mighty clever fellow to find you doing any work, Jimmy!"



"Don't try to be funny!" protested Mr. Lomax, more peevish than ever. "What are we going to do? That's what I want to know. I'll never direct for this infernal company again! Owen knows absolutely nothing about the business, and—"

"That's all to the good," interrupted Mr. Rivers briskly. "Heaven preserve us from the company chairman who knows the ropes! At least, Jimmy, Owen gives us a free hand, and what more can you want? Don't be such an old grumbler! We'll get through all right."

"With all these boys on the scene?"

"Leave them to me—I'll handle them," said the production manager good-naturedly.

He read that "pass" of Willy's, chuckled, and stuffed it into his pocket. Then he strolled over to the crowd of waiting juniors.

"Hallo, boys!" he said cheerily. "Come along to watch us at the talkie game, eh?"

"Yes, sir!" chorused the juniors.

"Good!" said Mr. Rivers. "Make yourselves at home."

"Thanks, Mr. Rivers!" said Willy. "This is Mr. Osbert Rivers, you chaps—the big producer."

"But I thought the other gentleman was the producer?" asked Chubby Heath.

"You're getting them mixed," said Willy. "The producer isn't the director. He's a much more important man."

"Oh, is he?" said Mr. Lomax, who was within earshot.

"This youngster knows what he's talking about," remarked Mr. Rivers, with a sly glance at the director. "Well, boys, I'd like just a few words with you before we carry on. Gather round."

The juniors gathered round, having taken a liking to the production manager.

"You can go where you please, and you can watch the whole of the works," said Mr. Rivers. "But, remember, there musn't be any noise. Got that?"

"Yes, sir!" yelled the juniors. "No noise!"

"If that's your idea of no noise you'd better go back to the beginning and start all over again," said Mr. Rivers. "You silly young donkeys! When I mean no noise, I mean no noise. Now, don't shout—just nod."

There was an epidemic of nodding.

"Keep out of the camera line, and don't crowd too much together," continued Mr. Rivers crisply. "We've got a big programme scheduled for this afternoon, and we're going through with it. These shots must be finished to-day. And don't forget that this is a talking film, and if any of you boys start shouting you might ruin everything. Do you give me your word that you won't interfere?"

There was another epidemic of nodding.

"Right!" said Mr. Rivers. "All set, Jimmy! Let's go!"

MR. LOMAX did not seem any too confident. However, he felt more satisfied after five or ten minutes had elapsed. These schoolboys had been impressed by the production manager's earnestness, and they were behaving themselves splendidly. There were no disturbances—there was no shouting. The fellows had distributed themselves into little groups, and they were careful not to get in the way of the film men.

They were very much interested in the cameras, and in the talkie apparatus—in the motor generators, and in the great reflectors, and in the microphones.

"Jiggered if I can understand what all the fuss was about!" murmured Handforth, as he stood with Church and McClure. "Look at those ruffians over there! They can stand and watch, it seems, and yet these people objected to us!"

Church and McClure glanced at the ruffians. Then they glanced at one another without Handforth spotting it, and grinned. There were ten or twelve of these tough customers—men with ragged clothing, some of them collarless, some of them with chokers round their throats. They certainly seemed to be a rough gang.

"Tramps, perhaps," said Church carelessly.

"Hardly tramps," put in the Scottish junior. "They look like loafers. Let's go across and see what they're doing here."

Handforth raised no objection. They went over a stretch of the sand and came nearer to the gang. One particularly brutal-looking man was in the act of extracting a cigarette from a delicate silver case.

"Of course, it's a frightful bore, you know," he was saying. "But these waits are inevitable, I'm told."

"Oh, absolutely," said one of the other "ruffians." "Is this the first time you've been in a film, Bertie?"

"As a matter of fact, yes," said the first "hooligan." "Rather a priceless experience, too. I'm awfully bucked about it. My people don't know a thing—which, perhaps, is just as well."

"They'll never recognise you, Bertie, old man," said one of the others. "There's that consolation, anyhow."

Handforth was looking blank, and Church and McClure were grinning.

"My only hat!" said Edward Oswald. "I've never heard toughs talking like this before."

Church and McClure rocked with silent laughter.

"You silly ass!" murmured Church. "Can't you see that they're only spoof roughs? They're actors."

"Actors!" ejaculated Handforth, with a start.

"Of course," grinned Church. "Didn't you hear the way they spoke? If they've got to do any talking in this film they'll ruin the giddy picture."

"Unless they know their part well, and do it properly," said Mac. "Well, I must



# THE ST. FRANK'S QUESTIONNAIRE!

Here are twelve testers for you, chums—questions which refer to St. Frank's and its members. Give them the "once-over," jot down the answers to those which you know, and then compare them with the correct list which will be given, together with another set of questions, next week.

- 1.—What is the colour of John Busterfield Boots' hair?
- 2.—Mr. Pagett, the master of the Fifth Form, has a particular hobby. What is it?
- 3.—Who is the most inventive junior in the Third Form?
- 4.—What are the colours of the Modern House?
- 5.—What is the name of the headmistress of the Moor View School?
- 6.—Who keeps the tuckshop in Bellton Village?
- 7.—How far is Bellton from St. Frank's?
- 8.—Who is the most accomplished amateur actor at St. Frank's?
- 9.—Which House is it that immediately faces the main gateway of St. Frank's?
- 10.—What kind of trees are they which grow in the Triangle?
- 11.—Who is the Junior captain of the River House School?
- 12.—Who is the most shortsighted master at St. Frank's?

## ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S QUESTIONS

1. *Red and Blue.* 2. *Winnie Pitt and Clive Russell.* 3. *The George Tavern.* 4. *Mr. William Pagett.* 5. *Grey stone.* 6. *Augustus Parkin—particularly so now that Kenmore is improving.* 7. *About 500 yards, along the road which leads to Edgemore and Bannington Moor.* 8. *Austin, Third Form. Cricket.* 9. *In the bicycle shed behind West Square.* 10. *Ernest Lawrence, of the Fourth.* 11. *Archie Glenthorne.* 12. *Lord Dorrimore.*

say it's all jolly interesting. But when are they going to start something big?"

McClure didn't know it, but something big was in the wind even then.

## CHAPTER 7.

### Nipper Makes a Suggestion!

**H**ANDFORTH felt that he had been swindled. He no longer regarded the gang of "toughs" with interest. The whole thing was a fraud. But he was compelled to admit that these men looked their parts to the life.

Mr. Lomax had come up to them, and he was evidently giving some directions.

"Now, boys, remember what you've got to do," he was saying. "There needn't be any talking—in fact, there mustn't be any talking. We want to get all the noises of the fight, and a yell or two will be all to the good. You've got to rush out from behind that clump of rocks and get to the attack straight away."

"Go ahead, Jimmy—we're ready," said a member of the gang.

Mr. Lomax proceeded to give further directions, after which the gang moved off, and disappeared behind some rocks. Then there was much activity with cameras, with talkie apparatus, and so forth.

There were one or two rehearsals to start with, and the affair proved to be quite exciting. The St. Frank's fellows, watching from a safe distance, were vastly interested. They knew nothing of the plot, and to them

it seemed that the scrap was pointless. But, of course, all this would be worked into the film and connected up in its right place.

A man dressed in a kind of naval uniform was evidently the hero, and he had one or two companions attired in ordinary lounge suits. They were supposed to be walking along the beach, carrying certain packages, when the roughs would spring upon them unawares. In the fight which resulted the roughs were to be beaten after a long struggle.

"That'll do!" sang out Mr. Lomax at length. "Now we're going to start shooting. Ready, everybody? Good! Let's get down to it."

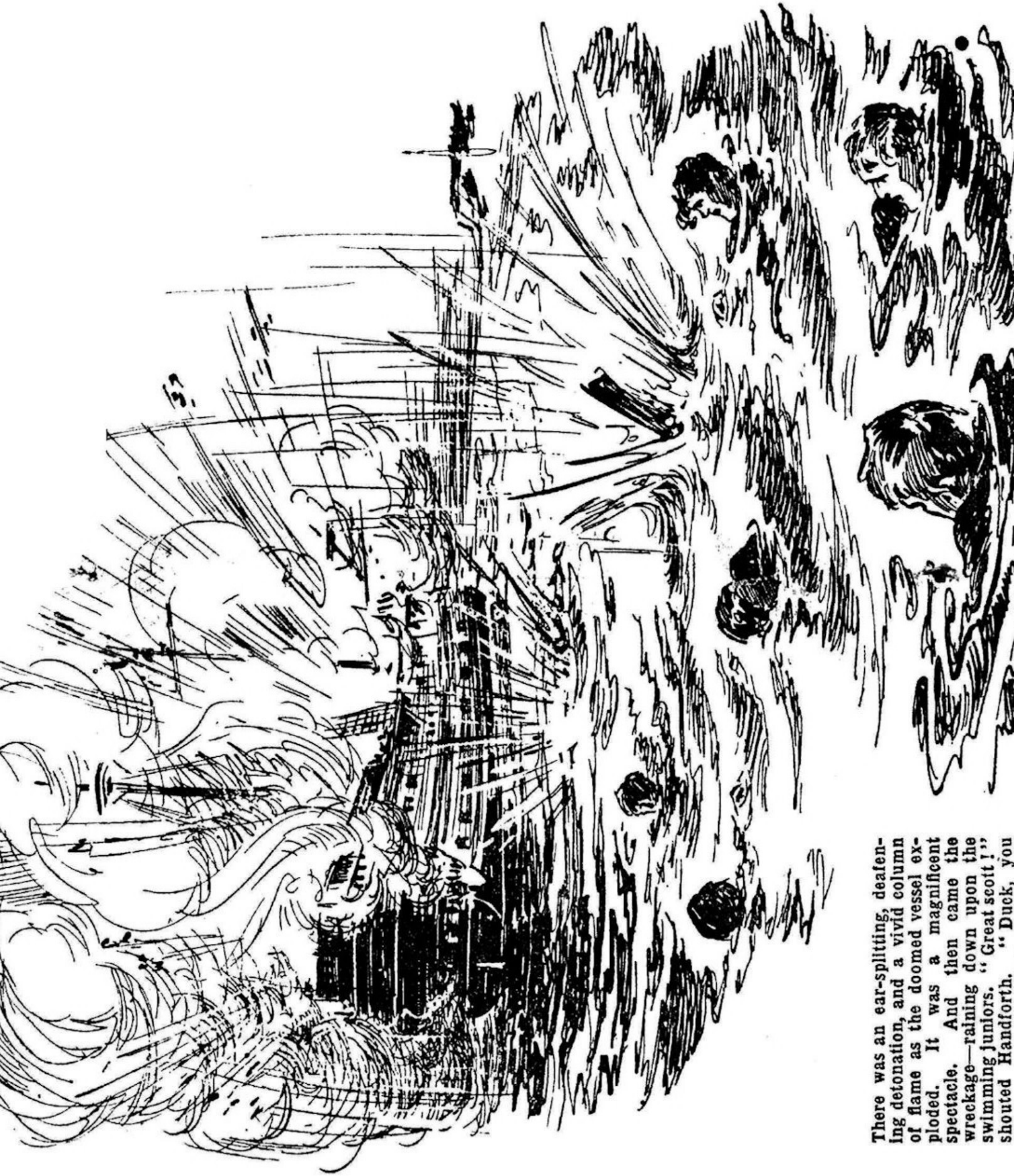
There were one or two more shouts; then came some signals, and complete silence. The men with the reflectors were at their posts, and the camera men were at their machines. The handles began to turn, and it was noticeable that there was not the slightest clicking.

The St. Frank's fellows watched with tremendous interest. Nipper had read that in some sound films the cameras were enclosed in sound-proof cabinets; but these cabinets were evidently not necessary here, since the machines themselves were silent.

As the officer and his companions trudged along the sands they were talking, and the dialogue was evidently being recorded, for a microphone accompanied them—two microphones, in fact.

The whole thing was very ingenious. A couple of electricians kept pace with the walking men; but these electricians, of





There was an ear-splitting, deafening detonation, and a vivid column of flame as the doomed vessel exploded. It was a magnificent spectacle. And then came the wreckage—raining down upon the swimming juniors. "Great scott!" shouted Handforth. "Duck, you



course, were beyond the scope of the camera's field. The microphones themselves were slung from long arms, and they hung down just in front of the walking actors, but rather above them, and also beyond the scope of the camera's field.

Naturally, this sort of thing could not be carried on for long—merely a few yards. But it was sufficient. The "gang" came rushing out from behind the neighbouring rock, and the officer and his friends halted, uttering startled ejaculations. They flung down their burdens, and the next moment they were in the thick of the fight. The only sounds were those caused by the tramping feet. Occasionally, however, there would be a hoarse gasp, a shout, and so on.

"Doesn't look very realistic to me—" began Handforth, and then nearly fell backwards as Church and McClure slammed their hands over his mouth.

"Shut up, you idiot!" hissed Church in Handforth's ear. "Do you want to spoil the whole thing, you chump?"

Handforth started.

"Sorry!" he whispered apologetically, as his two chums removed their hands from off his mouth. "Of course I don't want to spoil it. Not that it'll take much to do that," he added, with a touch of obstinacy. "It's most unrealistic!"

"You wait until you see it on the screen," breathed Church. "You'll see none of the apparatus then, you know—you'll just see those men walking along an apparently deserted beach. They'll be talking, and it'll probably be moonlight. Then these roughs will attack. It'll be amazingly realistic, in my opinion."

"Don't talk, you asses!" hissed somebody else.

The scene was soon over. There was some excuse for Handforth's scepticism, for it hardly seemed possible that that fight would actually look realistic in the film. But Church was quite correct. Here, in the full sunlight, with all these machines and lorries and men on the beach, it was hard to get the true atmosphere of the scene. The finished film, however, would probably be a marvel of realism.

As soon as the "shooting" was over everybody started talking. Mr. Rivers and Mr. Lomax consulted, and one of the camera man's assistants came forward with a board, and held it in front of the camera. A few turns of the handle, and that board had been photographed. This was very necessary, since it gave the number of the scene just taken.

"Well, that's the last beach scene," Mr. Rivers was saying. "All the rest will have to be done on the hulk, and from the boats. We shall get through, Jimmy."



There was an ear-splitting, deafening detonation, and a vivid column of flame as the doomed vessel exploded. It was a magnificent spectacle. And then came the wreckage—raining down upon the swimming juniors. "Great scott!" shouted Handforth. "Duck, you chaps!"

"We might," said the director. "Weather's keeping good—plenty of strong sunlight yet. But we mustn't lose any time."

The assistant-director came hurrying up.

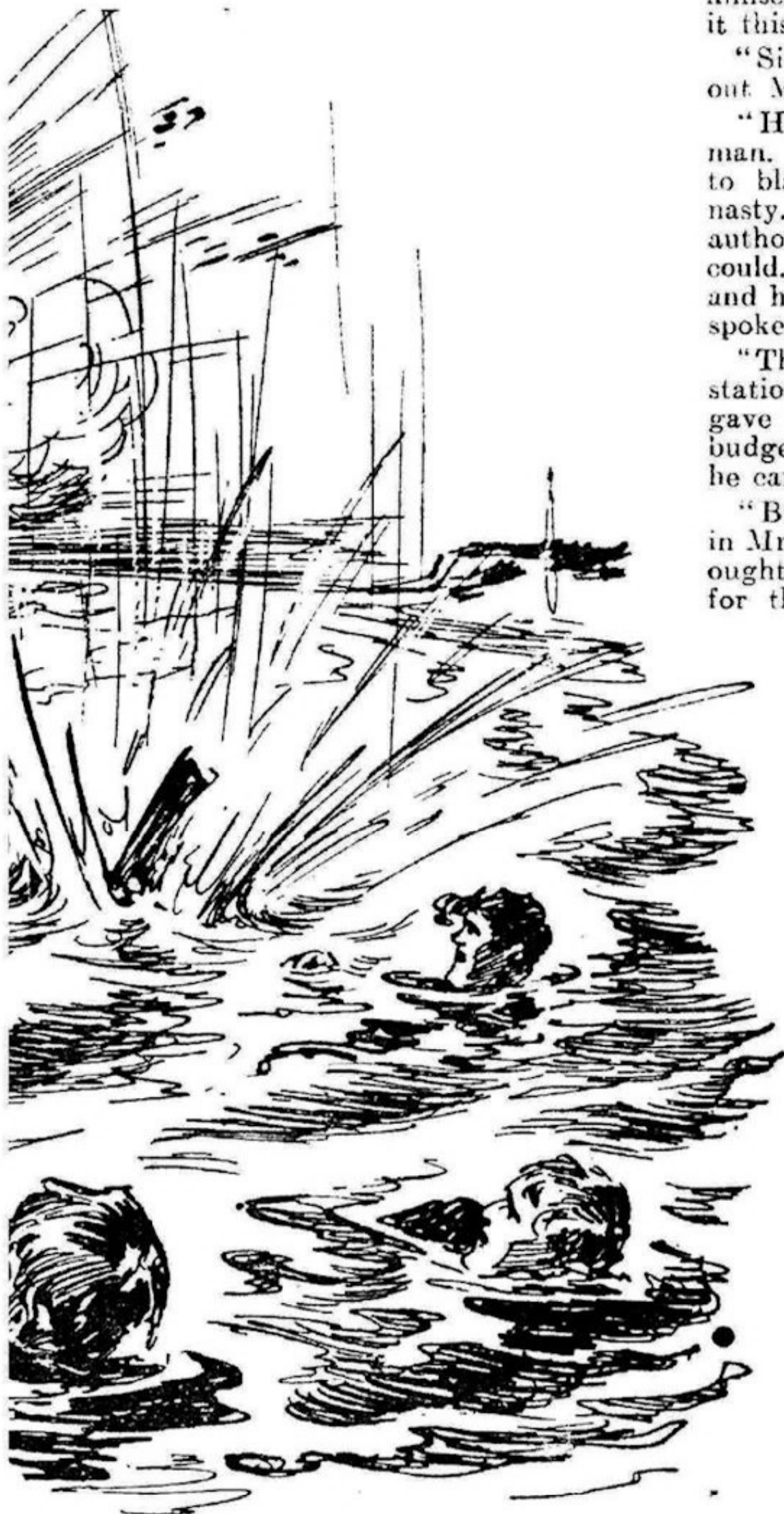


"We're sunk, Jimmy!" he declared mournfully.

"Sunk? What do you mean?" snapped Mr. Lomax.

"That fool of a Simmonds, in Portsmouth, has let us down!" said Mr. Newton. "Those boys aren't here."

The St. Frank's fellows, hearing something of this, and noting the expressions of consternation on the faces of Mr. Rivers and his colleagues, drew nearer.



"Don't get excited," said the production manager, with a gentle movement of his hands. "Now then, what's this about Simmonds?"

Another man joined them—a young fellow who was perspiring freely and breathing hard.

"I've run a mile along this infernal beach!" he was saying. "It's no good, Mr. Rivers. Simmonds has failed us. We definitely arranged for those boys to be here this afternoon, and they're not coming!"

"Why not?" snapped the producer.

"There was a hitch of some kind," replied the other. "Simmonds said that the firm offered a certain amount for the services of himself and his boys, and that you reduced it this morning, Mr. Rivers."

"Simmonds agreed to my terms," rapped out Mr. Rivers.

"He says he didn't," replied the young man. "Anyhow, he says that he'll see you to blazes before he'll agree. He got quite nasty. I couldn't do anything without authority, so I rushed along as fast as I could. Simmonds is waiting on the telephone, and he says he won't move an inch until he's spoken to you."

"Then that man is going to remain stationary," said Mr. Rivers grimly. "I gave him my figure, and I'm not going to budge from it. The grasping hog! Thinks he can force my hand, does he?"

"But we must have those boys, Os," put in Mr. Lomax agitatedly. "Man alive! They ought to be here now—we're nearly ready for them. If there's any further delay, we shan't be able to get through."

Nipper stepped forward.

"I don't want to butt in, sir," he said, looking at Mr. Rivers, "but if you're wanting any boys, what about us?"

"Fade away, young 'un—fade away!" said Jimmy Lomax peevishly. "For goodness' sake, don't interrupt—"

"He's not interrupting, Jimmy," said Mr. Rivers smoothly. "As a matter of fact, I've just been casting my eyes over these St. Frank's youngsters. Simmonds can go to the deuce. Why bother about him when we've got the right sort of material here, on the spot?"

The director started.

"These—these schoolboys?" he ejaculated.

"Why not?"

"But there aren't enough of them!" said Mr. Lomax. "Simmonds has arranged to bring over a hundred—"

"There are over fifty of us, sir," said Nipper eagerly.

"We can get through, Jimmy," said the producer. "I'm not pretending that fifty will be as good

as a hundred, but I'm hanged if I'll submit to Simmonds' dictation. Besides, there isn't time for him to get those boys here now. Either we use these youngsters, or we've got









*Handforth undertakes to answer, in his own unique fashion, any question "N.L." readers care to submit to him. But, although of a certainty the results will be amusing and entertaining, the Editor takes no responsibility for their veracity. Write to Handforth, c/o the NELSON LEE LIBRARY, to-day.*

**R. M. P. BARNETT (London).**—My birthday falls on the 18th of April—the same date every year. I certainly think you ARE inquisitive. What do you mean by asking me to tell you some of Archie Glenthorne's pet sayings? I regard it as a slight on myself. This is a sensible feature written by a sensible fellow, and if you think I'm going to waste space by repeating any of that lazy slacker's nonsense, then you're mistaken. In fact, you can go and eat coke. Your next question strikes me as being dotty—"You are one of my best characters in the NELSON LEE. Could you tell me why, please?" That doesn't make sense to me, but here's the answer. Because I'm me!

**BOB HARDY (Salisbury).**—I shall dot you most severely on the nose if ever I hear you saying that I used to write rubbish in the "St. Frank's Magazine." I have never written rubbish, and never will write rubbish. My advice to you to cure that wart on your finger is as follows: Get hold of the roughest and sharpest piece of stone or cement you can find, and rub it briskly against the wart. This should have the desired result of eventually making it disappear. If you feel that you will not be able to bear the pain, get somebody to hit you over the head with the aforementioned piece of stone or cement. Then, when you are unconscious, you can carry on as stated above.

**"BASHER BILL" (Catford).**—I don't believe you when you say you took Irene to the pictures the other night. Irene isn't that kind of girl. But I'm going to have it out with her, and if it should prove true—well,

you can look out for yourself. In any case, she wouldn't call me a clumsy chump, an ugly idiot and the biggest dolt on earth, because I will have you know that Irene never tells fibs. Trackett Grim and Splinter are still very much alive. They are both holiday-making at Mudville-on-Mud—having a high time there spending the millions of pounds they've received from grateful clients. The reason why they haven't had any cases lately is that all the crooks in the world are afraid of them. For the date of my birthday see above. I'm not answering your other questions (which don't concern me), because I think you're a cheeky bounder.

**PETER BUCK (Ipswich).**—My scores this cricket season have been as follows: 109, 70, 153, 149, 175, 99, 57, and many other centuries too numerous to mention. I don't think I have caught out more than a mere 100 batsmen—and then I woke up! Ha, ha! Jolly good joke, that, wasn't it? To tell the truth, great cricketers like myself never trouble to remember our scores and how many batsmen we have caught in the field.

**L. J. WITHAMS (Chelmsford).**—You must be a jolly fine fellow. Never once in your letter did you call me an idiot, or a fathead, or some other insulting name; nor did you make unflattering remarks about my face, nor did you say that my Trackett Grim yarns were tripe. It's a pity you didn't ask me any questions—except about my birthday, the answer to which you'll find above—for I should have been only too pleased to answer them at length. Write me again, old man.

**EDWARD OSWALD.**

## CHAPTER 8.

### The Schoolboy Film Actors!

**T**HE inclusion of the St. Frank's crowd in the film was a totally unexpected development—unexpected by the schoolboys themselves, and by the British Bulldog crowd.

Mr. Osbert Rivers had acted with characteristic incisiveness. Rather than submit to any nonsense from the absent Mr. Simmonds, he was doing without that gentleman's services altogether. These St. Frank's fellows would do just as well as the boys from the industrial school.

In fact, they would be a lot better. Mr.



Rivers had been impressed by the way in which the St. Frank's fellows had respected his wishes. They were brainy youngsters—they were just the type for this kind of job. And they would look well in the film—true specimens of British boyhood.

It was a surprise for the juniors to learn that the old hulk was to be set on fire, and then blown up. The end of the day would evidently be exciting and spectacular.

The plot of the film did not matter a jot. The boys knew all that was necessary. They were to be training ship cadets, and they were absolutely and positively to appear in the film. This would be something to boast of afterwards!

Mr. Newton had changed his attitude completely. He was geniality itself. He no longer looked upon these boys as a nuisance. They were necessary now, and he treated them with a friendly fatherliness which rather amused them.

"Props" proved to be a very genial little man with a face which was tremendously wrinkled. He was in full charge of a great motor lorry which seemed to contain everything from a trousers button to a spotlight.

"Let's have a look at you," he said, as he eyed the boys. "One at a time, young gents. There's a tent just along the beach where you can go and change, and look slippy about it, mind you."

He gauged their sizes with an experienced

eye, and when they went to the tent to change, they found that there had been very few mistakes in the matter of size. Their uniforms fitted almost as though they had been measured for them.

THE hulk was evidently supposed to be a training ship for officers, for the St. Frank's fellows found themselves arrayed in smart blue uniforms with reefer jackets and peaked caps. They had gold buttons, and gold on their caps and on their sleeves.

"This is jolly good!" remarked Handforth, as he surveyed himself. "I thought we were going to appear as the other kind of training ship boys—with those wide trousers and blouses and big collars."

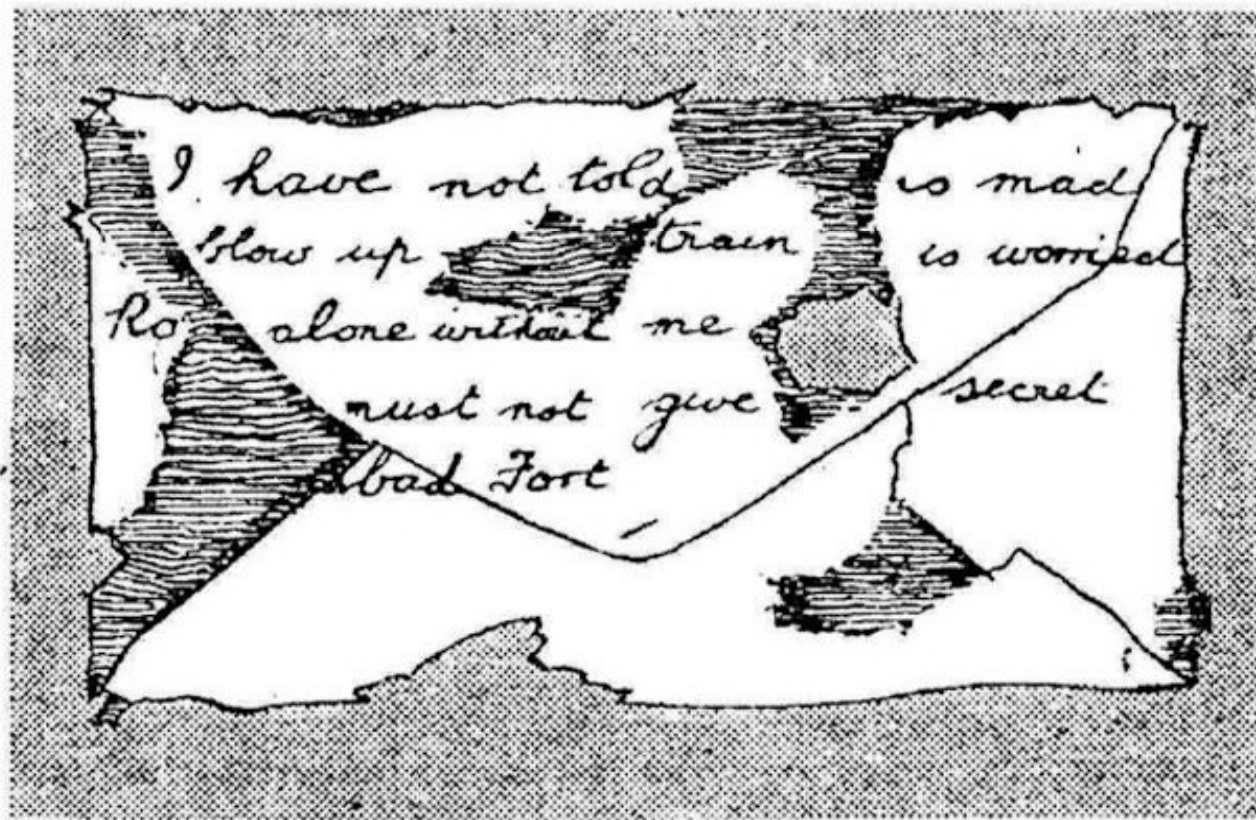
"Then you thought wrong—as usual," grinned Travers. "I say," he added, turning to the others, "have you noticed the miracle? Handy looks almost tidy for once."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wonder what we're supposed to represent?" asked somebody.

"We look like boys from the Worcester, down at Greenhithe," said Nipper. "I expect this ship is supposed to be one of the same type."

The last of the juniors came out into the sunshine, and they now saw that practically all the activity had been transferred to the hulk. Only one or two of the film men were



*What  
Was  
This  
Message  
and*

*Whose the Dead Hand*

mysteries? If you enjoy a good detective yarn you should read "The Man in The Darkened Room," a typically excellent Sexton Blake story in this week's

that Sexton Blake found in the wreckage of the train-smash? What is the meaning of these

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on the beach; the rest had gone aboard the "training ship."

"What are we supposed to do now?" asked Handforth impatiently.

He stopped then, and a sudden excitement gripped him.

"I say, you chaps," he burst out, "how about taking a film of ourselves. There's nobody about, and we can soon find a camera——"

"Don't be a fathead, Handy!" said Church. "All the cameras are in use, and you mustn't go monkeying about with them. Ah, here's one of the camera men. He'll soon stop you getting up to any mischief!"

The camera man came up. He was grinning broadly.

"I heard what you said, young man," he remarked, addressing Handforth. "So you want to do a bit of acting—eh?"

"Yes," replied Handforth eagerly. "Couldn't you get hold of a camera? And then I'll show you what a jolly fine actor I am."

A chorus of chuckles went up from the juniors. They had seen Handforth's efforts in the acting art before, and they were firmly convinced that he was far from a jolly fine one. But the camera man seemed to take the suggestion seriously.

"Anything to oblige, sonny," he said. "I'll get a camera and take some shots of you."

Handforth grinned triumphantly at the juniors as the man went off. He grinned more triumphantly when the man came back with a camera.

"Now, sonny, show us how you do your stuff," said the man, when he had placed the camera in position. "Are you ready? Right! Shoot!"

Handforth "shot." He went through all the emotions. He showed his audience how to appear gay and light-hearted; he registered sadness; he struck dramatic attitudes; he twisted his face about like a contortionist. And all the time the camera man solemnly turned the handle.

Edward Oswald, intensely serious, oblivious of everything, gloried in it all. So did the watchers. They howled and shrieked and laughed till they cried. Handforth had done some funny things before—he was nearly always funny—but never had he been funnier than now.

At last it was over. Handforth waved his hand in a lordly gesture to indicate that he had finished, and then he bestowed a self-satisfied smirk upon the man behind the camera.

"Well, what's your opinion?" asked Edward Oswald. "Don't you think I'm a born actor?"

"You're in a class by yourself," the man solemnly assured him.

"Any chance of those shots being put on the screen?" continued Handforth.

"Eh?" The man gave a start, and then he burst into a tremendous roar of

laughter. "Sorry to disappoint you, sonny, but there's no film in that camera, and, what's more, it doesn't work!"

The man jerked out the sentence with difficulty. As it was, he punctuated it from time to time with hearty guffaws.

The juniors howled with mirth as they heard the words, while Handforth appeared to be stunned. After all his efforts; after all his wonderful acting, and now he learned that the camera didn't work!

"Why, you—you—you——" he began, and couldn't get any further. Words failed him.

It was some time before Handforth recovered from the shock, and before the St. Frank's fellows regained their composure.



By that time all of them were dressed in their uniforms, and they were awaiting orders.

Looking out over the sunlit sea, they could see that the "training shop" was now the centre of great activity.

"Attention!" rapped out Nipper suddenly.

"Eh?" said Handforth, looking round.

"Line up, my lads!" commanded Nipper. "We're all cadets, aren't we? Might as well show Mr. Rivers that we're well trained for the job. We don't want him to think that we're a lot of undisciplined kids."

"That's a good idea," grinned Harry Gresham. "What's the good of being members of the St. Frank's Cadet Corps if we don't show what we can do?"

Mr. Rivers, who was coming up the beach at that moment, was pleasantly surprised to see the mob of uniformed figures smartly form itself into a double column. Heels clicked, shoulders were squared, and within the space of a few moments the St. Frank's fellows had formed themselves into a smart, orderly company. The Third-Formers were every bit as keen as the other juniors.

Nipper, as the commanding officer, saluted Mr. Rivers as he came up, and on the instant all the other cadets smartly raised their hands.

"Splendid!" chuckled the production manager. "Rather a pity I can't take a shot of you as you are. But it's not in the story, and we don't want to waste film. All ready?"

"Yes, sir!" went up a united shout.

"Good!" said Mr. Rivers. "Then you'd better get on board as quickly as possible. There's no time to waste."



THE juniors were taken out in boats, a batch at a time, and placed on board the steam-launch, which was close inshore. When they were all aboard, the telegraph sounded in the little engine-room, and the launch glided off towards the big bulk of the alleged training ship. This latter vessel, of course, was securely moored some distance from the beach.

The steam-launch ran alongside, and the fellows were soon piling over the old bulwarks of the hulk.

She really was an ancient vessel, but there had been a great deal of fakery, which was very obvious at close quarters. In the film, however, everything would look perfectly natural.

There was a wide, open space amidships. This was really a carefully prepared "set," and the cameras were already in position at the far end. A big companionway was visible, and Mr. Lomax was pointing to this while he talked with the actors who were to take part in the next scene.

"You've got to come up that companionway," he was saying. "You advance as far as that piece of rope lying on the deck, and you stop there and say your lines. Better have a bit of rehearsal first."

He looked round.

"All you boys had better get on to the other part of the deck during this scene," he added, addressing the St. Frank's fellows. "And don't forget there's to be no talking. We must have complete silence here—for the next ten minutes, anyhow."

"Go ahead, sir," said Nipper. "I'll be responsible for these chaps."

"Rats!" said Handforth. "We're all responsible for ourselves, fathead!"

The scene was rehearsed twice, and then shot. The juniors watched and listened fascinatedly, and they gathered from the dialogue that these desperate characters had just set fire to the ship whilst everybody slept. Incidentally they had also lit some fuses, and within a couple of minutes the whole ship would be blown to atoms.

Handforth was rather startled.

"They must be mad!" he burst out, as soon as the director had signalled that the scene was over. "If they've already lit those fuses we shall all be blown up!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What's the cackle for?" demanded Handforth. "You heard what those chaps said—"

"My dear ass, that was only a part of the film," said Nipper. "They didn't really light any fuses."

"Oh!"

"We've got to do our scene yet," continued Nipper. "I expect it's supposed to happen while the fuses are burning, and the audience will be expecting to see us sent sky-high every second. Actually we shan't be in any danger at all."

"What a fraud!" said Handforth, with a sniff.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Edward Oswald was having his eyes opened with regard to film production. Perhaps he thought that when such an explosion took place in a picture, the actors were really in the direst peril. As in everything else, he took the "pictures" literally.

"It isn't your business to think, Ted," said Willy gently. "We've only got to do as we're told. This isn't a real fight, and it won't be a real fire or a real explosion. At least, not while we're on board. It'll look genuine enough in the film, but I don't think Mr. Rivers wants us to be really blown into the middle of next week."

"There doesn't seem to be any story at all," grumbled Handforth.

"Of course there doesn't—as you see it now," said Willy. "Did you think they shot each scene in its proper sequence? When this film is shown to the public they'll see views of the ship burning furiously, and then a close-up of us on the deck, having a scrap perhaps, and then another view of the ship burning. What we're going to do now will supposedly happen after the ship is well alight."

"Well, I'm blessed!" said Handforth, scratching his head. "That's putting the cart before the horse!"

"I dare say it is—but it's the safer way," chuckled Nipper. "You don't expect that these people would let us be on board when the ship is really on fire, do you, and with explosives in the holds? They can't take chances like that, Handy."

"I shan't believe in these films any more!" said Handforth sternly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The very next time you go to the pictures you'll believe in them just the same as ever," grinned Travers. "If a picture is properly produced and properly directed, the illusion is absolutely perfect. What the Samson does it matter how it was made as long as it looks realistic?"

Handforth, glancing down the decks, suddenly jumped.

"By George!" he ejaculated. "You're wrong, you fatheads! The ship's on fire already!"

"What!"

"Look at all that smoke!" roared Handforth, pointing. "It's pouring out! The ship's burning—"

"Now then, don't get scared," said Jimmy Lomax, bustling forward.

"Who's scared?" demanded Handforth.

"You sound fairly excited, anyhow," said the director. "There's no fire. The property man's merely getting the smoke pots into shape."

"The smoke pots?" asked Handforth blankly.

"That's what I said," agreed Mr. Lomax, in an impatient voice. "You boys had better get ready for action now. This fight is supposed to take place while the ship is burning furiously. There'll be clouds of smoke, and we'll get some pretty good flames, too. But you needn't be alarmed—there'll be no





Handforth's efforts in the fight scene were certainly realistic—too realistic for one or two of the crooks! "Well, anyway, the thing was a success," said Handforth triumphantly. The director grinned. "My dear ass, that was only a rehearsal!" he said.

danger. This fire will be a fake one. The real thing won't happen until we're all safely off."

"It's nothing else but fakes," said Handforth tartly.

All the rest of the fellows grinned. They, of course, could thoroughly understand and appreciate everything that was being done. But Handforth was a "diehard," and he steadfastly maintained that if the film was to be a success the fire ought to be genuine.

**T**HERE was no question about the genuine appearance of the fire that broke out shortly afterwards—whether it was a fake or not. Unquestionably it looked real enough. Great clouds of smoke came drifting over the decks, and bursts of flame appeared from the cunningly contrived devices that Mr. Lomax was using.

All the St. Frank's juniors had gone below—to find that the interior of the ship was as deceptive as the exterior. The fellows merely had to wait at the bottom of some wide steps, in readiness for the signal. They were supposed to come rushing up from the dining saloon during a meal. Mr. Rivers had even hinted that the fellows would be required at the British Bulldog studios, at a later date, so that a scene of that meal could be taken. But the producer had an idea that he could get some other boys to take these parts. It would only be a brief shot,

anyhow, and as none of the St. Frank's fellows were taking individual parts in the film, their presence would not be absolutely essential.

Handforth was more puzzled than ever.

"But it's all rot!" he protested, as they waited. "If we're supposed to be having a meal down here, where's the saloon? And why don't we have the meal?"

"The interior scenes, you ass, are taken in the studio," said Nipper. "They'll prepare a set so that it represents the dining saloon of a training ship. Sometimes these scenes are taken long beforehand—sometimes they're taken afterwards. But in the film they appear in their right order."

"Well, of all the rummy things," said Handforth, staring.

"In this film, for example, the audience will see a crowd of chaps in the saloon, feeding," continued Nipper. "Then there'll be an alarm, and we shall go rushing on deck. The audience will see us rush on deck. That's the part we're going to do now, and it'll look as though we've really come up from the saloon."

"And we're only stuck here, in this mouldy old hole," said Handforth, looking round. "Even the staircase is a fake one—just plain beams."

"That doesn't matter—the staircase isn't seen from the deck," chuckled Willy. "And what the camera doesn't see, the audience can't grieve about."



## CHAPTER 9.

## Ready for the Big Scene!

THE whole thing was very elaborate. Until now the St. Frank's fellows had never imagined what careful preparations had to be made in the taking of a film, and particularly a talking film.

One part of the deck was literally encumbered with apparatus. Great electric cables came on board from the shore; various machines were placed here and there, and there were many microphones. Cameras, too, had been placed at different angles, and each camera had its operator and his assistant.

Mr. Lomax and Mr. Newton were extremely busy, and Mr. Osbert Rivers hovered about, supervising the whole business. He said very little, but when he did speak he spoke briefly and to the point. His keen eye was on everything, and his supervision was uncannily comprehensive.

The director, at times, didn't quite like it; not that Mr. Rivers cared. He was responsible for this production, and he was having things done in the way he wanted them to be done.

"All set?" asked Jimmy Lomax, at length. "Good! Now then, those boys had better get themselves ready. One rehearsal ought to be enough, and then we'll start shooting."

The assistant-director went to the top of the companionway.

"Ready down there?" he sang out.

"Waiting for the word!" came Nipper's voice.

"All right—get busy!" shouted Mr. Newton. "Don't forget—come up with a tearing rush. Look as excited as you can, and give some realistic yells. Don't overdo it, though. There mustn't be any talking, or shouting of remarks to one another. All we want from you is action—and yells."

"Come on!" shouted Handforth.

He was the first to come tearing up, and there was no fake about his excitement. Behind him streamed the other juniors. The "crooks" were all ready. They were supposed to be taken by surprise, and they spun round with startled exclamations and got ready for the attack.

"Come on, St. Frank's!" bellowed Handforth. "Back up, Remove!"

"Hurrah!"

As they came surging forward across the deck, Mr. Lomax ran up, waving his hands.

"Stop!" he roared. "Hold everything!"

The juniors stopped, rather taken aback.

"What's the big idea, young 'un?" demanded the director, glaring at Handforth.

"Didn't I do it right?" asked Edward Oswald.

"No, you didn't!" retorted Mr. Lomax.

"What do you mean by rushing up and shouting 'Come on, St. Frank's!'? This is a training ship—not a school!"

"Oh, my hat!" ejaculated Handforth, with a start.

"Start all over again." said the director. "Better be on the safe side, and use no words at all. Just yell!"

"I think it would be better if we left Ted out of it," said Willy thoughtfully. "You stay down below, Ted, and—"

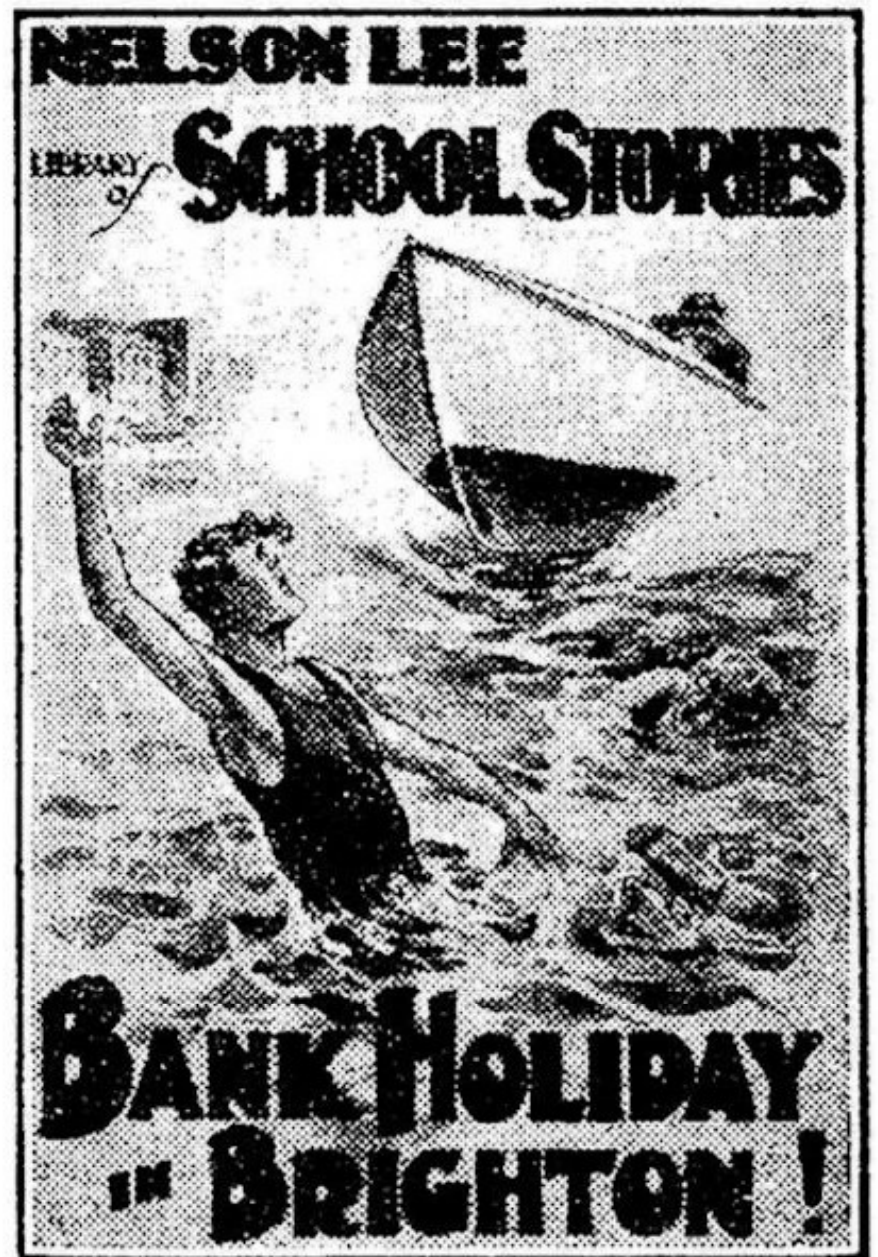
"You young ass!" interrupted Handforth. "We want this film to be a success!"

"That's why I'm suggesting that you should remain below," said the fag.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

They went crowding down the companionway again, and the whole thing was started afresh. This time the juniors came rushing

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up, and Handforth remembered himself. The yells he gave were perfectly satisfactory. He was well in the forefront, and he dashed up to the "crooks" and started scrapping in earnest.

Crash! Biff! Slam!

Handforth's fists were hard at work. One unfortunate crook received the full force of Edward Oswald's left on the point of his chin, and before he could recover he staggered back with a blow over the eye from Handforth's right which would undoubtedly impair his vision before long.

"Hey! Stop!" gasped the unfortunate young man. "I say, you know, what's the idea? Is this sort of thing absolutely necessary?"

It was extremely funny, coming from such a desperate-looking criminal. Mr. Lomax ran forward, waving his arms violently.



"That's enough!" he shouted. "You'll do all right!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"And don't be so realistic next time, young man," went on the director, turning to Handforth. "There's no need to punch these fellows in the eye like that!"

"I should say there isn't!" protested the injured one. "Confound his beastly nerve! I shan't be fit to be seen after this!"

"I say, I'm awfully sorry!" gasped Handforth, realising what he had done. "I—I forgot myself, you know!"

## "BANK HOLIDAY IN BRIGHTON!"

St. Frank's by the briny. Nipper and his cheery chums bathing in the sparkling blue sea. Suddenly there comes a terrific roar; out of the water whizzes a huge motor-boat, heading straight for Edward Oswald Handforth.

What happens?

This is only one of the numerous exciting incidents in next week's grand topical yarn—an incident which, unknown to the St. Frank's fellows, is to prove the first of many amazing adventures the like of which they have never before experienced!

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## "RIVALS OF THE RAMPANT!"

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"I'm not likely to forget it," moaned the unhappy one.

"Well, anyway, the thing was a success," said Handforth. "The only thing is, it was too short——"

"My dear young ass, the scene hasn't been taken yet," said the director. "That was only a rehearsal."

"What!" gurgled Handforth. "Weren't the cameras working?"

"They weren't!" said Mr. Lomax. "But they'll be working next time, and you'd better remember it."

THE fight was a triumph. Both Mr. Lomax and Mr. Rivers were thoroughly satisfied with it. Handforth again forgot himself in the heat of the scrap, and he distributed a few more black eyes and thick ears. The rest of the

juniors covered themselves with glory. The scene was a great success in every way, and there wasn't the slightest doubt that when the film was publicly shown the audiences would be thrilled.

The smoke pots had been going full blast, sending great billowing masses of acrid smoke across the decks, but in such a way that the camera view was not obscured. Great flickering flames had appeared, too, some from the companionway, some from beyond the deck-houses. As soon as the scene was over, however, the smoke vanished and the flames died down, and the deck became the centre of fresh activity.

Without any waste of time, the cameras and the talking apparatus went overboard into the waiting motor-boats and launches. Everything had been planned to the minutest detail. There wasn't a moment's waste of time. The very instant the scene was over, the mechanics and the electricians set to work.

"Well, that's all!" said Mr. Rivers genially, as he came amongst the St. Frank's boys. "You've done well, young 'uns!"

"Don't you want us any more, sir?" asked Nipper.

"No; your bit's done," said the producer. "All the rest will be purely spectacular. We've shot all the close-ups and all the other scenes. Now we're going to take the burning ship, and after that the explosion."

"But we can stay and see it all, can't we, sir?" asked Handforth.

"You can stay if you like—but you mustn't be too near," replied Mr. Rivers. "Better get on the launch, and you'll be taken ashore."

"We shan't be able to see much from that angle, sir," put in Nipper. "We'd like to see the fire from the other side. Can't the launch steam out to seaward a bit?"

"That's just what it's going to do—and we're going to take shots from the deck," said Mr. Rivers. "If you boys behave yourselves, you might as well remain on board."

They all promised to behave themselves, of course, and before long they were going down the ladder, and once again they crowded on the deck of the steam-launch.

Mr. Rivers did not stay with them long. He prepared to go off in a fast motor-boat, accompanied by Jimmy Lomax. They wanted to be able to dodge from place to place, so that they could direct the "shooting" from the various angles.

"There's absolutely no danger, boys," said Mr. Rivers. "There'll be a big fire, and we hope that the old ship will burn like a torch. She ought to, considering the paraffin and the tar barrels she's got inside her!"

"What about the explosives, sir?" asked Nipper.

"They're so placed that the fire won't be able to reach them—not until she's nearly burned to the water-line, anyhow," replied the producer. "In the story, the ship is suppose to contain a big store of crude oil—I think the author plausibly explains its presence on a training-ship—and it's this



oil which is supposed to blow up. Actually, we've got dynamite charges and gunpowder."

"My only hat!"

"That ought to make a big noise, sir!"

"It ought to make a good spectacle, too," nodded Mr. Rivers. "But, as I say, there's no danger. The explosives will be detonated by electrical contact, and that won't happen until we've taken all the close-ups of the fire."

"Who's going to make the contact, sir?" asked somebody.

"We've got a man out there on the shore, hidden behind the rocks," replied Mr. Rivers. "It wouldn't do for him to appear in the scene. He's got a plunger, and he won't bring it into operation until he hears the signal."

"Oh, I see," said Handforth. "There's no danger at all, then?"

"Not the slightest," chuckled Mr. Rivers. "I believe you'd like it better if there *was* danger, eh? Well, that explosion won't take place until the man behind the rocks hears three blasts from the launch's siren. That's the signal. And when it's given, young 'uns, you'll be at least a mile away."

Mr. Rivers went off, and Handforth grunted.

"What's the good of being a mile away?" he grumbled. "We can't see much at that distance."

"I expect we shall see all we want to," said McClure. "And we shall hear enough, too! By jingo! This is going to be exciting!"

The last men left the old hulk, and then the launch backed away, swung round, and steamed out to sea for some little distance, afterwards circling round with her engines stopped.

Great clouds of smoke were now appearing from the ship, both fore and aft—and soon there was more smoke from amidships with one or two licking flames.

"She's burning nicely now," said the assistant-director, who was in charge of the cameras on the launch. "Everything ready there? We shall have to start shooting soon."

"Better give her a bit more time," said one of his assistants.

It was no fake fire this time, but the real thing. Great, lurid flames were now bursting out from the portholes and from the companionway, accompanied by smothered smoke and sparks. The dull roaring of the flames could plainly be heard.

"My only topper!" said Handforth, impressed. "These films must cost a lot of money! Fancy burning a ship like that—burning it deliberately, I mean!"

"This is nothing," said Nipper. "In some films they work stunts that cost ten times as much. Whoa! There she goes!"

The fire was gaining a hold with incredible rapidity. The motor-boat was dodging about at full speed now, and the cameras were at work, taking shots of the blaze from various angles.

It was all very fascinating—and the best was yet to come!

## CHAPTER 10.

### An Unrehearsed Effect!

THE motor-boat came shooting past. "Get in close to her—on this side!" sang out Mr. Lomax. "Get some close-ups of her, broadside, Newton."

"The sparks are flying this way, Mr. Lomax!" yelled the launch's skipper.

"That won't matter!" shouted the director. "You'll be by within a minute, and you can get a good shot of the main blaze. Better go now, or it'll be too late!"

"All right!" called the assistant-director. "Get her as close as you can, captain. Cameras ready!"

The skipper shook his head.

"We oughtn't to do it," he said.

"Jimmy wants these shots, and he's going to have them!" said Mr. Newton doggedly.

The captain shrugged his shoulders, and touched the engine-room telegraph. The engines thudded gently, and the launch moved forward, gliding round in a semi-circle towards the blazing ship.

A fairly strong wind had blown up now, and the sparks and the smoke came over the water in flurries.

"By jingo, this is going to be good!" murmured Tommy Watson.

All the juniors were thrilled. They had been thoroughly interested in the proceedings beforehand, but this climax was well worth waiting for.

The cameras were already in action as the launch went shooting past the blazing vessel at fairly close quarters. An immense wave of heat was sweeping over the sea, and the air was full of choking fumes. But most of the smoke—as the director had seen—was going overhead. The cameras were able to get clear shots of the conflagration.

"What-ho! A slight rise in the good old temperature, what?" said Archie Glen-thorne, as he leaned over the rail. "Good gad! It's a dashed good thing we're not lingering— Whoa! Odds jolts and jars! What's happened?"

"We've hit something!" gasped Handforth.

The steam-launch, with a sudden sickening lurch, had stopped dead. She had stopped in a dead line with the burning ship, and only a comparatively short distance from her. The idea had been to shoot past, and during those few seconds there could be little or no danger.

But now?

One or two of the cameras had crashed over, and Mr. Newton was shouting angrily.

"We're aground!" roared the captain. "It's no good shouting at me like that! I didn't want to come round on this side, and now we've hit a mud bank. I tell you we're aground!"



"But we can't stay here!" ejaculated Mr. Newton. "These sparks will be coming in millions within a few minutes."

Even as he spoke, a sudden gust of wind brought a tremendous cloud of white-hot sparks across the intervening stretch of sea. Many of them drifted on to the launch's deck, and the St. Frank's fellows dodged hurriedly. Their throats were parched with the acrid fumes, and they were half suffocated by the heat.

The unexpected had happened. Here was an unrehearsed effect! The launch had gone aground—probably owing to the fact that the tide was out. The engine-room telegraph was clanging, and the propeller was churning the water madly. The captain was making an effort to back off, but nothing happened. The launch remained just where she was—full in the danger zone.

"Where's Lomax?" yelled the assistant-director. "Better tell him at once. He's got to be warned—"

He broke off, aghast, as the skipper gave three loud blasts on the steam-launch's syren! Every atom of colour fled from the assistant-director's cheeks, and he leapt forward like a madman.

"Man alive!" he panted. "What have you done?"

"I'm signalling to your people—"

"But you've given the signal for the explosion!" groaned Mr. Newton, staring fascinatedly at the burning ship. "And we're stuck here—aground—within a hundred yards of the ship! We shall all be killed!"

"Good heavens!" gasped the skipper. "I—I—I— I'd forgotten!"

EVERYBODY waited for death. The St. Frank's boys, stunned by the suddenness of this dire peril, had no time to feel afraid. They only knew that the fatal signal had been given, and that the steam-launch was stuck fast. At such close quarters as this there could be no possible escape for them. Mercifully, the explosion had not yet happened, although it would almost certainly come at any moment now. The man behind the rocks on the beach must have heard those three hoots.

The assistant-director suddenly turned to the crowd of juniors.

"Can you boys swim?" he shouted hoarsely.

"Yes, sir!"

"Then swim!" yelled Mr. Newton. "Don't stay here! Dive overboard, and swim away from the fire. There's just a chance in a thousand that you might save yourselves!"

The smoke and the sparks were now pouring over in great clouds, and the water was obviously the best place for safety. Nipper led the way, plunging cleanly into the sea. Then the others followed in a great crowd, diving over neatly, or jumping. Fortunately, they could all swim—although some of them were rather weak at it.

Boom-oom!

"There she goes!" yelled Handforth.

He was in the water, and he turned round and stared at the burning ship. A sudden explosion had occurred, and the stern seemed to break completely away from the rest of the vessel. It went up in a vast column of timbers and blazing debris. The shock of the explosion, however, was only comparatively slight.

Nearby the launch could be seen—still quite safe.

"My only sainted aunt!" ejaculated Handforth, aghast. "Look there! The captain's still on the launch! He'll be killed!"

"Well, he had a chance to jump with the rest," said Church breathlessly. "He must be mad to stay there!"

The motor-boat was coming up now, Mr. Rivers having sensed that something was wrong—for, owing to the smoke and the smother, he had not been able to see anything. But he had heard those three blasts from the syren, and he knew that they were premature.

AS it happened, the motor-boat's arrival was only just in time. For some of the boys—particularly one or two of the fags—were in a bad way. They were hauled into the motor-boat, and they were really none the worse for their adventure. All the strong swimmers were making for the shore—fellows such as Nipper and Handforth and Travers and Boots and Reggie Pitt. They felt that they could do this swim quite comfortably.

And in the meantime the camera-men were busy—in spite of the danger. They had taken some excellent shots of those explosions, and the machines were at work everywhere—taking shots from all angles.

"There's no hope for that launch!" said Nipper, as he swam with Tommy Watson and Tregellis-West. "When the big explosion comes, she'll be blown to atoms!"

"Hallo!" ejaculated Sir Montie, looking back. "Begad! She's not there now, dear old boys!"

"What!"

They looked, and they found that the steam-launch was now moving off—away from the burning wreck, and into safety.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said Handforth indignantly, when he saw. "There wasn't any need for us to swim at all! We might as well have stopped on board!"

"How did we know that she'd get off?" asked Church. "Besides, I expect she's only got afloat again because she's relieved of our weight. I believe the tide's coming in, too—and that's helped."

"Perhaps you're right," admitted Handforth. "Anyhow, it's a jolly good thing that the ship—"

And then, at that very moment, came the big explosion. There wasn't any doubt about it this time. There was an ear-splitting, deafening detonation—an appalling explosion

(Concluded on page 44.)





## Things Heard and Seen by EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

**L**OTS of people haven't the faintest idea what Chubby Heath's people call him when he's at home—and the same applies to Juicy Lemon. Naturally, they're not called "Chubby" or "Juicy" by their fond parents. These are merely nicknames to which they answer at St. Frank's. Miss Christine Salisbury, of Birmingham, has asked me about Chubby Heath, so I'll include Juicy as well. I wasn't quite sure of Chubby's name myself, as it's such a long time since I've used it, and I made a point of asking him personally when I saw him last week in Bristol. He confessed that his father and mother always call him Joseph, and that to the various members of his parents' household he is known as Master Joe. Juicy Lemon was very reluctant to divulge his own Christian name, but at last he informed me that he was christened "Christopher." He's had a grudge against his people ever since. I told the young ass that "Christopher" is one of the best names going, and reminded him that it was Christopher Columbus who discovered America. And all Juicy said was "Why?" I'll admit that I couldn't find any reasonable answer.

\* \* \*

The other day I happened to see "Smiling" Bill Gordon, and we had a chat about the time when he was interested in St. Frank's. I'll bet some of you remember him—eh? He's the bluff, good-natured boxing promoter who once fixed up some big matches for Ernest Lawrence, of the Fourth. Lawrence, by the way, is just as keen on boxing as ever, and he generally runs away with all the honours in the junior contests. Perhaps it will please George Burgess, of Arundel, if I bring Lawrence into the stories a bit more prominently. He says he'd like to see Ernest Lawrence to the front in a whole series again. Well, it's quite likely that he will do something pretty big before

long. Anyhow, Smiling Bill Gordon was as keen as mustard on a new stunt he had in mind, and it may come to something soon. By the way, don't take too much notice of this snapshot of George Burgess. He's been following our chronicles of St. Frank's for umpteen years, and I'm sure he must have had this photograph taken during the "ump" years. I think he's well in his teens now.

\* \* \*

**W**HAT'S the matter with Charlie Redway and Harold Pearce and Reg Banks and Fred Johnson, to say nothing of those other friends of Fred Oates? Fred, who lives in Devonport, tells me that all his chums read Our Paper, and they keep promising to write to me. Well, as far as I can remember, they haven't written yet. I don't think they're really lazy, but it's surprising how many people, ordinarily brave, turn absolutely funky when it comes to writing a letter. And yet the majority of these, if they only got really down to it, would find that it's one of the easiest things in the world. I wish they would write, anyhow, and give me their views on St. Frank's. How can I keep up this feature unless you readers write to me so that I can have something to discuss? Lots of times I've opened a letter and read something of this sort: "Dear Mr. Brooks, at last I have taken my courage in both hands, and my pen in one hand, and I am writing to you—" Think of it! Where does the courage part of it come? I'm not an ogre, and I haven't been a sergeant major. If you met me in the street, you'd notice what an inoffensive-looking merchant I am. I doubt if you would give me a second glance. So what's all this scare about? If you haven't got any good notepaper handy, use a sugar-bag, or something. I don't care a bit. But I do like to hear from you, particularly if I have been writing something that doesn't strike you as being up to the mark.



Here's a reader now—Richard Mounsey, of Norwich—who tells me that he has been reading my yarns since he was ten years old—and now he's twenty-one. And this is the first time he has written to me! Naturally, I'm jolly pleased to hear from him, especially as he tells me that he's going to write again. But here's the point. I wonder how many more readers there are who have been following the adventures of Nipper & Co. for eleven years, and who have not yet sent me even a single line? I'll bet there are heaps of them. What about taking a hint from this Norwich chap?

\* \* \*

I'M getting a bit worried about Mr. Pagett. Unless he's very careful, he'll find himself neglecting his work—not, of course, that anybody in the Fifth would mind that. Even as it is, the Fifth Form chaps are having a pretty slack time of it, and they're hoping for the best. The fact is, Mr. Pagett has suddenly developed a fondness for golf. And the worst of it is, I'm to blame. I happened to meet him in Bannington while I was on my way to the links, and I invited him to accompany me. He said he didn't know how to play, but in a rash moment I offered to give him a few pointers. And now he's spending all his spare time reading golf books, buying mashies and niblicks and things, and he's probably talking in his sleep about bogeys and stymies and handicaps. And when I met him yesterday he had a terribly worried frown, and he said that he'd give anybody half his salary to cure him of his slicing. So I'm feeling a great responsibility, and if old Pagett loses his job, I shall have it on my conscience.

\* \* \*

Vivian Travers seems to be pretty popular, and lots of readers keep asking me to bring him more prominently into the stories. Here's Jackie Hughes, of Streatham Hill, actually bursting into verse about him:

"Time's hanging heavy on my hands,  
And I've got nothing else to do;  
I've had my tea and feel fed up,  
So I think I'll write to you.  
Travers is my favourite;  
He's more wicked than the rest.  
He's got his faults, like all of us,  
But he's still 'one of the best.'"

I think I must be super-human, because I haven't fainted, and Jackie seemed to take it for granted that I would faint after reading that verse. I don't know what the rest of you think, but I'm of the opinion that

it's pretty good. I am now awaiting the chorus with interest. Not the chorus of praise for Jackie's effort from all you readers, (which is bound to come, anyhow), but the chorus from Jackie to match the verse. In the meantime, I'll see what Travers is doing, and if he has been up to anything particularly bad, I'll see if I can make a story out of it. I am quite sure you won't want to hear of anything good from him. Travers is one of those chaps who's only attractive because he's always straying near the edge of the straight and narrow path, and not quite wobbling over it. One of these days he might have a bit of a side-slip, though. But when I tell him to mind what he's doing he merely grins at me and assures me that he wasn't born yesterday. I knew that without his telling me.

\* \* \*

I HEAR that the Blue Crusaders are preparing for practice, and they'll probably start in earnest during the first week in August. I had a look round the Stronghold, in Bannington, last week, and I was immensely struck by the progress that has been made during the close season. It's a real sports stadium, with vast concrete stands, a magnificent clubhouse, refreshment-rooms, and everything. I don't think there's a professional football ground in the country which can boast of such magnificent accommodation. The turf is in splendid condition, and when the footer season opens I believe the people of Bannington and district will justify the hopes of the Blue Crusaders directorate by packing the Stronghold regularly. If any venture deserves full success, this one does.

\* \* \*

Of course, the "Blues" are in the First Division now. They won promotion last season, and Mr. Ulysses Piecombe, the manager, was to a large extent responsible. But we mustn't forget that Lionel Corcoran's unflagging spirit had a great deal to do with it, too. Considering that he's only a Fourth-Former at St. Frank's, I think he's a young marvel. He's always had faith in the Blue Crusaders, and they've proved themselves worthy of it. Imagine, too, Tich Harborough playing against the big First Division clubs during the coming season! Pretty good—eh? A St. Frank's Removite playing against such clubs as Huddersfield and Aston Villa and all the rest of them! Yes, I think that the forthcoming football season will be of particular interest to the St. Frank's chaps.

#### OUR READERS' PORTRAIT GALLERY

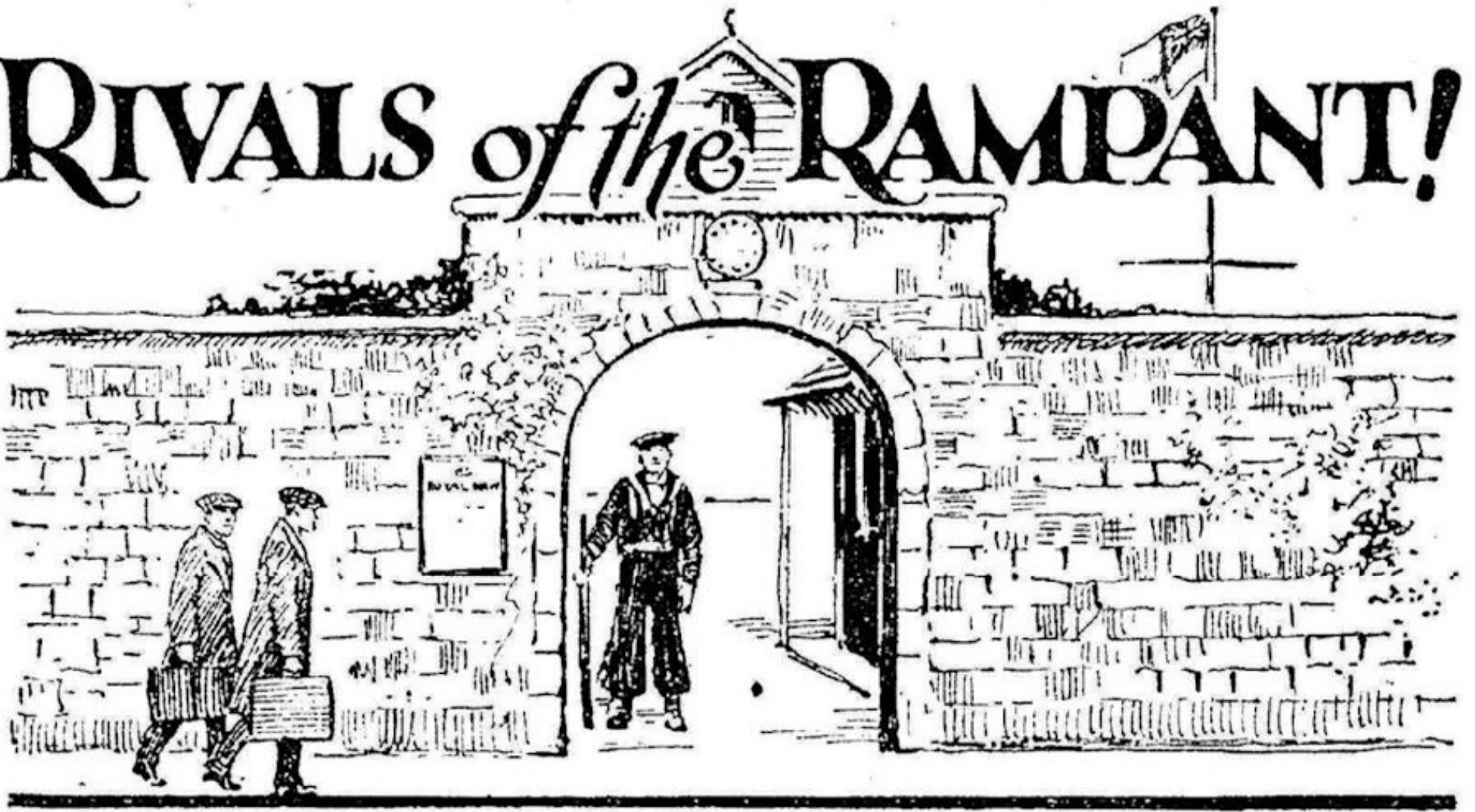


George Burgess



THIS GRAND SERIAL GETS MORE AND MORE EXCITING EVERY WEEK!

# RIVALS of the RAMPANT!



By STANTON HOPE

## Busky's True Colours!

**B**USKY had shot his bolt, and apart from a sore nose and "bellows to mend," he had water from his ship-mates' wake burbling into his mouth and nostrils.

"Shades of Nelson!" howled P.-o. Teak in sudden ecstacy. "We're not licked yet! Oh, you Boy Gilbert! Jack, Jack!"

The shouting of the regatta crowd had been like a mere gale to what it was now—a roaring tornado! Naval ratings and Sandeliff schoolboys almost yelled their heads off for their respective champions.

Merely snatching an occasional breath amid the burbling foam about him, Jack slammed on his way. Of Ginger he saw nothing, though he heard his name amid the babel, but he glimpsed Teddy Roscoe immediately on his right hand. Bit by bit he crept up in those last breathless yards to the Sandeliff boy who was leading. Now his head was level with Teddy's shoulder, and, amid the maddened tumult of the fans, he drew farther ahead. They were on level terms—and gallant Ginger was but a few inches to the rear!

"Jack Gilbert!"

"Navy for ever!"

"Now, Teddy!"

And then with a final heart-tearing effort, the lion-hearted Jack ripped his way ahead and gripped the white-painted rope festooned along the raft's side.

A thunder of cheers—and again another as Ginger Jones got in a hand-touch ahead of the schoolboy champion to gain a further 2 points for second place.

Rampant had won!

For the first time in the regatta between the naval and local schools, the Rampant boys had wrested the coveted honour, and by the margin of 4 points.

Breathless though he was, Jack felt a thrill such as he had never experienced in his life before. He

*Thanks to Jack Gilbert, H.M.S. Rampant comes out on top in the Regatta. Naturally, this is not to the liking of his rival, Busky Smith, who shows his jealous displeasure in no uncertain way—and then has great cause to regret doing so!*

and Ginger had taken the White Ensign to victory; his school had won! His pride was not in his own achievement, but that the Rampant to which he belonged had gained the honours of the day. That his victory might possibly count in any way as proof of his sporting prowess toward gaining the legacy left by old Barny Morland, never entered his head.

He gasped out a congratulation to Ginger, and, starting to clamber out



upon the swaying raft, felt the horny hand of P.-o. Teak clap down upon his shoulder.

"Great effort, Boy Gilbert!"

And the petty officer's commendation gave Jack as much pleasure as if he had been handed a silver cup.

During this exciting moment or two after the finish of the race, he had not given a thought to Busky Smith; in fact, he had forgotten that his rival had taken part in the event at all. He was reminded sharply of him, however, as he hauled himself out of the water and his legs were suddenly gripped.

"Here!" panted Jack. "What the thump!"

He fell back into the water, and the next thing he became aware of was a hand shoved violently into his face, forcing his head back again below the surface.

"Phew! Whooh!" spluttered Jack, struggling upward. "B-belay there!"

The grating voice of Busky rasped into his ear:

"You beastly young cad! Foul me, would you! Put me out of the race—eh? Hold that!"

His right came over in a savage hook to Jack's ear, and Jack's gurgle of surprise was drowned by a storm of protests from the astounded witnesses aboard the raft and in the boats nearby.

"Avast!" thundered Teak. "Come aboard here at once!"

But Busky, lost to all sense of honour, reason, or discipline in his hatred of Jack, heard nothing but the urge of the demon of fury within him, and he followed up his blow by lurching atop of his rival and driving him under water again.

Choking mouthfuls of the briny sea into his system, Jack nevertheless rose clear-headed enough to fight back in self-defence. In swift succession he flung

out his two fists, and, rather luckily, got home with his left full on Busky's nose, which had already been made sore from the accidental kick during the race.

"Groogh!" spluttered Busky.

The waters of Sandcliff Bay closed over his matted hair and crimsoned slightly about him.

A number of naval ratings laughed and applauded the blow, and the Sandcliff juniors showed themselves on Jack's side to a man.

"Good egg!" piped Teddy Roscoe. "Wade into the big weed!"

Everything had been so hectic during and after the race that Jack had had no time to realise what had caused all this trouble. During the sprint he had felt his legs grappled, and had felt his heel strike against something. He had been quite unaware that he had been fouled deliberately by Busky, and that by accident he had dealt his rival a well-merited rebuke on the end of the nose! So why Busky had set about him here in the sea before the regatta crowd, he had not the haziest notion.

Whatever the cause, however, he had no thought of turning tail when Busky, a ribbon of red cleaving his wet face from nose to chin, emerged above the surface and renewed the combat.

Churning the water into foam, they went hard at it. In their struggles they got farther from the raft and nearer to the end of that lane of row-boats and other craft lining the regatta course. Someone, thinking that Jack would get the worst of it from his burlier opponent, thrust an oar between the two, and Busky cracked his fist hard against the wooden blade. Then, dodging round, the infuriated cad attempted to secure a throat hold, only to receive a third stabbing blow to his damaged nose.

#### HOW THE STORY STARTED:

**JACK GILBERT**, a cheery youngster of some fifteen years, has just joined H.M.S. Rampant, a naval training school at Porthaven. His only living relative is his scoundrelly uncle,

**LEW BONNER**, and the less he sees of him the better Jack will be pleased. The boy joins the Navy along with

**CLEM SMITH**, or Busky, as he becomes known at the Rampant. Smith is of the bullying type, and is very jealous of Jack's friendship with his—Busky's—uncle,

**BARNY MORLAND**, who has just died. It was Barny who got the two boys to join the Navy, and in his will he stipulates that a sum of £2,000 is to go to the boy who acquits himself best in the Service. Both settle down at the Rampant, and Jack makes a friend of

**GINGER JONES**. All three boys are chosen to take part in the annual regatta between Rampant and Sandcliff Towers College, which is held at Sandcliff, a popular seaside resort. Jack gets a shock when he sees his rascally uncle there, but, fortunately, Lew Bonner does not spot his nephew. The first four regatta events take place, resulting in Sandcliff Towers obtaining a lead of two points. To win now, Rampant will have to obtain first and second places in the final event—the hundred yards' swimming race. Jack, Ginger, and Busky are entered for this, and the former takes the lead, only to lose it when Busky deliberately fouls him. Ginger and a Sandcliff fellow are struggling for first place, and Jack, although he is yards behind, makes a final do-or-die effort to win the race for Rampant. Will he be able to pull off a sensational victory?

(Now read on.)



Busky's hoarse exclamation of pain was broken off as he took another drink of the salty Channel, and his hands feebly beat the surface. Afraid that the fellow might sink and drown, Jack wriggled round behind him and grabbed the top part of his swimming costume, accidentally ripping it for about six inches. Then, while Busky was still snorting like a grampus, he secured another hold under his shoulders and dragged him to the raft.

There Petty Officer Teak, his face thunderous, hauled the cad aboard and dropped him face downward on the wood.

"The spiteful young swab!" he gulped under his breath. "I'll teach him to bring the Rampant's name into disgrace! I'll show him he's in the Navy now!"

Not a word did Teak say to Jack, but with quite unnecessary severity began kneading the cad's body with his fists. And Busky, too helpless to resist owing to the sea-water he had swallowed, writhed in pain and vainly spluttered his protests as the P.O. gave him his own particular brand of "first aid."

"I—I'll report you, me lad! I'll have you 'in the rattle' for this all right!"

He emphasised his remarks with vigorous kneadings and pummellings, and Busky distressingly choked up a deal of superfluous sea-water, fondled his injured nose, and burred his excuses.

"F-foul! Ouch! Foul, I say!" he protested. "K-kicked me—groogh!—he did! It was—c-corks, let up—in the race, the b-beast!"

"You got off your course and fouled Jack Gilbert," snapped Petty Officer Teak, "and you only got what was coming to you when you ran your silly figurehead on to the heel of his foot! Now tumble into that dinghy and go back to the old hulk to dress. All boys from the Rampant fall in on the pier-head in half an hour's time!"

Jack, Ginger, and two or three more swam over the course while some of the other fellows went back to the "dressing-rooms" with Busky in the row-boat.

"The race should have been yours, Ginger," smiled Jack. "I heard some of 'em say that you looked back and grinned, or you would have had first place and I'd have been in second. Still, what's it matter so long as those cheeky land-lubbers have been licked?"

"Ay," agreed Ginger a trifle doubtfully. "But I could kick that big skate, Busky Smith, for letting us down in front of everyone with his beastly temper. He'll hear something about it all right from the chaps later, mark my words!"

Back in the dressing-rooms aboard the old hulk, Busky Smith attempted to discuss the incident during the race and the fracas afterwards. As the "hero" who was believed to have saved the ferry, he imagined that he was firmly established in the poularity of his comrades. Now he discovered to his chagrin that no one would have anything to do with him for the time being; they were far too disgusted.

Although the blows struck in the water had had little sting, his nose was red and swollen and one eye showed definite promise of going into mourning. This was even more apparent when in due course the boys of the Rampant returned to the pier-head and fell in under their petty officer.

"You will now be dismissed," P.-o. Teak informed them, after he had called the roll, "and you can spend your time as you like till nine o'clock. At nine sharp you'll be outside the Clock Tower to take the charybanc back to Port-haven."

Already Jack and Ginger had talked things over. They had not much money between them, for they only had their ninepence a day to draw upon. Apart from the regatta, Sandcliff held little attraction for them, and, when the party was dismissed, they requested the P.O. if they might have a tramp back along the coast instead of waiting for the charabanc to convey them.

"That's all right, my hearties!" agreed Teak. "So long as you report in the Rampant at nine-thirty this evening, I don't mind. I know you won't let me down."

"Rather not!" piped Jack and Ginger.

An elderly man with grey moustache stepped forward and touched the petty officer on the shoulder.

"May I speak with one of the boys for a moment?" he said. "It is a lad I'm particularly interested in."

The young bluejackets about to make off to their own various amusements, paused out of curiosity, and Busky edged near, anxious not to miss anything.

The stranger drew a card and handed it to Teak.

"As you will see, petty officer," he remarked, "my name is Arnold Greaves, and I am a partner in the firm of Greaves and Greaves, solicitors, of Chancery Buildings, in London. We acted on behalf of the late Mr. Barnaby Morland, of whom you may have heard."

Busky drew nearer yet, a quizzical expression on his coarse face.



"The boy I should like to have permission to speak to," added Arnold Greaves, "is the lad standing there—Jack Gilbert."

### Busky's Bitter Pill!

"**B**OY GILBERT," snapped Petty Officer Teak, "did you hear what this gentleman said? He wants a word with you."

Jack took a pace forward, and faced

was nothing to that of his rival, Busky Smith.

The cad of the Rampant stood by, his face brick-red with chagrin and his eyes glinting maliciously at the boy who had won chief personal honours in the aquatic sports.

Not to be left out in the cold, he approached Arnold Greaves and gave the naval salute in such a slovenly manner that Teak rasped a reproof from under his breath.

"Er—I've seen you before, Mr.

Mad with rage at having been beaten in the swimming race, Busky Smith shoved his hand into Jack's face and pushed his head below the surface. "You beastly young cad!" he grated.



the elderly man who had inquired for him.

A trifle embarrassed in front of his shipmates, Jack was speedily put at his ease by Arnold Greaves awarding him a hearty hand grip.

"I'm glad to make your acquaintance, Jack," said the solicitor kindly. "Of course, I've heard of you, as you must have heard of me. The heartiest congrats. on your swimming ability, my boy, and for winning a fine race!"

This praise brought the blood into Jack's cheeks, but his heightened colour

Greaves," mumbled Busky. "I'm Clement Smith, you know—the nephew of old Barney."

The elderly solicitor shook him by the hand, regarding him with a coldness that made Busky feel uncomfortable.

"I saw you in the race, too, Smith," he said. "You're a good swimmer as well." He said it in such a tone that those around half-expected him to add: "But a dashed rotten sportsman!"

"I—I—I— was fouled, sir," stammered Busky.



The solicitor, however, was taking no further notice of him, but was chatting to Jack as though he had known him for years.

It appeared that Arnold Greaves was spending a short holiday at Sandeliff, and had intended to pay a visit to Porthaven to look up the two boys, but had heard their names mentioned in connection with the swimming events against the local school. Like all others who had watched the sports that afternoon in Sandeliff Bay, he had been much impressed by Jack's ability and pluck in pulling off a race when all the odds had been against him.

Most of the Rampant boys dispersed, but Jack's chum, Ginger Jones, remained standing near together with Petty Officer Teak and Busky Smith.

Busky himself was filled with remorse—not because he had fouled and fought Jack in the water, but because he should have done these things when a member of the firm of Greaves and Greaves had been present.

But how could he have known? It was rotten luck—the cruellest Fate—that this man, who, with his partner, would one day have the decision as to the disposal of old Barny Morland's money, should have been spending a holiday at this seaside resort.

According to the terms of old Barny's will, £2,000 would go either to Busky or Jack, and the decision would ultimately rest with the solicitors. To decide, these legal men would have to take into consideration who had done the better during the early period of training in the Navy, and ability in sport and correct conduct would count among other things.

This was the limit! It was the most bitter pill Busky had ever had to swallow, to listen to the commendation of his rival by this man. It was as though Jack were being awarded full marks for sports, while he himself was getting a big blue cross put over his efforts.

To some extent he was relieved when Arnold Greaves turned and addressed him again.

"We read with pride, my boy," he said, "of your splendid conduct aboard the sinking ferry."

"Th-thank you, s-sir!" stammered Busky. His gaze fell on the deck of the pier, for he had the knowledge that Jack, the real and unknown hero of the Porthaven ferry disaster, was looking at him coldly.

"And we read, too," smiled Mr. Greaves, "of the heroism of young Jack here in signalling for help aboard the

target-ship which was under shell-fire during the Fleet gunnery practice."

"Y-yes, sir," mumbled Busky. "Er—I was there as well, looking after Petty Officer Teak here, you know."

"Quite," said Mr. Greaves, in a gentle tone which left Busky deeply puzzled.

After a few more remarks, Arnold Greaves left to rejoin his family, giving Jack a cheery smile and his best wishes, and a casual acknowledgment of Busky's salute with his hand.

"C'mon, Jack!" piped Ginger, linking arms with his chum. "Let's be getting off the pier. We'll have a drop of tea and then leg it along the coast back for Porthaven."

"Don't forget, lads," admonished P.-o. Teak, with a smile. "You'll be back in the Rampant by nine-thirty prompt!"

"Oh, rather!" piped the chums.

They glimpsed Busky Smith scowling at them as he slunk away, and the little Cockney chuckled with mirth.

"Ha, ha, ha! I'm jolly glad!" he laughed. "That just serves old Busky Smith right for playing the giddy goat during the races. Tar me, I bet he could kick himself now that he knows that the solicitor chap was a-looking on all the time! You'll come out top of the class in the matter of the legacy, Jack, and you'll know better how to use it than Busky—the beastly outsider!"

Only a few days previously Jack had told his staunch little pal the terms of old Barny Morland's will, but there was still locked in his heart the secret of how the ferry was saved. He had promised Busky he would never speak about that to a soul, and he had kept his word. Only one other knew the truth of this—the captain of the ferry which was in collision, and the latest information was that he had had a relapse in hospital and might die at any hour.

Owing to his head injuries he had never been able to speak, and with his death the secret of Jack's heroism and Busky's cowardice would remain only with the two boys themselves.

### The Haunted Coast!

**I**N Sandeliff, the two chums expended a few coppers on tea and cake, and, while they talked, noted Busky glaring at them in hostile fashion from a far table. When they left the tea-rooms together, Busky followed shortly and, meeting P.-o. Teak, requested leave to "find his own way back to the Rampant."



The request granted, Busky set off to get within sight of Jack and Ginger and trail them out of town. For, deep in Busky's warped mind, was the idea that no two fellows would give up the chance of a ride back in a charabanc for the sake of tramping along the sea coast. It was his belief that the pals "had got something on," and he imagined it might be to his advantage to find out what it was.

All unaware that they were being followed by their suspicious shipmate, Jack and Ginger strode gaily out of Sandcliff and along the coast. The evening was warm and mellow, and they swung along at a speed that presently made Busky, who was following afar off, heartily wish he had waited in Sandcliff for a ride back to the naval port.

Within two miles of Porthaven, the chums paused among a number of crumbling sand cliffs for a breather, and to watch the fishing fleet sailing out over a calm sea.

"My aunt, the sea's been eating into this bit of coast!" exclaimed Jack. "See that crazy cottage, Ginger, hanging right there on the very edge of the cliff!"

"There's old bricks all over the place on the beach here," responded Ginger. "Some of 'em are as round as pebbles, which proves that they've been washed by the sea for a good many years. There must have been quite a few houses here at one time."

"There's places on the Suffolk and Norfolk coasts something like this," Jack returned. "The sea encroaches each year and bites away more of the land."

A grey-bearded fisherman in blue jersey and sea-boots, and with a coil of wet rope hanging over his shoulder, ambled along the sandy beach, and paused to ask for a match, with which Ginger supplied him.

"Ay, there used to be a village here, me young admirals," said the fisherman, in response to their inquiry. "A fair tidy sized 'un it was, called Paggleshale. That cottage up there is the wery last of it, and that'll be down the cliffs with the next winter's storms."

He neatly finished packing his pipe with shag by pressing his thumb on the bowl, and proceeded to light up.

"It were a mangy bad spot for a village," he added, "and most of it is under the sea. Some of the cottages broke up when the cliffs fell, and they do say that others which were on a lower level, are still standing there under the sea."

(Continued on next page.)



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*(Continued from previous page.)*

"A village under the sea!" smiled Jack. "That sounds like a giddy idea out of a story-book!"

The old fisherman sent the blue smoke of his pipe up into the evening air.

"It's more or less true, all the same, me lad," he averred. "The most o' Paggleshale is under the sea, and, accordin' from what I used to hear from the lips o' me old grandfather, some of the houses were built strong enough to stand a hundred years o' Channel storms. Paggleshale church has crumbled up now, but for more'n fifty years the steeple was a-stickin' up out of the sea and could be seen for miles. And to this day when there's stormy weather and a fishing boat is wrecked with loss of life, you can hear that bell a-tolling a sort o' dirge for the dead."

"C-crums!" muttered Ginger.

"You don't believe that, me young admiral," murmured the fisherman, absent-mindedly slipping the box of matches into his pocket; "but I've heard things with me own ears, and seen things with me own eyes."

"What have you heard?" inquired Jack eagerly. "What have you seen?"

"Voices and shapes," returned the old salt, in a voice impressively hoarse. "Only a fortnight back, me young admirals, I came past this way one bad night when the bell was a-tolling——"

"You heard it!" exclaimed Ginger.

"N-no," admitted the fisherman, with some reluctance; "but mates o' mine out in a fishin' trawler vowed they did as plain as I can hear that surf now. It was the voices I heard—moaning voices sounding like they had come from deep down from among the lobsters at the bottom of the sea. And then I saw 'em!"

"What?" smiled Jack. "The lobsters?"

The old fisherman expressed his contempt by a vigorous puff of smoke from his shag-filled pipe.

"The owners o' them voices, me lad," he returned solemnly. "One—two—three—four of 'em I saw, just ghosts come out from under these self-same sand cliffs. Drowned fishermen they were, and they waded into the sea and went off back to Davy Jones!"

"And you actually saw 'em walk down into the sea again?" exclaimed Jack, in incredulous tones.

"W-well, where else could they ha' gone?" the fisherman queried. "I didn't exactly wait to see, but I heard what I'm pretty certain was the splashin' o' their feet."

He ambled on his way, and, despite his

remarkable vision, failed to notice another Navy boy dodge down behind a ruined village wall at the foot of the sand cliffs.

For a time, Jack and Ginger remained silent, but when the old man was out of earshot, they burst into merry laughter.

"He must have seen some smugglers," suggested Ginger lightly. "There's still a bit of smuggling done along the coast, I believe."

"A dickens of a lot of it!" said Jack. "I saw in the 'Porthaven Gazette' only yesterday that there was talk of increasing the coastguards again along this bit of coast. Since they reduced the force, there's been a thumpin' lot of contraband landed from the French coast. I say," he added, "how about coming for another swim? It's jolly warm, and I could just do with one now."

The sporting Ginger agreed, and they turned one of the cellars of ruined Paggleshale into a dressing-room.

"Brrrrrh!" shivered Ginger, as he slipped on his still wet swimming costume.

Kneeling down, he took a small locket from the pocket of his discarded bell-bottomed trousers, and carefully hung the thin black tape attached to it round his neck. And Jack, who had noticed this during the races against the Sandcliff School, regarded the cheap little trinket curiously.

His pal turned it about that he might see both sides.

"That, Jack," said Ginger quietly, "is a portrait of my ma; she died when I was a kid too young to remember her. This, on the other side, is my dad—as I told you, he was a gunner's mate in the Navy, an' killed at Jutland. I—I wouldn't lose this here little locket, not for my chance of passing out to be an ordinary seaman one day."

Jack—an orphan himself—twisted his arm round that of his chum, a sympathetic gesture which meant more than words to the little fellow. Then the two boys stumbled over the sand for rather more than a hundred yards and splashed through the light surf out to sea.

Side by side they swam strongly from the shore, and neither saw a figure which came creeping stealthily as a jackal among the sand hillocks. It was Busky Smith, and a baleful leer was on his face as he plunged into the old, sand-strewn cellar which they had used for a dressing-room!

*(Another gripping instalment of this grand serial will appear in next week's splendid issue. Order your copy now, chums!)*



# The ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE CORNER!



*The Chief Officer Chats  
with his Chums.*

*Here's his address if you want to  
write to him: The Chief Officer, The  
Nelson Lee Library, Fleetway House,  
Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.*

## A Life On The Ocean Wave!

**S.** MEE, an enthusiastic reader of the NELSON LEE LIBRARY, who hails from Bradford, writes telling me that he has just turned fourteen years of age, and now wants to become a sailor; particularly a ship's engineer. Is this a good job? he asks. Can I tell him all about it?

I have replied to S. Mee by post, but I feel certain that this question is bound to interest heaps of other readers, so I propose to have a little chat about it here. I don't profess to know ALL about the subject under discussion, but I think I know enough to help any others of you who have similar ideas to those of my Bradford chum.

I can assure you all that if you become a ship's engineer you'll have a jolly good job—but to become one is not done in the space of months, and without plenty of hard work and sweating on your part.

First of all, you will have to apprentice yourself with a firm of shipbuilders and marine engineers. Some of the firms charge premiums, others do not. After you have served your apprenticeship—which lasts at least five years—you are qualified as an assistant engineer and may seek a berth in a ship as such. When you have been to sea for at least eighteen months, you take the examination to obtain your second-class certificate. More examinations follow if you wish to rise to a first-class engineer.

Such is a brief outline of the conditions entailed to become a ship's engineer. If any of you desire to get fuller particulars I advise you to write to the various shipping companies, who will send you all the information required.

## Club Secretaries Please Note!

I am asked to mention in these columns that A. Willis, of 33, Delcroft Road, E. Greenwich, London, S.E., wishes to join a junior cricket and football club in his district. He would like to belong to a club whose average age is 15; he tells me his own age is 14. Secretaries of clubs who are on the lookout for likely talent should write to my chum at the address mentioned above. I can assure them that if A. Willis is as good a footballer and cricketer as he is an enthusiastic reader of the NELSON LEE LIBRARY—well, they'll snap up a real good man for their team!

## Two Cricket Answers!

"Cricketer," of Braintree, Essex, asks a few questions about his favourite sport.

The M.C.C. stands for the Marylebone Cricket Club. 628 is the highest individual score ever made in cricket. This record stands to the credit of A. E. J. Collins, who made this colossal total when playing in a Junior House match for Clifton College, Australia. His innings, of 6 hours 50 minutes was spread over five afternoons, and he was then still undefeated.

**THE CHIEF OFFICER.**

## THIS WEEK'S WINNING LETTER

*Dear Editor,—I write to thank you for publishing my advert in the "Correspondents Wanted" column. I received numerous letters in reply, many of which contained some remarkably good offers.*

*I wonder if there are many other present-day readers who can equal my record of having read every Nelson Lee since number one was published in 1915. In my opinion, every story has been a credit to the Nelson Lee Library.*

*The Nelson Lee and the St. Frank's League has been the means of my obtaining many pen-friends, and I find that receiving and answering their extremely interesting letters make a most fascinating hobby. One correspondent sends me a sixteen-page letter every Tuesday. Each week I also receive another letter from a lady and her two daughters, all three of whom praise the Old Paper and have been reading it since No. 110, old series.*

*With best wishes to you, Mr. Brooks and the St. Frank's League,  
(Signed) I. W. BOUCHER (St. Frank's League,  
No. 2241).*

*(Fo. this letter I. W. Boucher, of Camberwell, London, will receive a useful pocket wallet.)*



## CORRESPONDENTS WANTED

W. Rigg, 19, Edith Street, **Nelson, Lancs.**, requires members for his International Correspondence club.

K. V. Bond, 32, Baines Street, **Everton, Liverpool**, wants to hear from members and readers in his district.

D. O. Swift, 70, Woodholm Road, **Ecclesall, Sheffield**, wants to hear from readers interested in chemistry.

F. Tucker, 1, Radnor Road, **Cardiff**, has N.L.L., new series, 1-100 for sale, 1d. each.

Syd. G. Thornton, Box 155, Longreach, **Queensland, Australia**, has N.L.L., old series, and complete new series to 155, for disposal.

J. Newstead, 3, Lawn Avenue, **Burley-in-Wharfedale, Yorks.**, has back numbers of the N.L.L. on offer.

A. Hubert, 72, Wetherfield Road, Acorn Green, **Birmingham**, wishes to hear from readers interested in painting, tennis, operatic and classical music.

E. A. Nair, Avonview, The Paragon, **Clifton, Bristol**, wants to hear from readers interested in bird life, photography and butterflies.

J. A. Sanders, Pwllglas Farm, **Mold, North Wales**, wishes to form a club.

Archie D. Luke, 8, Paradise Place, **Plymouth**, wants members for the Alpha Correspondence Club.

Walter S. Morrish, 42, Manor Lane, **Lewisham, London, S.E.13**, wants correspondents anywhere.

Miss Eva Wilson, 71, Dudley Street, **Brierley Hill, Staffs.**, wants correspondents.

T. R. Balaji Rao, Burmah-Shell Oil Storage and Distributing Co., Ltd., Calicut (S. Malabar), **India**, wishes to correspond with readers, ages between 18 and 20, from all parts of the world, especially those interested in sports, photography, stamp collecting and any other interesting subjects. All correspondence promptly attended to.

Howard J. Panter, 29, Elmfield Road, **London, Balham, S.W.**, wants back numbers of the N.L.L., old series; would exchange stamps or buy the copies.

C. Jennings, 6, George Street, **Wellington, Somerset**, has N.L.L., new series, for sale.

James Waters, 23, Holloway Street, **Wolverhampton**, wishes to hear from Australian readers who have emigrated from England.

Noel Wainor, c/o G.P.O., Regina, **Saskatchewan, Canada**, aged 21, wants to hear from readers interested in travelling, sports, animals, language, music, engineering, etc.

## ST. FRANK'S IN THE "TALKIES"

(Continued from page 33.)

which seemed to split the heavens. The doomed ship blew completely up in one vast column of fire and flame.

It was a magnificent spectacle—an awe-inspiring, never-to-be-forgotten sight.

"Great Scott!" shouted Handforth. "Duck, you chaps—dive!"

But none of the others heard him, although they were quite near by. They were momentarily deafened.

Splash! Splash!

Great timbers came dropping into the water—burning timbers, smoking beams and blazing planks. Miraculously, everybody had got clear in time. Some odd bits of debris fell quite close to the St. Frank's fellows, but nobody was actually hit.

And after they had struggled ashore, they felt that they had had quite enough excitement for one half-holiday.

ON the whole, Mr. Osbert Rivers was feeling highly delighted. There had been no casualties, and there was no tragic sequel because of that mishap. Some remarkably fine shots of the fire and of the explosion had been obtained, so, from the production manager's point of view, everything was satisfactory.

It appeared that the man on the shore had obeyed the signal, according to instructions. Providentially, however, some of the main electrical wires had got burnt through before their time. But for this, the chief explosion would have occurred immediately. The St. Frank's boys had had a narrower escape than they quite realised.

For that electrical contact had only caused one or two of the charges of dynamite to go off; the main charge had not exploded until the fire reached it. It was this fact which really saved the situation.

Anyhow, the juniors bade good-bye to Mr. Rivers, and they went back to the School Train, feeling that they had had enough of talking pictures to last them for a long time.

THE END.

(Jolly fun, isn't that, eh, chums? There's another corker coming next week—a special Bank Holiday tale, entitled "Bank Holiday in Brighton!" This story is also the opening yarn of a wonderful new holiday adventure series. Don't miss reading it on any account. Order your next Wednesday's copy of the Old Paper now to avoid disappointment.)