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SCHOOL STORIES



BANK HOLIDAY IN BRIGHTON!

A thrilling incident from this week's grand topical long complete yarn of schoolboy fun and adventure, featuring the cheery chums of St. Frank's.

New Series No. 170.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

August 3rd, 1929.

A Punch and Judy show is a commonplace thing ; it is to be seen on the beach of practically any seaside resort. That a Punch and Judy show should be the means of involving anybody in a series of the most amazing and exciting adventures seems rather improbable, however. But that's what happens to the cheery Chums of St. Frank's this week—and as a result it will be many a long day before they forget their—

BANK HOLIDAY IN BRIGHTON!



CHAPTER 1.

Breaking Up Week!

"JUST our luck!" said Handforth disconsolately.

"What's the matter now?" asked Church.

"Everything's the matter!" growled Handforth. "We shall miss Irene and the other girls by just one day. Sickening, isn't it?"

"If you'll tell us a few more details, we might be able to understand what the

dickens you're driving at!" put in McClure, with a touch of impatience. "We can't read your thoughts, Handy—although you apparently take it for granted that we can!"

The famous chums of Study D were in the Common-room, on the celebrated St. Frank's School Train. It was really the Junior class-room, but in "off" hours it was used by the fellows as a Common-room.

Just at present it was fairly crowded, for

the evening was young, and outside the rain was pouring down in a steady, depressing torrent.

"So this is Brighton!" remarked Vivian Travers, as he stood at one of the windows, looking out over a vista of wetness. "Well, well! I can't say, dear old fellows, that I am particularly bucked."

"You mustn't blame Brighton because of the rotten weather," said Nipper, the cheery captain of the Remove. "It rains at Brighton sometimes—and in the middle of the summer season, too. Let's hope it'll be a fine day to-morrow."

"No harm in hoping," nodded Travers.

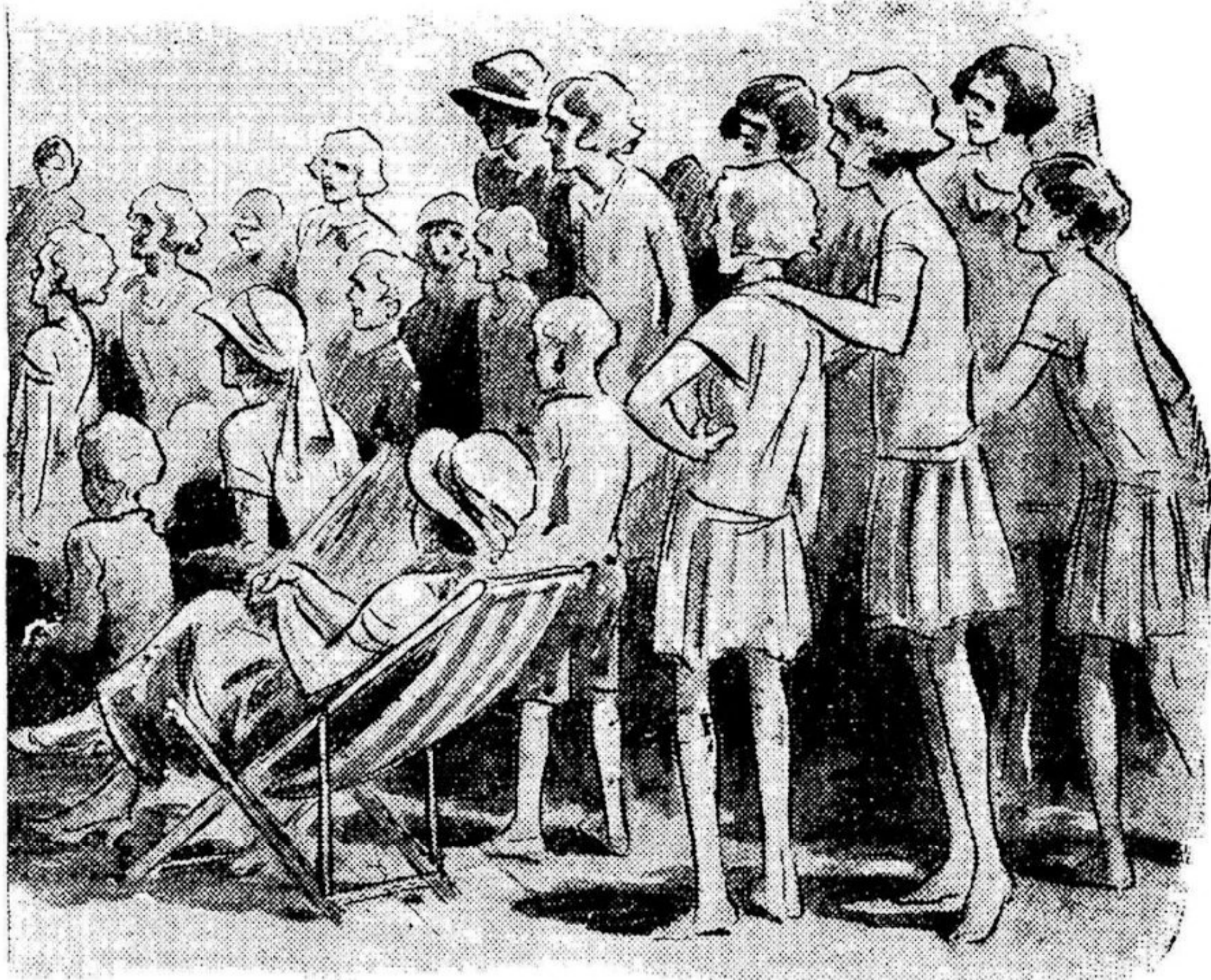
"But, by the look of the sky at present, this rain will continue for about three months!"

He strolled away, and Handforth's glum face caught his eye. He paused sympathetically.

A Grand Topical Complete Yarn

by your Favourite Author,

EDWY SEARLES BROOKS



"Feeling a bit blue, dear old fellow?" he asked. "For the love of Samson, don't look at me like that! I'm not responsible for the weather!"

"Blow the weather!" said Handforth gruffly.

"Exactly! But do you think that would really do any good?"

"I'm not thinking about the weather," continued Handforth coldly. "It's this letter."

Travers bent over, and glanced at it.

"A fair handwriting, I observe," he said, nodding. "I can even detect a faint odour of Lily of the Valley. The young ladies again, eh? Well, well! What a gay dog you are, Handy!"

"Rats!" said Handforth. "This letter is from Irene."

"Apparently she has imparted some bad news?"

"Yes," replied Handforth, with a grunt. "She's coming to Brighton!"

"And do you call that bad news?"

"Of course I do, ass!"

"Then I can only assume, dear old fellow, that you have fallen in love with some Brighton lass," said Travers sternly. "Quite naturally, you wish to avoid these two girls meeting—"

"You—you funny fathcad!" roared Handforth. "I don't know any of the Brighton girls! I haven't fallen in love with anybody! But it's just our luck that Irene should come to Brighton this week! Just our rotten luck!"

"Don't take any notice of him," advised McClure, the Scottish junior. "He's been going on like that for about ten minutes—ever since he got the letter. I think he's off his rocker!"

"Think!" sniffed Church. "I don't think anything about it—I know!"

Handforth looked round with a glare.

"To-day's Wednesday, isn't it?" he demanded.

"I believe so," said Church.

"And to-morrow the school breaks up for the summer holidays?"

"Well, yes."

"That means that we leave the School Train and go home," continued Handforth. "And here's a letter from Irene saying that she's coming down to Brighton on Friday!"

"Oh!" chorused the others.

"Do you call that bad news or good news?" demanded Handforth. "Irene and lots of her friends will be here on Friday—the day after we've gone!"

"Why didn't you say so at first?" asked McClure. "Of course, it's bad news. We can understand now. Pity that the girls couldn't get here at the beginning of the week, so that we could see something of them before the school broke up."

"That's what I've been thinking," said Handforth, frowning. "Beastly, isn't it?"

THE School Train had been in Brighton for nearly two days, and the St. Frank's fellows were getting a bit fed up. Unfortunately, they had struck a bad patch of weather. It had been raining, on and off, ever since they had struck the famous South Coast watering-place. To-day had been particularly wet, and, as it was a half-holiday, the juniors had felt properly swindled. There was no fun in going on the beach, or in strolling along the promenade in the pouring rain. Even cricket had been ruled out.

And to-morrow the school broke up. Those fellows at St. Frank's would go off to their various homes as usual; and, naturally, all those fellows on the School Train would do precisely the same thing. They had had two or three days in Brighton, and they felt that Brighton had let them down. Which, of course, was most unfair to Brighton.

Their interest in the seaside town had dwindled completely to-day, for their last chance of enjoying themselves on the beach had gone. To-morrow everything would be hustle and bustle.

An added aggravation lay in the fact that the School Train itself would not shift until after August Bank Holiday. Everybody had been expecting that the School Train would steal into London during the night—Wednesday night, to be exact. In this way, the fellows would be saved from the trouble of making an ordinary railway trip.

But it had been learned that the School Train would be left on this out-of-the-way siding, not far from Hove, until after the holidays. There was a great deal of extra traffic just now, and the railway authorities had found it impossible to fit in the School Train. So here she would remain, on this siding, until the worst of the holiday traffic was over.

It didn't make any real difference to the touring school, except for the fact that everybody would have to pack their things and go home by an ordinary train. This seemed silly, after travelling all over the country in their own special train; but the railway company had issued its decree, and there was no appeal.

HOW many of the girls are coming with Irene?" asked Nipper interestedly.

"What does it matter?" replied Handforth, as he glanced at the letter. "We shan't see them."

"We might."

"How the dickens can we?" demanded Edward Oswald, staring. "We're going home to-morrow, and the girls don't get here until Friday. We shan't even see them in London, unless we look pretty slippy."

"It's certainly a bit awkward," admitted Nipper.

"Irene says that her people have taken a big furnished house in Hove—not half a mile from this giddy train!" went on Handforth disconsolately. "A whacking great place, you know, where they'll hold receptions, and all that sort of thing. And Irene is bringing

lots of her chums to stay with her."

"Including Mary Summers?" asked Nipper, with interest.

"Yes; her names's on the list."

"And Doris Berkeley?" asked Reggie Pitt eagerly.

"Yes."

"Good gad! And what about dear old Marjorie?" inquired Archie Glenthorne, joining the group.

"Marjorie Temple will be with them, I think," said Handforth, consulting the letter again. "Yes—

and your sister Winnie, too, Pitt. And my own sister Ena, and Tessa Love, and Sylvia Glenn, and one or two others. And we shan't see one of 'em! Don't you call that tough luck?"

"Awful!" went up a chorus.

"Absolutely all wrong," said Archie, shaking his head. "I mean, can't something be done about it, laddies?"

"How the dickens can we do anything?" retorted Handforth.

Nipper suddenly grinned.

"Listen to your uncle, my children," he said cheerfully.

"Gather round, and let your ears lie well back. I've got a wheeze."

The juniors crowded round eagerly. Nipper's wheezes were usually good.

"Out with it!" said Handforth.

"Right!" grinned Nipper. "Well, to begin with, how many of you chaps have made arrangements for the beginning of the holidays? August Bank Holiday, I mean."

"That's next Monday," said Reggie Pitt.

"Yes."

"Well, I haven't made any arrangements for Bank Holiday," said Reggie.

"Neither have I," said Travers.

"Absolutely not," put in Archie Glenthorne. "I mean to say, I thought it would be rather a ripe scheme to sling a hammock in the good old garden at Glenthorne Manor, and spend the day relaxing—"

"That's how you *would* spend the day, Archie," growled Handforth. "I've got nothing on for Monday, either. But what are you trying to get at, Nipper? What are you leading up to?"

"It's simple," replied Nipper.

"Quite a few of us haven't made any arrangements for August Bank Holiday, or for any part of next week, if it comes to that."

"I've made no arrangements, but my people have," put in Jack Grey. "We're all going off to Norway on Saturday."

"Well, you'll be out of it," replied Nipper. "If you're going to Norway, you can't be here."

"Here?" said Handforth, staring. "On Saturday?"

"Yes."

"How the dickens can we be here on Saturday when the school is going to break up tomorrow, ass?"

"That's just it," said Nipper. "The school may break up, but why shouldn't we stay on?"

"Good gad!"

"My only sainted aunt!"

"The School Train isn't going to be shifted from this siding until the end of next week," continued Nipper. "The general idea, I think, is to shut it up after we've all gone. But it'll still be here."

"Nipper, dear old fellow, there's something in this thing besides water" declared Travers, placing a hand on Nipper's head. "This isn't merely an idea of yours, it's a gilt-edge wheeze."

Handforth was looking excited.

WHO'S WHO AT ST. FRANK'S.



DR. MORRISON NICHOLLS.

Dr. Nicholls has only been headmaster of St. Frank's a short while, but already he has made himself thoroughly popular with the school—seniors and juniors alike. He is a man of unusual—perhaps startling—ideas, but he has the welfare of St. Frank's at heart. Brilliantly clever—and the ideal headmaster.

"You—you mean to stay on here—on the School Train?" he asked. "Spend August Bank Holiday, and a part of next week, in Brighton?"

"Exactly!"

"By George! If we do that, we shall have a royal time!" said Handforth enthusiastically. "The girls will be here, and Irene will invite us to her place, and we can have the girls here on the train and— But it can't be done!" he added, with a sudden note of depression in his voice. "They won't let us stop on like that!"

"Why not?" said Nipper. "We shan't do the train any harm, shall we?"

"But it'll mean that one of the masters will have to stay behind to look after us."

"Do you think we shall need any looking after?" asked Reggie Pitt. "After to-morrow the holidays will be on."

"That's true," admitted Handforth, brightening up again. "All the same, I don't suppose Mr. Lee will allow us to remain here entirely on our own. He might think that we should get up to mischief—not, of course, that there would be any chance of that."

"Perish the thought!" said Nipper solemnly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's certainly a snag," said Reggie Pitt thoughtfully. "None of the masters will like remaining behind—and we shan't get any of the prefects to help us. Yet the authorities will insist upon somebody remaining in charge. How do you think it can be worked?"

"It doesn't need any working," replied Nipper coolly. "Of course, we shall only be able to use the School Train as a kind of headquarters. The entire staff will clear off to-morrow, so we shan't be able to get any grub on board, unless we bring it and prepare it ourselves."

"Well, that'll be easy enough," said Buster Boots of the Fourth.

"Quite easy," agreed Nipper. "In fact, it'll be all to the good. There's nothing like being free and easy during the holidays."

"But that snag's there, just the same," insisted Reggie. "We know well enough that we don't need anybody to look after us, but will Mr. Lee think the same? You know how these masters get queer ideas into their heads—"

"My dear chap, I happen to know that Mr. Lee isn't leaving to-morrow," said Nipper sweetly.

"What!"

"Of course he isn't!" grinned Nipper. "That's the card I've been keeping up my sleeve, my sons! The guv'nor told me only to-day that he's staying in Brighton until the School Train moves on. In other words, we've only got to put the thing to Mr. Lee and he'll probably agree in a flash. He's the Head of the School Train, and he doesn't want to leave until the train is finally stowed away in its garage, or

wherever they're going to put it. Besides that, he's got a special reason for staying in Brighton over the holidays. I don't exactly know what it is, but that doesn't matter. He'll be here."

"You silly ass, why didn't you tell us this before?" demanded Handforth indignantly. "Let's go along and see Mr. Lee now. Let's get it fixed up!"

"Rather!" said Reggie Pitt. "It'll be ripping, you chaps! Bank Holiday in Brighton—with the girls to help us to enjoy the holiday. It's a corking stunt!"

Nipper went off to Nelson Lee's study soon afterwards, and he put the thing to the School Train's Head in as few words as possible. Rather to his surprise, Nelson Lee raised no objections.

"If you'd like to remain, Nipper, all well and good," he said. "The train will be here, so there's no reason why you shouldn't take advantage of the fact. But, of course, there won't be any meals served, as there are now, and I'm a bit uncertain as to the arrangements—"

"Don't worry about those, sir," interrupted Nipper. "We can get our own grub, and do everything like that. The main thing is that we've got your permission to stay. Thanks awfully, guv'nor!"

"How many of you do you think there'll be?" asked Lee smilingly.

"Oh, I don't know—perhaps a couple of dozen," said Nipper. "I'll dash along and tell the chaps. They'll be delighted. You're a brick, sir!"

And when the others heard they fully agreed that Nipper's description of Nelson Lee was accurate.

CHAPTER 2.

A Near Thing!

"AREN'T the girls here yet?" asked Reggie Pitt, looking round.

He and a crowd of other juniors were on the Brighton beach. It was Bank Holiday—although, judging by the look of the beach, it might have been a particularly mild morning in mid-winter. Hardly a soul was in sight.

This was accounted for, perhaps, by the fact that the hour was just six-thirty a.m.

All the St. Frank's fellows were in swimming costumes, and they had just trotted down to the front from the School Train. They had only worn wraps for this purpose.

They had arranged with Irene Manners and her friends to go for an early morning swim, and the girls had promised to be on the beach on time. They, too, would wear only their swimming costumes and wraps. It was so much easier—and, of course, it was quite permissible at this early hour of the morning.

Everything had been going very smoothly.

On the previous Thursday the School Train had "broken up," and most of the

seniors and juniors had gone off to their homes. About two dozen members of the Remove and Fourth had remained behind, and of these about a dozen had decided upon this early morning swim.

The girls had arrived on Friday, according to the information contained in Irene's letter to Handforth, and, needless to say, Irene & Co. had been delighted to find a crowd of their schoolboy friends in Brighton, and they were even more delighted when they learned that the fellows were to stay on for practically a week.

The weather was now doing its utmost to make amends for its bad behaviour of late, and there had been two or three days of glorious sunshine. This morning was no exception; the sun was beating down with quite a lot of warmth, although the hour was so early. The sea was looking blue and sparkling and enticing.

"Here they come!" said Handforth, waving his hand.

"Late, as usual, but we forgive 'em," said Travers. "Bless their little hearts, it's their privilege to be late!"

The girls came running down the beach, laughing and merry. They flung their wraps and shoes into a heap and were ready for the water.

"Let's see who'll be first in!" cried Irene gaily.

"Here, I say, wait a minute!" protested Handforth. "We didn't know you were going to do anything like that! I've still got my shoes on!"

"Absolutely!" ejaculated Archie. "I mean, dash it! Good gad, they're off!"

There was a kind of a race, but the girls were in the water first. Evidently they had been planning that little dodge on their way down to the beach.

"Who won?" asked Irene, as she came to the surface, the water streaming from her orange-coloured swimming-cap.

"Nobody won, of course," said Handforth. "It wasn't a race at all. By George, isn't the water ripping?"

"There's nothing like an early morning bathe," said Doris Berkeley. "Whoever would think that this was Bank Holiday?"

They swam about, thoroughly enjoying their dip. The tide was nearly in, and the great expanse of the Brighton front looked splendid with the sun shining on it. Far in the distance, towards Kemp Town, one or two other bathers could faintly be seen. But on the promenade, and on the beach, there was hardly a sign of life.

The St. Frank's fellows were exceedingly glad that they had stayed on the School Train after the holidays had officially begun. They had been thoroughly enjoying their freedom, and Nelson Lee had imposed no restrictions whatsoever.

There had been some good fun on the School Train, for the girls had been over more than once, and there had been two or three big feeds, with wireless and gramo-

phone music afterwards. In just the same way Irene's people had had the boys over to their house. But the free and easy spirit on the School Train had been enjoyed most.

"TALKING about a race," said Handforth, "let's see who can get out to that buoy first."

He pointed to a little black spot in the distance, out to sea, and Travers shook his head.

"It wouldn't be fair, dear old fellow," he said. "The girls are bound to win!"

"What!" said Handforth. "Do you admit that you can be beaten by a girl?"

"It's a sad admission, but it's a fact," confessed Travers. "And you'll be beaten, too, Handy, if you are rash enough to try



it on. Everybody knows that girls can swim better than boys. Look at the way they attack the Channel!"

"Rats!" said Nipper. "I'm willing to try my luck in this little race, anyhow—and I'll only make one stipulation."

"What's that?" chorused the girls.

"That Marjorie is left out of it," grinned Nipper. "I don't mind pitting my swimming ability against you others, but Marjorie must be disqualified."

Marjorie Temple swam up, chuckling.

"Then Travers is right," she said mischievously. "We girls can beat you."

"You can, but I'm not saying anything about the others," said Nipper. "You're a kind of champion, Marjorie. You've won all sorts of prizes, and you're more at home in the water than you are on land."

This was practically true, for Marjorie was never happier than when she was swimming or diving.

So it was arranged that she should be a kind of umpire, going on ahead, and arriving at the buoy in time to give her decision as to the result.

The swimmers started off enthusiastically, and for the first twenty or thirty yards there was very little to choose between any of them. Then Handforth, much to his astonishment, found that he was slightly in the rear of Nipper and Travers and one or two others. He was even in the rear of the girls.

"This is all rot!" he spluttered. "I'm the best swimmer, and yet I'm behind!"

"Don't talk, ass!" gurgled Church. "Swim!"

Even Church was beating the astonished Edward Oswald, and most of the girls were

now well ahead of him. Handforth had always fancied himself as a swimmer, but he quite overlooked the fact that in swimming, as in everything else, he was clumsy.

They kept at it strenuously, going as hard as possible. And subconsciously they all became aware of a strange roaring sound, which seemed to increase with every second.

It was Vivian Travers who gave the first real warning.

"For the love of Samson!" he ejaculated. "I say! Stop, you chaps! Wait a minute, girls! This doesn't look very healthy!"

"Great Scott!" shouted Nipper.

He, too, had seen something, and the others, sensing that all was not right, abandoned the race and raised their heads out of the water.

"What's wrong?" asked Handforth. "Is somebody in difficulties? One of the girls? By George? What the dickens——"

He broke off, aghast. The reason for that roaring noise was now apparent. Comparatively near to the group of young swimmers, and swooping down upon them with incredible speed, was a powerful racing motor-boat.

It was tearing through the water in a perfectly straight line, following the coast, and it was on precisely the same line as the swimmers. It was, indeed, coming straight for them, the enormously powerful engine roaring all out.

"She'll run us down!" cried Irene. "Quick! We must get out of the way——"

"There's no time!" shouted Nipper. "We'll never do it—not all of us, anyhow! Dive, everybody—dive as deeply as you can, and keep down as long as possible!"

It seemed to be the only thing to do.

But Handforth, as usual, did something else. This was not because he ignored Nipper's advice, but because he did not even hear it. And, as the others were all diving, Handforth leapt as far out of the water as possible, and waved his hands wildly in the air.

Then he went back with a plunge and a splash. He did not even realise the peril of that moment; for if the man in the racing motor-boat had not seen him, he would undoubtedly have been run down, and that might have meant instant death.

As it was, something happened with bewildering abruptness.

The motor-boat swerved. Going at full speed, she cut in towards the shore. The man at the wheel, evidently realising that he was about to run down a swimmer—or some swimmers—changed the vessel's course.

He must have wrenched at the steering-wheel with tremendous violence, for the boat literally leapt out of the water, her engines still roaring at full speed, and for a moment it seemed that the craft would capsize.

In any case, she was completely out of control. Veering off at right-angles, she headed straight for the beach.

"Hurrah!" yelled Handforth. "She's missed us!"

But he was the only one, except Marjorie, who knew how close a shave it had been.

The others were coming to the surface now, and they found themselves in a smother of foam, and the wash from the motor-boat was causing the sea to become quite rough for a moment or so. The speeding boat had missed Handforth by feet only.

"Great Scott!" he ejaculated, staring. "Look at her! The driver must be mad! He's going straight for the beach—and he hasn't even shut off his engine!"

Everything was happening at lightning speed. In the first place, the boat had been travelling at something near eighty miles an hour, and although the beach looked some little distance off to the juniors, it must have seemed right under the motor-boat's nose to the pilot.

As a matter of fact, the pilot had been unseated by the giddy swerve, and by the time he got back into a position where he could manipulate the controls, several precious seconds had elapsed.

Only seconds—but they counted in a crisis like this.

The watching boys and girls became aware of a dead silence—sudden, abrupt, and rather startling. The engine had been cut off completely. But it was too late. Before the man at the wheel could make any attempt to steer his boat, she was ashore.

She simply leapt at the beach, sending the sand and the shingle flying in cascades. There came a kind of crash, comparatively trivial, and then silence again.

"My only aunt!" ejaculated Handforth. "I thought she was going to smash herself to smithereens! And yet she doesn't seem to be damaged at all!"

"The madman!" said Nipper angrily. "He might have killed us all!"

"I don't suppose he knew we were here," remarked Mary Summers.

"That doesn't excuse him," said Nipper. "A fast boat of that kind ought to keep well out from the shore, and not come dashing along where there might be early morning swimmers. It's not so bad along the open coast, but here, on the Brighton front, it's positively dangerous!"

"Let's swim ashore and find out who he is," suggested Reggie Pitt briskly.

"Good egg! Come on! Let's make a race of it again."

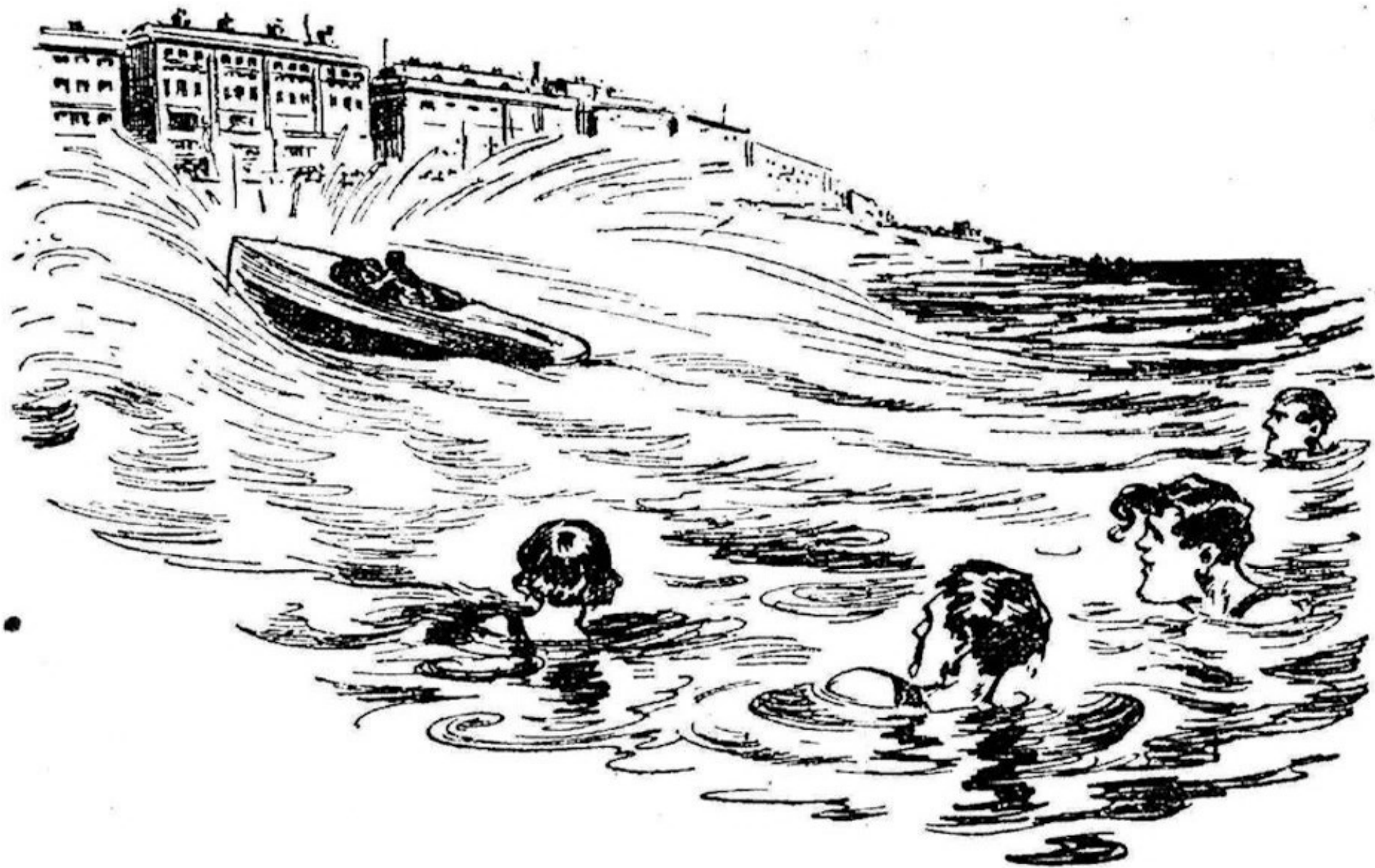
Off they went, eager and keen, with their hearts beating rather more rapidly than usual. Perhaps they were just beginning to understand how narrowly they had escaped disaster.

CHAPTER 3.

Not a Sportsman!

"**B**UST my topboots!" said Joe Briggs blankly.

Joe Briggs was one of Brighton's leading lights. He was, in fact, the owner of several little pleasure-boats which he hired out to holiday-makers. He had been engaged in the task of preparing his craft for the day's work. *Lizzie* needed a little touch of paint here and there, and



Just in time the powerful motor-boat avoided running down the swimming boys and girls. But in doing so the pilot lost control, and it went hurtling towards the shore. Fascinatedly the swimmers watched. There came a crash as the boat plunged ashore, and then—silence!

Martha Anne had one of her rowlocks out of order. But Mr. Joe Briggs was not attending to his boats now; he was gazing at that speed monster which had leapt ashore, only fifteen yards away from him.

"Lucky thing you wasn't killed, Joe!" said a voice.

Mr. Briggs looked round and found his friend and rival, Bill Robbins, close at hand. Mr. Robbins was the owner of another set of little pleasure boats, and he was preparing for Bank Holiday, too.

"Never seen anything like it!" said Mr. Briggs, removing his ancient peaked cap, and scratching his iron-grey head. "Come ashore like a bullet, he did. Must be that furriner from Shoreham."

"That's what I was thinkin'," agreed Mr. Robbins. "Somehow, Joe, I don't think that old Hookey will like this much."

"Poor old feller—he'll be tearin' his hair," said the other. "That stand of his don't look much class now, does it?"

They were regarding some wreckage which lay under the bows of the motor-boat. It was the remains of a Punch and Judy outfit. The motor-boat had struck it fair and square, after leaping ashore, and reduced it almost to matchwood. The tide being fully in, the Punch and Judy stand had been only a few feet away from the gently breaking waves. During this calm weather it was only necessary to place such things just out of reach of high water mark.

The crash that the St. Frank's fellows and the Moor View girls had heard had not been

caused by any serious damage to the motor-boat, but by the collapse of that fragile stand. Apparently the racer had come to no harm at all.

"Hey! You men! You help me, yes?"

The two boatmen exchanged glances.

"It's that furriner, sure enough, Joe," murmured Mr. Robbins.

They lumbered along, and found a young man standing beside the racing motor-boat. He was attired in flannel trousers and pull-over; he was dark-haired and slim, and his complexion was rather sallow. Perhaps it was more sallow than usual just now owing to the recent incident.

"Those swimmers!" said the young man, glaring out to sea. "It was their fault. They might have killed me!"

"What about you killin' them, mister?" asked Joe Briggs. "You didn't ought to come tearin' along the front like that, you know. T'ain't the right thing to do."

"At this early hour—no danger!" snapped the other. "How could I tell? Those swimmers no right to be in my way. Help me to shift this boat."

He produced a ten-shilling note and thrust it into Mr. Briggs' ready palm, whereat Mr. Briggs rather changed his mind about the "furriner." He wasn't such a bad sort after all.

And Mr. Robbins, who counted upon sharing that ten-shilling note, helped valiantly in the work of shoving the motor-boat back into the water. It wasn't such a difficult job for the three of them, for the

beach was shelving just here, and the boat, in spite of its power, was not excessively large.

The foreigner was looking rather uneasy—indeed, almost scared. He kept casting glances up the beach, to right and to left, and out to sea, too. It was evident that he wanted to be off before there could be any inquiry. Fortunately for him, there was still hardly a soul on the beach, while the promenade was also practically deserted.

Once the motor-boat was in the water the foreigner lost no time in starting up the engine, and almost immediately he was off, gliding away close inshore with the motor throbbing at quarter power. Even at this power, however, the craft shifted with extraordinary speed.

“**H**ill!” roared Handforth, waving a hand. “Wait a minute!”

“It’s no good, old man—he’s not taking any notice,” said Church.

“The rotter!” said Handforth fiercely. “He’s ignoring us on purpose! He knows jolly well that he nearly ran us down, and I expect he’s ashamed of himself!”

The boys and girls were quite near the shore now, but the foreigner had beaten them. He was off before they could finish their swim. And this is exactly what he had desired; for he had had no wish to meet the swimmers who had had such a narrow escape.

“Don’t make a fuss, Ted,” said Irene. “We’re all safe, and nothing serious has happened. I expect the poor man had a fright, and it will teach him a lesson. We don’t want to be vindictive.”

“That’s one way of looking at it, of course,” admitted Handforth. “All the same, the chap ought to be ducked! Coming along at that speed! He might have known that there would be swimmers in the way.”

“It isn’t seven o’clock yet, Ted,” Irene reminded him.

“By George! That’s right, too!” said Handforth, with a start. “I’d forgotten that it was so early.”

Their feet touched bottom, and they came walking out of the water. Not that they had finished their bathe. They merely wanted to make some inquiries; there were two old boatmen just there, and these boatmen had helped the culprit to get away.

“Who was that chap in the motor-boat?” demanded Handforth, as he strode up to Joe Briggs and Bill Robbins. “What do you mean by helping him to get away?”

“He didn’t do you no ’arm, did he, young gent?” asked Mr. Briggs.

“Oh, didn’t he?” retorted Handforth. “He nearly killed some of us—that’s all!”

“I ain’t surprised,” remarked Mr. Robbins, removing a small pipe from the corner of his mouth. “Dangerous cove, that furriner.”

“Foreigner, eh?” said Nipper. “Do you know who he is, and where he comes from?”

“Shorcham, I think, young gent,” said Mr. Robbins.

“And what’s his name?”

“Popoff, or Pop-something or other, I think,” said the old boatman. “Some such cranky name as that. Been over there for some little time. We often see him come dashin’ along, only he ain’t never come so close inshore afore. That boat of ’is is a reg’lar demon.”

“And what’s all this?” asked Handforth, as he looked at the wreckage on the beach.

“That *was* Hookey Webb’s Punch and Judy show,” said Mr. Briggs, shaking his head. “It ain’t nothin’ now, ’cept a ’cap of rubbish. Pore old Hookey will ’ave a fit when he sees this.”

“Surely that foreigner didn’t go off without making some arrangement about compensation?” asked Irene in wonder. “It was he who smashed this Punch and Judy show, and he ought to make things right.”

“He never said nothin’ about it—all ’e wanted to do was to get off quick,” said Mr. Briggs. “Scared, I reckon. He nearly ran you down, eh?”

“He was coming straight for us, and if Handy hadn’t leapt out of the water he might have killed some of us,” said Church indignantly.

“So that’s why he come swerving towards the beach, Bill,” said Mr. Briggs. “It only shows you what these ’ere motor-boats are once they get out of control. Give me one o’ my boats, with a pair of oars. Quite fast enough for me!”

“Me, too,” said Mr. Robbins heavily.

The boys and girls, forgetting their bathe, gathered round the wreckage of the Punch and Judy show.

“Well, something’s going to be done about this, of course,” said Nipper. “Not that it’s anything to do with us. I expect that motor-boat man will come back after he’s got over his shock, and do something in the way of compensation.”

“It’ll be bad for pore old Hookey if he don’t,” said Joe Briggs. “The pore old feller ain’t done much this season, and he was countin’ on to-day to make up a bit. Bein’ Bank Holiday, he was reckonin’ on collectin’ a nice few bob.”

“Who is this Hookey?” asked Handforth.

“I don’t know ’is proper fust name,” said Mr. Briggs. “We’ve always called him Hookey Webb. Been ’ere for years, in season an’ out o’ season. Why, ’e must ’ave run this ’ere Punch an’ Judy show for fourteen or fifteen years. Never did much good at it, though. He’s ’ad some rare ’ard times durin’ the winter.”

“And now this rotter comes along and busts the old man’s show up on Bank Holiday!” said Handforth indignantly. “It wouldn’t be so bad if he had acknowledged his responsibility—”

“That furrin chap said it was your fault,” said Mr. Robbins, looking at the schoolboys and schoolgirls.

"Our fault?" cried Marjorie. "Well, of all the impudence!"

"Said you was in 'is way," nodded Mr. Robbins.

"And he lives at Shoreham, does he?" said Handforth grimly. "All right! After we're dressed, you chaps, we'll make some inquiries about this Mr. Pop-something or other! Our fault, eh? Of all the giddy nerve!"

THEY didn't feel like completing their bathe now. They had had a good swim, anyhow, and this other affair had taken up a lot of time. The girls decided to don their wraps and get back to Irene's house, and the boys, of course, followed the girls' example. The sea had lost its interest.

"We'll be out on the front again within twenty minutes," promised Irene, as the two groups parted on the esplanade. "We shan't take long to dress, and then we'll come out again before breakfast."

"All right," said Nipper. "We'll see if we can race you, but I doubt it, because we've got a fairly long run to the School Train."

They went off, and by the time they arrived at the train they were in a warm glow. It only took them five or six minutes to dress, for they merely donned flannel bags and open-necked shirts, with blazers and white shoes to complete their attire.

Although they hurried back at full speed Irene & Co. were on the front in advance, looking very charming in their summer frocks. They were hatless, and they evidently regarded stockings as superfluous for the sea-side.

"Come along, slow-coaches!" said Irene mischievously.

"Well, I like that!" protested Handforth. "We've been rushing like the dickens!"

"Only my fun," laughed Irene. "I say, there's a queer old man over by that Punch and Judy show. I believe he's the proprietor. Don't you think we ought to go and have a word with him?"

"Yes, rather!" said Nipper. "We'll tell him that we'll stand by him, if necessary. It was that foreigner's fault, and he'll have to be made to pay up."

They all went down on to the beach, and as they approached the wrecked Punch and Judy show they saw that an elderly man was seated on the shingle, near by. He was contemplating the debris in a melancholy sort of way. By this time there was a fair number of people about—on the promenades and on the beach. Scores of people were in the water, too. Half an hour made all the difference.

Mr. Briggs and Mr. Robbins had evidently gone off for breakfast, so that they would be fortified for a busy morning. Before long

the day-trippers would be coming in—charabancs and motor-coaches and motor-buses would be arriving by the hundred every hour, and further crowds would come by train. Bank Holiday at Brighton is generally an exceedingly busy day.

"I say, just a minute," said Nipper gently. The old fellow by the Punch and Judy show looked up.

"Speakin' to me, matey?" he asked drearily.

"Yes," said Nipper. "You're in a bit of trouble, aren't you?"

"This ain't trouble—it's lots wuss than trouble," said the old man. "I'm sunk—that's what I am! Clean sunk!"

"It's not so bad as that, is it?" asked Irene.

"I can't do nothin' with the old show now, missy," said Mr. Hookey Webb, as he dolefully shook his head. "Look at it! Nothin' but matchwood! I can't give no show to-day—and Bank Holiday, too! But there! I was allus the most unlucky bloke under the sun. And me knowin' where there's tons an' tons of gold, too!"

"Gold?" said Nipper curiously.

"Red gold!" said Mr. Webb impressively. "Tons of it! I know where it is, and if I could only get there I'd put my 'ands on it. But who'll believe me? That's what I asks you, matey. Who'll believe me? Nobody."

He sunk into a state of depression again. "And now me old show's busted," he went on. "Can't even make a few bob on Bank Holiday!"

"Why talk like this if you can put your



hands on tons of gold?" asked Handforth practically.

Mr. Webb looked up again.

"The gold ain't 'ere, young gent—that's the trouble," he said, in a mournful voice.

"It's thousands of miles away. That's where it is. But it's there all right; nobody ain't touched it since old Ben was there forty years ago."

He evidently noticed that the boys and girls were regarding him with sceptical expressions.

"Think I'm balmy, don't you?" he continued. "Well, that won't be no change. Most people thinks I'm a bit off somewhere. I'm used to it. But I ain't balmy," he added defiantly. "An' that gold o' mine is as real as this 'ere busted Punch and Judy show. An' that's real enough, ain't it?"

THERE was something fascinating about this quaint old man. He was small and wiry, and, although his hair was perfectly white and his face lined with a thousand wrinkles, he looked virile and alive. His eyes were like little glittering beads, full of sparkle and activity. He glanced from one boy to another, and from one girl to another, and he seemed to be taking stock of them. There was really something remarkable in those bright, gleam-eyes, set in such a battered old face.

For surely Mr. Webb had been through the wars. An old scar could be discerned on his right cheek, his left ear was not quite complete, and there was a sort of depression left in his chin—a reminder, no doubt, of an old injury.

He was dressed in nondescript garb—a shabby old pair of trousers, a jacket that was far too large for him, and his grey flannel shirt, open at the neck, appeared to consist more of darns than shirt.

"Hasn't that foreign chap done anything for you?" asked Reggie Pitt. "It was he who smashed up your show, you know—"

Joe Briggs told me all about it, matey," interrupted Mr. Webb. "But what can I do? If I complain to the p'lice they won't 'elp me. Leastways, they won't do nothin' to-day, will they? An' it's to-day that matters. Being Bank 'Oliday, I thought I'd get a bit o' custom."

"Have you always run this Punch and Judy show?" asked Mary.

"Not allus, missy," said the old man. "It's a sort of new line for me. I 'aven't been at it so very long."

"Why, one of those boatmen said that you'd run the show for fifteen years."

"So I 'ave, but that ain't long," replied Hookey Webb. "'Tain't long in my way o' thinkin', anyway. I'm a seaman, missy. Leastways, I was. There ain't many parts o' the world I ain't been—not as I crave to see 'em agin. There's only one place that I want to go to, an' there's gold there."

"Oh, rather!" said Nipper hastily.

He and the others had already concluded that Mr. Webb had a "bee in his bonnet" somewhere. It was obviously absurd that such a battered piece of human wreckage as this could really know anything about a hoard of gold. No doubt the old fellow was eccentric.

"I suppose you gave up the sea, then?" asked Doris.

"I didn't give it up, m'issy—the sea give me up, in a way of speakin'," replied Mr. Webb dolefully. "Able-bodied seaman—that's what I was until I lost me left 'and. Then they wouldn't take me no more."

He exhibited a large hook at the end of his left arm. Until now, the boys and girls had not realised that Mr. Webb was a cripple. They now understood the meaning of his nickname.

"I'm awfully sorry," said Irene. "We didn't know."

"There ain't no call for you to be sorry, missy," grinned Mr. Webb. "This 'ere 'ook is just as good as any 'and. I'm used to it. There ain't many things that I can't do with it. Ah, well! I s'pose I must make the best o' things. Not as I can repair this 'ere damage in time for the crowds. It'll take me two or three days, by the look o' things."

Evidently the schoolboys and schoolgirls were having a cheering effect upon him. He was of a philosophic turn of mind, too. He had had troubles all his life, and he had found that they were easier to bear if he made light of them. Unquestionably, however, the shock of this morning's discovery had been a great blow to him.

"Look here, Mr. Webb," said Nipper. "We feel that we're somehow responsible for your trouble. We were bathing, you see, and that motor-boat swerved in order to avoid us."

"Then it wasn't your fault, young gent," protested Mr. Webb. "It was the fault o' that bloke in the motor-boat, confound 'im! Like the nerve of these 'ere furriners to come bustin' people's property up!"

"Well, if we hadn't been swimming this wouldn't have happened," argued Nipper. "So we're going to see that you don't suffer."

Hookey Webb stared.

"And 'ow?" he asked. "What do ye think you can do, matey?"

"Well, we'll go along to Shoreham and put the whole thing before this foreigner," replied Nipper. "We'll tell him how you're placed, and if he's got any decency in him at all he'll whack out a few quid as compensation. That's what I want to ask you now. How much did you reckon to take to-day with your Punch and Judy show? And how much do you think it'll cost to repair your stand?"

Mr. Webb removed his battered headgear and scratched his white head.

"Well, I dunno," he said. "It's mighty kind of you young gents an' you young ladies to think o' me like this. Maybe I'd take a quid or two durin' the day—if I was lucky. An' I dare say I could get the old show repaired for about ten bob."

"Well, supposing we say five pounds?" asked Nipper. "Do you think that would put things right?"

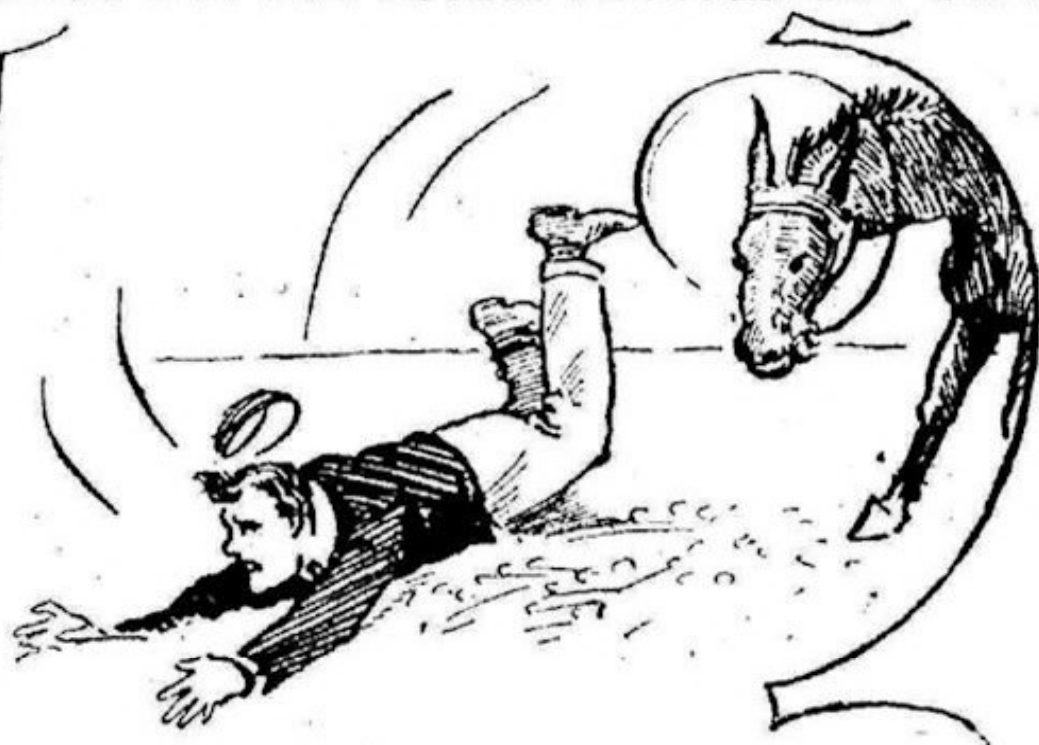
"Five quid?" said Mr. Webb. "Lummy! I wouldn't know what to do wi' five quid, matey! An' that's queer, too—with me knowin' where I can put my 'ands on five million quid!"

"All right, then," said Nipper, with a chuckle. "We won't say anything about the five milion quid—we'll stick to the five. The owner of that motor-boat ought to whack out, and we'll see that he does it. Don't you worry, Mr. Webb."

"Not me!" said Hookey Webb. "I don't worry. Never did. Lor', if I was a one for worryin' I'd 'ave been in my grave years ago."

(Continued on page 14.)

MY IDEAL BANK HOLIDAY



NIPPER. An all-day cricket match and a real summery day. What better than to hear the clack of ball meeting willow? What more exhilarating than to see the ball speeding away to the boundary? Then, again: what a glorious feeling you experience when you send down a real "stinger" and see the stumps at the other end somersaulting out of the ground, the batsman gazing on in rueful dismay. Yes, sir! Give me a day's cricket and I'd be supremely happy.

CLARENCE FELLOWE will spend his holiday differently from the other chaps at St. Frank's. Listen to what he says.

It is my wish to write
an ode
Upon a poor misguided
toad,
Who strayed beneath
a tyrant's foot
When foraging for food
and loot.
Poor toad! No longer
will he croak
And please the gentle
countryfolk.
He's gone and all the world seems grey
To me this August Holiday.

EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH. Cricket in the morning and afternoon, and then a trip in my Austin Seven down to the Bannington Fair, where I should have a jolly good time on the swings and roundabouts. (At this juncture McClure interrupted with the amusing information that Handforth is keen on donkey-riding—brotherly interest, he supposed. He also stated, most emphatically, that as a rider Handy is a complete wash-out, usually ending his "ride" by being tossed by a fed-up animal. Here Handforth showed signs of becoming war-like, so Mac beat a hasty retreat.) Then I'd make a tour of all the coco-nut shies and show people how to win coco-nuts. By

George! It'd need a pantechicon to hold all the coco-nuts I should win. However, I shouldn't want the beastly things, so I'd give them away to all the children in Bannington and Bellton, and—if there were any left—the remainder to those in Caistowe as well.

FATTY LITTLE. A comfortable armchair in a shady spot; a constant supply of grub, interspersed with ices and large iced drinks—that's my ideal Bank Holiday.

WILLIAM NAPOLEON BROWNE. Browne, of course, gave his opinion on this subject in his usual long-winded fashion. By the time he had finished "gassing" the interviewer was considerably weak and exhausted, but he gathered that Browne's ideal Bank Holiday would be to take Dora Manners for a trip to the country or seaside in his car.

ARCHIE GLENTHORNE. Odds calamities and catastrophies! It's a bit off the mark, laddie, your disturbing me when I'm resting the good old tissues. My ideal Bank Holiday? Oh, a spot of hammock in the jolly old grounds of Glenthorne Manor, where I should indulge in a series of forty winks, with a cup of Phipps' priceless brew to liven up matters periodically.

WILLY HANDFORTH. I should go for a long "hike" into the country. There's nothing more enjoyable. In the evening, if I got back in time, I should go down to the fair—just to let Chubby and Juicy enjoy themselves in their own childish ways. If they were ill after the swings and roundabouts, serve 'em right!

All of you have probably got your own ideas on how to spend August Bank Holiday Monday. This interesting feature tells you how your favourite characters at St. Frank's would like to spend theirs. With some you'll agree; others will amuse you, while still others—but read them for yourselves, chums!

BANK HOLIDAY IN BRIGHTON!

(Continued from page 12.)

"You leave this thing to us," said Handforth.

"It's very kind o' you young gents to think o' me in this way," said Hookey Webb, glancing from one to another with his keen, beady eyes. "You're reg'lar young sports, that's what you are, an' I thank ye kindly for what you're doin'."

"A BIT cranky, isn't he?" asked Sylvia Glenn, when they had all got out of earshot.

"He must be," said Irene. "How can an old man like that know anything about gold?"

"He's an old seaman," said Nipper. "Perhaps he's had some big shock earlier in life, and it's left him with a sort of delusion. But why bother about it? The main thing is to see that foreigner and get that five pounds out of him. The rotter ought to be only too glad to whack out."

"Supposing he won't accept any responsibility?" asked Doris.

"By George! Then we'll jump on him!" replied Handforth aggressively. "We'll take the money out of his giddy pockets! He smashed up that Punch and Judy show, and he'll have to do the right thing!"

"We don't even know who he is yet," said Winnie Pitt.

"Don't you worry, sis—we'll soon find out," said her brother. "Perhaps your pater will know, Irene?"

"Yes, that's quite likely," said Irene, nodding. "I hadn't thought of asking my father. Let's go along straight away; he's bound to be up by now."

The big house that Mr. Hobart Manners had rented was quite close to the sea-front, and the boys and girls waited whilst Irene went indoors. She soon reappeared, and she nodded as she joined them.

"Father knows all about him," she announced. "His name is Popodos, and he's said to be a millionaire."

"Sounds like a Greek," said Nipper.

"I believe he is a Greek," replied Irene. "Anyhow, he's from Central Europe, somewhere. Perhaps he's a Bulgarian, though. Father says that he's a young man who had a fortune left to him, and he's mad on motor-boats. He's been challenging all sorts of people to races, and he's got this boat of his at Shoreham, and it's a regular speed demon."

"Don't we know it?" murmured Travers.

"His name is Alexis Popodos," laughed Irene. "Did you ever hear such a name? Father says that anybody in Shoreham will know where his place is. He's got an enormous house there, I believe."

"Good enough," said Nipper briskly. "You girls go into breakfast, and we'll go to Shoreham to make inquiries. If we don't come back with five quid from this giddy Bulgarian millionaire, you can call me a Czecho-Slovakian!"

THE St. Frank's fellows had a rather hasty breakfast in one of the restaurants along the front. They were not very keen on food this morning. They wanted to see Mr. Hookey Webb through his trouble. There was really no reason why they should concern themselves in this way, for Mr. Webb's misfortune was not their responsibility. They had every reason to bear a grudge against Mr. Alexis Popodos themselves. Still, they argued that if they had not been bathing just at that time the Punch and Judy show would not have been smashed up. So, to an extent, they felt themselves responsible.

They went to Shoreham by motor-bus, and they soon located the big house where Popodos lived. It was

right on the front; and there, on the beach, guarded by a little army of mechanics, was the motor-boat. Not merely one motor-boat, but two or three. Mr. Popodos evidently believed in quantity.

"We'll go on the beach first," said Nipper. "Those mechanics might be able to put us in touch with Popodos. Come on!"

"Just what I was going to suggest," said Handforth.

They went along the beach, and, in answer to their inquiries, the mechanics informed them that Mr. Popodos was at home, and would not go for another trip until mid-morning.

"He had a bit of a scare this morning—early," said one of the mechanics confidentially. "He wouldn't exactly tell us what happened, but—"

"We can tell you," said Nipper grimly.

They did tell, and the mechanics gathered round, listening interestedly. One or two of them were foreign, but the majority were Englishmen.

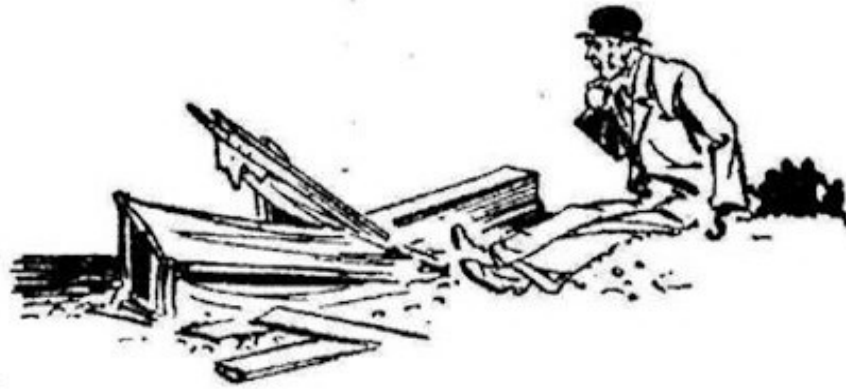
"Just like him," said one man, at length. "Reckless young fool! We've often warned him against flying down the sea-front too near to the shore. You youngsters are jolly lucky; you might have been run down."

"Is he always doing that sort of thing?" asked Reggie Pitt.

"Not always, but we've had the very deuce of a job with him," said the mechanic. "If he wasn't paying me a jolly good screw, I'd clear off. But a chap can't afford to pick and choose nowadays; he's got to stick to a good job when he gets one."

"Are all these boats his?" asked Handforth, looking at the high-speed craft.

"Not all of them," said the mechanic. "The 'big' one—that beauty—belongs to an



English chap. They're going to race, I believe. Quite a private affair."

"Who's the Englishman?" asked Nipper, smiling.

"I forget his name now," said the mechanic. "Some titled fellow, I believe. Anyhow, he's got pots of money to buy these sort of toys. Gosh! I wish I could afford one a quarter as good!"

The juniors thanked their informant, and went off to the big house. Here they were informed that Mr. Popodos was engaged, and could see nobody.

"I suppose we can send him a message?" asked Nipper, looking at the butler who had delivered the ultimatum.

"I suppose so, young sir," said the butler. "But if it's not very important, I should advise you to put it off. Mr. Popodos is not in the mood to spend any of his time on schoolboys. This is going to be a very busy day for him."

"Busy be blowed!" said Handforth aggressively. "He nearly killed us this morning, and he smashed up an old chap's Punch and Judy show. We're going to see that he pays proper compensation. Why not barge in, you chaps, and take the rotter by storm?"

"That wouldn't be the right thing, Handy," said Nipper, shaking his head. "Two wrongs don't make a right, old man. No; we'll send a message."

Nipper quickly wrote a few words on a slip of paper, and the butler vanished. But he soon reappeared.

"Mr. Popodos has read your message, young sir, and he tells me that there is no answer whatsoever," said the butler coldly.

"By George!"

"No answer whatsoever, eh?" said Nipper grimly.

"That is the message which Mr. Popodos wished me to convey," said the butler. "I would like to add that Mr. Popodos seemed very highly incensed when he read your message."

"Oh, did he?" grunted Nipper. "All right—we'll leave it at that."

He turned aside, and the butler closed the door before any of the others could say anything.

"What's the big idea, ass?" demanded Handforth, glaring. "You're not going to be satisfied with that rot, are you?"

"Well, hardly," replied Nipper. "But we shan't do ourselves any good if we create a commotion here. We shall have to wait for a better opportunity. Popodos is bound to come out sooner or later, and then we'll grab him."

"H'm! That's not a bad wheeze, either," admitted Handforth. "Better than forcing our way into his house, I suppose. Good man!"

And the juniors prepared to wait. Evidently Mr. Alexis Popodos was not going to escape his responsibility as he imagined!

CHAPTER 4.

Doing Hookey a Good Turn!

"I'M getting fed-up!" said Handforth, in exasperation.

He and the other fellows had been waiting within sight of the Greek's house for a full hour. And nothing had happened. Handforth, always impatient, could contain himself no longer.

"I'm afraid you won't make a good detective, Handy, old man," said Nipper, shaking his head. "You mustn't give up so easily as this."

"Who's talking about giving up?" demanded Handforth. "My idea is to force Popodos into action. If he won't come out, why shouldn't we go in and fetch him?"

Before any of the others could reply, they heard a curiously loud purring noise from the direction of the sea. They glanced at one another, rather startled. Then they all sped down the front, and they halted when they saw a fast motor-boat putting out over the blue expanse of the Channel.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said Reggie Pitt. "He must have gone!"

"Looks like it," said Nipper gruffly. "Some of you fellows stay here and watch the house. The rest of us will go down to the beach and have a word with those mechanics."

They hurried on to the beach, and the mechanics shook their heads when the boys inquired for Monsieur Popodos.

"He's gone," said one of the men. "Didn't you see him two or three minutes ago?"

"Was that Popodos himself?" asked



Nipper.

"Of course."

"Where's he gone?"

"It was very careless of him, but he forgot to tell us," said the mechanic dryly. "He'll probably be cruising about for hours. There's no telling when he'll be back."

"Well, I'm hanged!" said Nipper, annoyed. "He must have given us the slip somehow."

"He's a tricky beggar," said the mechanic confidentially. "Treats us like dogs, too. After this week I'm going to get another job. And if that greasy blighter talks to me again as he did this morning I'll let him feel the full weight of my fist!"

It was quite evident that Monsieur Popodos was not popular with his employees. In fact, it was fairly certain that the gentleman was very much of a bad egg.

“WELL, we'd better get back to Brighton,” suggested Nipper, after he had reported to the others, and after there had been a general indignation meeting.

“And allow that Greek rotter to go scot-free?” asked Handforth, with a sniff. “Not likely! He's got to pay——”

“But what's the use, Handy?” asked Nipper. “These mechanics say that Popodos might not be back for hours. We don't want to waste the whole morning here. Besides, I'm thinking of Hookey.”

“So am I,” said Handforth.

“It's Bank Holiday, and he was reckoning to make a good bit of money to-day,” continued Nipper. “As we've failed to get compensation from Popodos, it might be a good idea to get that Punch and Judy show repaired. Even if it's only a temporary affair, it'll do for to-day. Then Hookey will be able to get on with the business.”

“Good gad! A somewhat priceless scheme, old dear,” said Archie, nodding. “Absolutely! Let's do a bit of dashing about.”

Even Handforth had to admit that this idea was sound. And very soon the juniors were on their way back to Brighton.

When they arrived they found a vast difference in the famous seaside resort. The sun was shining gloriously now, and the day was becoming hot. Many thousands of holidaymakers had arrived by road and by rail, and the beach was becoming thronged. Hundreds of people were bathing, boats were to be seen by the score, and there was an air of activity and bustle and joyous happiness. Everybody was enjoying themselves. Brighton on a Bank Holiday is no place for the melancholy.

“Hallo!” said Nipper, as he stared down on to the beach from the promenade near the West Pier. “There's another Punch and Judy show there!”

“Where?” chorused the others.

Nipper indicated it.

“Somebody must have known of old Hookey's misfortune, and they've usurped his place,” said Handforth indignantly. “Come on! We'll go and clear this boulder off the beach!”

“Rats!” said Nipper. “This man may have a perfectly legitimate licence for giving his Punch and Judy show.”

“Here?” asked Pitt keenly. “Don't forget that it's exactly on the same pitch as Hookey's.”

“So it is,” admitted Nipper, frowning. “That doesn't seem right now you come to mention it. By Jove! The girls are down there, too—looking on!”

“Let's go!” said Handforth.

They went hurrying down to the sands, and they found quite a big crowd round the Punch and Judy show. Children were screaming with merriment, and the squawky voice of the Punch and Judy man could be heard plainly above the yells of laughter. It was not until the St. Frank's fellows were at close quarters that they noticed that the outfit was rather patched and decrepit. Nipper caught in his breath, suspecting the truth, but Handforth noticed nothing in particular.

“I say, girls!” he exclaimed, as he burst upon Irene & Co. “What's the idea of allowing this?”

“Allowing what?” asked Irene. “Hallo, Ted! You've been a long while in Shoreham——”

“I know,” said Handforth. “We couldn't find that rotter, Popodos. But what about this Punch and Judy show?”

“It's not bad, is it?” asked Doris.

“It oughtn't to be here at all!” said Handforth severely. “This is Hookey's pitch. Why didn't you tell this man that he hasn't any right on the sands? He's taking Hookey's business away.”

“Isn't that too bad?” asked Irene, looking at the other girls. “You silly, Ted! This is Hookey!”

“Eh?” said Handforth with a start. “You—you don't mean——”

“Of course,” said Irene. “We managed to repair his stand, and he's giving his show.”

THE St. Frank's fellows were rather startled to hear this. The girls, during their absence, had performed the very service that they themselves had hurried back to perform. These Moor View girls were pretty useful, it seemed!

“How did you manage to do it?” asked Nipper.

“You speak as if we've done something marvellous,” laughed Mary Summers. “We only took the Punch and Judy show up to Irene's place.”

“By George! What did Irene's people say?” asked Handforth.

“They didn't say anything—they didn't know about it,” replied Mary. “We managed to get it round the back, where there was a kind of workshop. We just got busy and patched up the whole contrivance.”

“We've warned Hookey to be careful,” smiled Irene. “If he makes Punch a bit too violent, or if he causes Judy or Toby to dodge about too much, the whole contraption might collapse on the top of him. It's dreadfully weak.”

“Well, it wouldn't hurt him,” said Handforth. “It's only a wooden frame with some old canvas wrapped round it.”

“But the show would be ruined,” said Irene, “and we don't want that, do we? Hookey is doing big business.”

The Punch and Judy man was indeed causing plenty of attention. He was an unusually good Punch and Judy showman;



Thinking the motor-boat contained the unpleasant Mr. Popodos, the juniors surged forward. The begoggled occupant was seized by strong arms and pulled bodily out into the water. "Duck him!" yelled Handforth. The juniors little realised that the man was not Popodos, but—Lord Dorrimore!

his voice was pitched in exactly the right key, and his enunciation was good. Most surprising of all, however, was his manipulation of the dummy figures.

The St. Frank's fellows wondered how he contrived to do it, considering that he merely possessed a hook instead of a left hand. There was not the slightest indication that Hookey was in any way handicapped. His manipulation of the puppets was uncannily clever. He could get roars of laughter from the audience without uttering a word—by merely moving his little dummy figures.

"Personally," said Travers, "I'm not altogether crazy about a Punch and Judy show. Perhaps my taste has changed, dear old fellows, but somehow I can't seem to get really enthralled."

Nipper chuckled.

"A bit above your head, old man, eh?" he asked blandly.

"A nasty one that—and quite uncalled-for," said Travers sadly. "However, we'll let it pass. Well, well! All the kiddies seem to be pleased, so why should I object? At the same time, Brighton surely offers fare that will appeal to us in a more satisfying way."

"Oh, absolutely!" said Archie. "I quite agree, dear old scream. Wouldn't it be a dashed ripe scheme to trickle away now that the old chappie is set up? I mean, there are sundry deck-chairs dotted about, and unless we're dashed slippy we shall lose our chances."

"Bother the deck-chairs!" said Handforth. "You can go and sleep all the morning if you like, Archie. I'm in favour of another

bathe. It's getting jolly hot now, and the water looks ripping. Who says a dip?"

"Rather!" chorused the others—girls included.

"We can't spend the whole of Bank Holiday looking at a giddy Punch and Judy show," continued Handforth. "Hookey is all right now, and we needn't bother about him any longer. Good for you girls! We can deal with that Greek rotter later on."

"Talk of the fellow with the spiked tail and he appears!" murmured Travers. "By Samson! What's more to the point, he's coming up to the beach! Well, well! He surely cannot realise that we are here ready to pounce!"

The St. Frank's fellows had drawn aside, leaving Mr. Hookey Webb to get on with his business, and they were staring out over the sunlit sea. They had all heard the deep, pulsating throb of a powerful motor-boat; now they could see the craft some distance out. Her engine was throttled down and she was gliding in towards the beach. Monsieur Popodos had come—and he had either forgotten the existence of the St. Frank's fellows, or else he did not think that they were worthy of consideration.

But Nipper & Co. were a grim-looking knot of fellows as they picked their way through the crowds on the beach and approached the spot where the motor-boat was likely to strike the shingle. Hookey Webb might be giving his show, but this was solely because of Irene & Co.'s timely help.

Alexis Popodos had done nothing by way of compensation—but it was more than probable that he would do something now!

CHAPTER 5.

A Slight Error!

NIPPER uttered a note of warning as they waited for the motor-boat to come ashore. Irene & Co. thought it advisable to keep in the background; somehow they had an idea that a few unpleasant things—for Mr. Popodos—were about to happen.

"Don't forget, you chaps, that this is Brighton beach," said Nipper. "It's crowded with holidaymakers, and all these people are enjoying themselves. There are plenty of kiddies, too."

"What about it?" asked Gresham.

"Well, we don't want to do anything that'll scare the kiddies," said Nipper. "So I suggest that we put it to Popodos quietly and calmly. We don't want any violence."

"Of course not," said Handforth at once.

"Oh, you agree, then?" asked Nipper.

"Of course I agree, ass!"

"That's good," said Nipper. "I was afraid that you might do something drastic, Handy, and if you led the way the others might back you up."

"Rats!" said Edward Oswald. "I should hope I know how to behave myself. I don't believe in violence, anyhow. All we've got to do is to wait until Popodos steps out of his boat and then we'll grab him, throw him face downwards in the sand——"

"Eh?"

"Frog's-march him up and down the beach——"

"What!"

"And after that chuck him in the sea!" said Handforth grimly.

"Well, well!" murmured Travers. "Is that what you call treating Popodos calmly? Don't you think it's a bit—well, drastic?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Of course not!" said Handforth, staring. "Popodos needs a lesson."

"So do you, you ass!" growled Nipper. "Not that you will ever learn it! Here am I trying to impress upon you the necessity for going easy, and you suggest an assault."

"And why not?" said Edward Oswald. "What's the good of gentle methods with a rotter like that? He wouldn't see us at Shoreham, and if we go up to him quietly he'll probably tell us to go and eat coke."

"Well, the boat's in now—so you'd better not argue any more," said McClure. "By jingo! He's coming ashore, too!"

The powerful racing motor-boat had grounded gently, with her nose in the shingle. And now the begoggled figure of the driver was climbing out of the cockpit.

"**C**OME on!" shouted Handforth excitedly. "Don't give him a chance to dodge back! If he spots us he'll bolt! Let's grab him now!"

"Hurrah!"

"On the ball, you chaps!"

"Hear, hear!"

They went rushing pell-mell into the water, and Nipper, after the first moment, was as keen as any of the others. Perhaps it would be better to give Popodos no chance whatever. The man was evidently a rotter, and he deserved to be handled roughly.

Popodos himself had not the slightest idea that he had come into danger. Now, as he was standing up in the cockpit, preparing to remove his big goggles, he paused. Somehow, these schoolboys did not seem any too friendly. Perhaps he recognised them—or, at least, he sensed that they were unfriendly. He did not need to be very acute to sense that.

The fellows cared nothing for their shoes or flannel trousers. Sea water would not hurt them in the least. They just plunged in through the gently-breaking surf, and before the startled man could even protest he was seized by strong arms and pulled bodily out of the cockpit.

"Hey!" he gasped. "What the——"

"Duck him!" yelled Handforth.

"Absolutely!" said Archie Glenthorne with unusual enthusiasm.

The unhappy man was jerked out so forcibly that he arrived in the water on his back before anybody could leap to his assistance. There was a mechanic in the boat with him, but this young gentleman had no opportunity of coming to the rescue.

Splash!

The begoggled figure disappeared into the water, and Handforth cheerfully sat on his chest, holding him under.

"Another little drink won't do him any harm!" said Edward Oswald, grinning. "Let's keep him under for about two minutes, you chaps! That'll teach him a lesson!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly ass, Handy!" said Church in alarm. "If you keep him under for two minutes he'll be drowned!"

"By George! I'd forgotten that!" said Handforth. "Still, we'll show him that we don't like him!"

"I think we've shown him that already, dear old fellow," chuckled Travers. "I'm quite sure he guesses that we're not well disposed towards him."

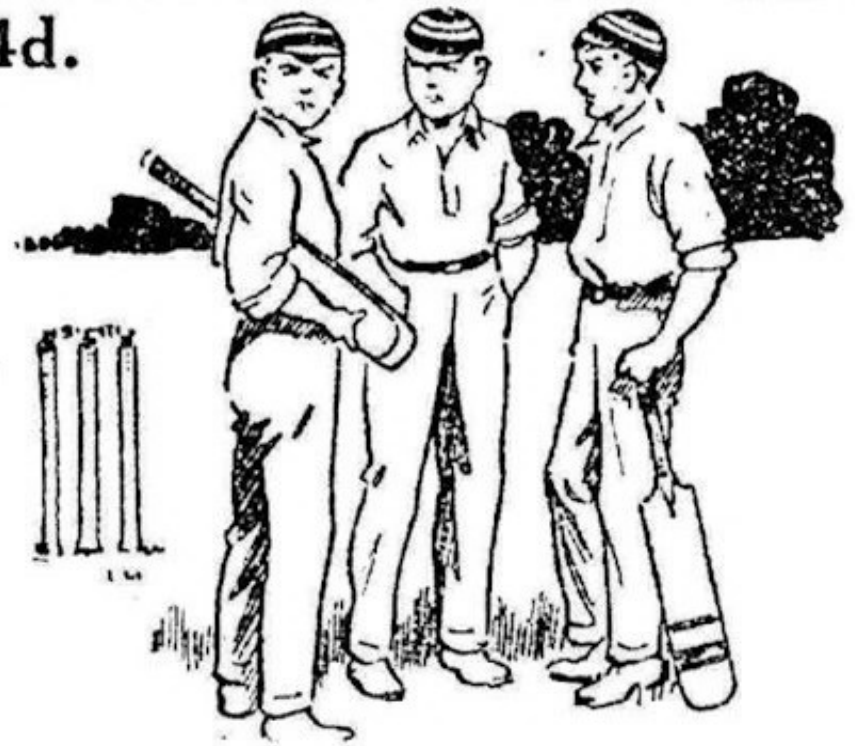
The unlucky man managed to shove the juniors off, and he sat up dazedly, the surf from the breaking waves foaming all round him. Everything had happened so quickly that not many people on the crowded beach had gathered round. However, they were coming up now, curious to know what all this meant.

"By the Lord Harry!" ejaculated the begoggled figure in a gasping voice. "I say, steady, you young idiots!"

Nipper started violently, and the other boys, too, were suddenly stricken. That voice! That expression! There was something familiar——

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"Hold on!" gasped Nipper. "I believe we've made a mistake, you chaps! It isn't Popodos! It's—it's—"

He reached forward and grabbed the goggles.

"Dorrie!" he yelled.

Lord Dorrimore looked at Nipper, and then he looked at the other fellows. He shook his head rather sadly.

"If this is your idea of welcoming me to Brighton, young 'uns, I don't think much of it," he said complainingly. "I'm a great believer in a friendly spirit, but you can go a bit too far with these things, you know. This excess of exuberance is too confoundedly thick."

"My only sainted aunt!" ejaculated Handforth blankly. "It's—it's old Dorrie! And we've ducked him!"

"It wouldn't be so bad if you had merely ducked me," said Lord Dorrimore. "You've done far worse than that. I believe I've swallowed about half a dozen pebbles, and I know for an absolute fact that I've swallowed half the English Channel. It's very good of you to be so enthusiastic, but—"

"Dorrie!" yelled Nipper, grabbing his lordship and helping him to get to his feet. "We—we didn't know, sir! Great Scott! You don't think that we deliberately chucked you into the sea, do you?"

"I don't think anything about it—I know!" replied Lord Dorrimore. "You

certainly *did* deliberately chuck me into the sea."

"But we thought you were somebody else," explained Nipper frantically.

"Well, of course, that makes it a bit better," admitted Dorrie. "In fact, I'm quite relieved. You ought to be a bit more careful; it's risky to go about grabbing people before you can identify them."

"We thought you were that rotter Popodos!" put in Handforth. "We couldn't see you properly with those goggles on, sir. We're most awfully sorry, Dorrie!"

LORD DORRIMORE, the famous sporting millionaire peer, was soon grinning with all his customary geniality. He knew, of course, that the St. Frank's boys had made a mistake; and when he had heard a few words of explanation he appreciated how easily the blunder had been made.

"That's all right then," he said. "No need to apologise any more, my sons. Let's forget all about it. I'm to understand that I haven't been ducked, eh?"

"Yes, of course, sir!"

"All right—we'll leave it at that," grinned Dorrie. "I rather expected to see some of you fellows here to-day, although you took me by surprise. I ought to have come ashore further along the beach."

"What are you doing in Brighton, sir?" asked Nipper eagerly. "We hadn't the faintest idea. Did Mr. Lee know?"

"Of course."

"The bounder!" said Nipper. "He never told me anything about it, Dorrie!"

"I think your respected gov'nor meant to keep it as a little surprise," chuckled Dorrie. "Goodness only knows why it should be a surprise—or, at least, why you should regard it as an event."

"But it is an event!" protested Nipper.

"Yes, rather!"

"Absolutely!"

All the fellows were delighted—and by this time Irene & Co. had come up, and they were just as excited as the boys. Lord Dorrimore was exceedingly popular. Hadn't the St. Frank's fellows and the Moor View girls had many an adventure with this genial sportsman? He was such an old friend that they regarded him as a kind of genial uncle.

Dorrie, too, was responsible for the famous School Train. It was he who had thought of the idea—he who had provided the money for the train itself. It was little wonder that the schoolboys and schoolgirls were enthusiastic in their reception.

"We thought you were over on the other side of the world somewhere, Dorrie," said Nipper. "By Jove! This is great! I'm glad the gov'nor didn't tell me anything beforehand—it's come as a ripping surprise now!"

"You certainly surprised me," admitted his lordship.

"There's no telling where you'll bob up, Dorrie," grinned Handforth. "And who the dickens could have guessed that you would go in for motor-boat racing?"

"I'm always ready to try something that promises a few thrills," said his lordship complacently. "This motor-boat stuff is pretty good."

"It's a wonder you don't go in for trying to break the world's land speed record, sir," said Reggie Pitt. "Perhaps you could beat Major Scagrove's Daytona Beach performance?"

"Well, as a matter of fact, I'm having a special car built. But that doesn't matter now," said Lord Dorrimore hastily. "No, my sons, we'll leave it! I ought not to have said anything."

"Are you really going to try to break the world's land speed record, sir?" asked Nipper eagerly.

"Not yet—if at all," said Dorrie. "Not until next year, anyhow. I was a chump to say anything. How would some of you like to come for a little trip in the old tub?"

"Hurrah!"

"I'll take a few of you at a time—mixed," said Dorrie, glancing from the boys to the girls. "I'm having a race to-morrow—with this merchant, Popodos. Quite a private affair, and I'm hoping to knock him into the middle of next week. He's a boastful sort of bounder, and he makes my flesh creep. If I can get him to sing small, I shall feel

that I have done something really worth while."

"We've been trying to get hold of him, sir," said Nipper. "We've told you how he nearly ran us down while we were bathing this morning—and how he smashed up that Punch and Judy show. He ought to be made to pay full compensation."

"He will be made, too," said his lordship grimly. "Leave this to me, my lads! In fact, you might as well give the Punch and Judy gentleman this fiver straight away. I'll collect it from Popodos later."

Nipper shook his head.

"I know you, Dorrie!" he said, grinning. "You're such a good-natured chap that you'd bid good-bye to the fiver and forget all about collecting it from Popodos. You'd consider it too much bother. No; we want to grab Popodos himself, put it to him straight from the shoulder, and make him shell out!"

"Hear, hear!"

"That's the only way to do it, sir!"

"Oh, all right—I'll leave it to you," said his lordship. "After all, it's your affair, and I won't butt in. Now, what about this trip? I have an idea that the crowds are becoming curious."

And so, for the remainder of the morning, the St. Frank's fellows and the Moor View girls enjoyed themselves tremendously. They had expected to have a fine time in Brighton on Bank Holiday; but Lord Dorrimore's unexpected advent had made all the difference.

They went for long trips in that glorious motor-boat, five or six of them at a time. They were exhilarated and excited and thrilled.

And as Mr. Hookey Webb, in the meantime, was making good money with his Punch and Judy show, everything, as Handforth put it, in the garden was lovely!

CHAPTER 6.

Hookey's Little Delusion!

NOTHING was seen of Mr. Alexis Popodos during the day. And Nipper & Co., on the whole, were rather relieved. Mr. Popodos could easily wait until the morrow.

Lord Dorrimore, who was nothing but a big, overgrown schoolboy himself, insisted upon the fellows and the girls joining him at luncheon. He engaged a whole dining-room at one of the big hotels, and did the thing in style. Giving pleasure to the young people was one of his greatest joys, and there was not the slightest doubt about the pleasure of Nipper & Co. and Irene & Co.

Then, in the afternoon, came more motor-boat trips, and bathing, and similar seaside joys. Every member of the party voted that this was one of the most enjoyable Bank Holidays that they had ever spent.

In the evening Dorrie sprang another little surprise.

"How about dinner on the *Wanderer*?" he asked casually.

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.—If there is a big fight at St. Frank's, where does it generally take place?
- 2.—What is the name of the school porter?
- 3.—Who are the occupants of Study A, in the Ancient House?
- 4.—What are the colours of the West House?
- 5.—Who is the best footballer in the Junior School?
- 6.—What colour are the eyes of Irene Manners, of the Moor View School?
- 7.—How is St. Frank's lighted?
- 8.—What position did Mr. Beverley Stokes occupy when he first arrived at St. Frank's?
- 9.—Has Nipper a pet? And, if so, name it.
- 10.—How did Sir James Potts, Bart., of the Remove, first come to St. Frank's?
- 11.—Who is the laziest junior in the school?
- 12.—On which House is the Clock Tower situated?

ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S QUESTIONS

1. Red. 2. Working in sealing-wax.
3. Tommy Hobbs. Willy is the most ingenious, but Tommy invents something, on the average, twice a day.
4. Green and gold.
5. Miss Charlotte Bond. 6. Ebenezer Binks.
7. Just under a mile. 8. Horace Stevens, of the Fifth.
9. The School House. 10. Chestnuts.
11. Hal Brewster, of the Fourth.
12. Professor Sylvester Tucker.

"The *Wanderer*!" yelled half a dozen excited juniors.

"But—but the *Wanderer* isn't here, sir!" ejaculated Nipper.

"No; she's in Newhaven at present," nodded Dorrie. "I can easily send a message to the skipper, and the old tub will be brought round and anchored off shore, handy. If you boys and girls would care to join me at dinner, you've only got to be on the pier at eight o'clock sharp, and I'll have some boats ready to bring you aboard."

There was great excitement. Dorrie's "old tub," as he called it, was one of the most magnificent steam yachts in the world. Most of the St. Frank's fellows and the Moor View girls were familiar with the *Wanderer*. She was not only a wonderful yacht with regard to her equipment and general luxury, but she was the fastest thing of her type afloat. Dorrie had enough money to indulge his own fancies, and the *Wanderer* was nearly as fast as a destroyer. She could cross the Atlantic with ease in about four days—faster than any of the famous liners.

Naturally, the boys and girls jumped at the chance; dinner on board the *Wanderer* would bring an end, as it were, to a perfect day.

"But is there time, Dorrie?" asked Irene wonderingly. "I mean, it's not fair to spring this on you so suddenly."

"There's no springing about it," grinned his lordship. "I gave instructions to the head steward in the early part of the afternoon, and he's preparing a feed for a party of about three dozen. There's nothing like being on the safe side, you know."

"You boulder, Dorrie!" said Handforth. "Then you knew that we'd accept?"

"Once," replied Dorrie, "I was a boy myself."

"And you're still one!" said Nipper, with conviction.

HIS lordship went off in the motor-boat, and the girls hurried away to Irene's temporary home, in order to get ready for the dinner. It was only a little past five o'clock now, but, as Handforth remarked, girls always needed two or three hours to get dressed for dinner.

"There's no need for us to bother yet," said Nipper. "The School Train's handy, and we can be ready comfortably if we start dressing at about half-past seven."

"And what shall we do until then?" asked Tommy Watson.

"Well, I was thinking that we might as well give Hookey a hand," said Nipper. "Perhaps we can boost up his business. Let's go and find him, anyhow!"

"Good wheeze!" said Handforth approvingly. "I was just going to suggest the same thing!"

But when they arrived at the Punch and Judy show they found Mr. Hookey Webb packing up for departure. His stand was looking rather the worse for wear; it was crooked and twisted, and the gentle evening breeze was causing the torn fabric to flap about.

"You haven't finished, Hookey, have you?" asked Nipper.

"I've 'ad a good day, matey," replied Hookey complacently. "A very good day. Ain't 'ad such a good day, in fact, since this time last year."

"We're glad to hear it," said Reggie Pitt.

"Ain't no sense in keepin' 'ere any longer," went on Hookey. "The crowd ain't on the beach now. Might as well pack up an' get 'ome."



The juniors gladly carried Hookey Webb's Punch and Judy show ; they were only too pleased to help the old man. And then, when they came within sight of his home, they gasped in sheer surprise. For it consisted of an old, upturned barge. "By George, how topping!" exclaimed Handforth, as Hookey invited them into the place.

He regarded the decrepit stand in a thoughtful way. He was looking as alert and as keen-eyed as ever—although he had had an extraordinarily tiring day. With hardly a pause he had carried on, giving his show again and again and again.

"Feels like a bit o' wind comin' up," went on Hookey, turning his face to the breeze. "I ain't so sure o' this old stand o' mine. She ain't any too safe. I'll 'ave to take 'er 'ome wi' me, else she'll be blown to bits afore the mornin'."

"Can't we help?" asked Nipper.

"I don't like to ask ye," said the old man. "You've bin 'elpin' me ever since this mornin'—an' I'd like to tell you 'ow much I appreciate it. Them young ladies, too—they're reg'lar sports, they are. If it wasn't for them I don't s'pose I could ha' given my show at all."

"They've patched up the old show pretty well, but I'm afraid their work isn't permanent," said Nipper, with a chuckle. "I'll tell you what, Hookey. You lead the way, and we'll follow—bringing the stand with us. Perhaps we'll be able to help you when you get home. We've got an hour or two to spare."

"Hear, hear!" chorused some of the others.

"Absolutely!" said Archie Glen-thorne. "At the same time, ladies, let me remind you that we've got to be on the priceless old pier at eight o'clock. Even if we start dressing now, we shall only be ready in the nick of time."

"Rats!" said Handforth. "You can buzz off, Archie, if you like. You take as long to dress as a girl—and longer! If we're at the School Train by half-past seven, we shall be in plenty of time."

"Good gad! Absolutely imposs!" protested Archie. "I mean to say, half-past seven, what? It doesn't give a chappie a chance even to select a dashed necktie!"

However, Archie was excused, and one or two of the other fellows, too, felt that it was unnecessary for them to accompany Hookey Webb home. Nine or ten fellows, including Nipper & Co. and Handforth & Co., took on the job. Hookey was voluble in his expressions of appreciation.

His home was as curious as himself.

It was an old boat—a barge, apparently—turned upside down. It was situated some little distance from the beach, in a quiet back-water of the town, only reached by a narrow alley. Hookey Webb had lived in this queer old place for many years, and, indeed, he was a well-known character in the district.

During the course of the years he had made additions to his strange home; he had built the windows, some with little gables, and he had placed a porch over the low doorway.

"By George! How topping!" exclaimed Handforth. "Flower-beds and roses round

the door and everything! Reminds me of one of Charles Dickens' books—*Oliver Twist*, I think. Old Fagin had a home like this."

"Fathead!" said Church witheringly. "You're thinking of Daniel Peggotty, the old fisherman chap in *David Copperfield*. He lived in an old barge like this—only I don't think it was wrong side up—near Yarmouth."

"Well, what's the difference?" said Handforth impatiently. "I was right about Dickens, wasn't I?"

"Let's give Handy the credit of having



The juniors gladly carried Hookey Webb's Punch then, when they came within sight of his home, then, "By George, how topping!" exclaimed

Handforth. "I was expecting him to name Joseph Conrad as the author of *Oliver Twist*—or Thomas Hardy, or possibly Edgar Wallace."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, we won't argue," said Nipper, with a chuckle. "Let's see if we can do some-

thing with this old Punch and Judy stand. Have you got any tools, Hookey?"

"Don't ye bother with that now, matey," said old Hookey. "Come inside. It ain't much of a 'ome, but it's good enough for the likes o' me. Bein' an old sailor man, I naturally feels more at 'ome in a place like this 'ere."

The fellows were curious enough to inspect the interior of Mr. Webb's abode. They found it quite fascinating. There was one big apartment, with a low roof and sloping walls. Little windows were placed here and



; they were only too pleased to help the old man. And surprise. For it consisted of an old, upturned barge. "By as Hookey invited them into the place.

there, so that plenty of daylight was admitted.

There was an ancient kind of stove in the very centre, with a crazy chimney penetrating the roof. The air was thick with the odour of tobacco smoke and tar.

There were crude tables and chairs, and a rough bedstead along one side. Everywhere

there was a litter of old magazines and papers—ropes and nets. Up one corner there was a little kind of workshop where Mr. Webb sometimes manufactured little models for his Punch and Judy show.

"By George! It's not so dusty!" said Handforth, as he looked round. "Wouldn't mind living here myself! How long have you been here, Hookey?"

"Nigh on twelve years now, young gent," said the old man thoughtfully. "It ain't much of a place for the likes o' me, wot might 'ave mansions o' me own."

"Ahem!" coughed Nipper. "Let's see about repairing the old show."

"Ay, that's right!" said old Hookey, looking at Nipper keenly out of his bright, beady eyes. "Think ye can put me off, eh? Think I'm barmy, don't ye? Me talkin' about mansions an' such like. But if I was to only find somebody who'd grubstake me, I'd show ye something!"

"I don't doubt it, dear old fellow," murmured Travers.

"I'd show ye gold!" said Hookey, his eyes burning more brightly than ever. "Red gold—yellow gold—sparklin' an' glintin' in tons. Ay, an' I mean it! Tons, young gents! I know where it is—an' I can put me 'ands on it, too. Only it's so durned far away."

"That's the worst of gold," said Travers. "It's always so far away."

Mr. Webb sat down on a keg.

"Reckon it's five thousan' miles away," he said, as though talking to himself. "New Mexico, young gents—or Arizona. I ain't quite sure which, seein' as my geography ain't very good. Still, once I got over there, I'd find my way sure enough, though I ain't bin there for forty years."

"New Mexico," said Nipper, looking interested. "Arizona! I've been in those parts of the United States, Hookey."

"Ye have?" said the old man eagerly. "Then mebber ye know that wot I'm sayin' is the truth?"

"Well, of course, everybody knows that gold has been found in some of those districts," said Nipper guardedly.

"Durin' my time things was pretty wild," said Hookey. "Injuns was roamin' about. That was in '89, or thereabouts. Reg'lar wild country in them days, with them Injuns takin' as many scalps as they could find."

"Things are different now," said Nipper. "The Indians are kept in their reservations."

"But they're still Injuns," said the old man grimly. "An' Injuns is Injuns—an' allus will be. Petic'ly the Apaches. Nasty and treacherous, them Apaches."

It was quite evident that Mr. Hookey Webb knew what he was talking about. This was no mere yarn. In the old days, apparently, he had actually been in New Mexico and Arizona. And as he sat there on that keg he somehow looked different. His eyes were brighter, and his expression was more alert.

"If ye're interested, young gents, I'll tell ye the yarn," he said, looking round from a boy to boy. "I'll tell ye a yarn of gold—so much gold that it's lil'ly your brains will reel."

"Go ahead!" said Handforth eagerly. "If it's a yarn about Indians and gold, we're ready for it!"

CHAPTER 7.

Handforth is Convinced!

HOOKEY WEBB cleared his throat, and he proceeded to fill an ancient pipe with black twist.

"I'm a sailor man, rightly speakin'," he said thoughtfully. "Back in '88 I was aboard an old wind-jammer wot struggled inter New Orleans arter a pretty rough voyage across the Gulf. An' it was while I was in one o' them New Orleans lodgin'-ouses that I struck up with old Ben."

"I think you mentioned his name once before," said Nipper, nodding.

"Old Ben Dalton," said Hookey. "A reg'lar pal 'e was. Seems 'e was struck on going' West, 'avin' 'eard tales of gold. Well, my ship was so busted up that all 'ands was paid off, and there wasn't no other ship 'andy. And me havin' a bit o' money put by, I went shares with old Ben. We bought our outfit, an' went West.

"Ben, o' course, knew the country like a book, an' it was 'is idea to go out on the desert, an' amongst those mountains in Arizony. Reg'lar wild country—wildest I've ever see'd. I won't tell ye of the troubles we 'ad. Wot with thirst an' losin' our way, an' one thing an' another, it was nigh on six months afore we got to the place where old Ben thought there might be gold. Right up there on the Mesa, it was."

"The Mesa?" repeated Handforth.

"Kinder big plateau," explained Hookey. "They allus call it the Mesa out in Arizony. Pretty 'igh up, but nearly flat—'undreds o' miles of it. You can go for days without seein' a tree, 'ceptin' a bunch o' cacti now an' agin. The kinder country wot might take the 'cart out of anybody straight off."

"It's pretty rough out there," said Nipper, nodding. "Some parts of Arizona and New Mexico are practically as wild to-day as they were then in '88."

"I was only a youngster in them days, but that trip fair took the spring out o' my muscles," said Hookey, shaking his head. "There was one bloke wot wouldn't come in with us. I remember 'im now—reg'lar desert feller. Dicky Siggers, that was 'is name—Dicky Siggers, an' his pals called him 'the Rat,' 'cause 'e wouldn't live nowhere else but on the desert. On'y a young 'un, same as ourselves. But when we asked 'im to come along wi' us, he wouldn't 'ave nothin' to do with it. Said 'e hadn't no 'ankerin' arter losin' his scalp."

"But you and Ben Dalton went on, eh?" asked Reggie Pitt.

"We found the gold," said Hookey impressively. "Fust of all we come across a creek, an' there was so much gold in the bed o' that blamed little stream that we could run it through our fingers. Then we found the real gold—cliffs of it!"

"Draw it mild!" protested Handforth.

"I ain't exaggeratin'," insisted the old man, his eyes burning. "I tell ye there was cliffs of it, matey! We filled our pockets, an' it was our idea to come back agin with a big outfit. But the Injuns got arter us, an' pore old Ben was winged."

"Killed?" asked Nipper.

"Pretty nigh," said Hookey. "But Ben was a good plucked 'un. If it wasn't for 'im, I'd bin lost in that blamed desert—an' killed by them Injuns, too. Ben stuck it, an' it was owin' to 'is knowin' the country so well that we got out. But the day arter we reached a township old Ben was took ill an' died."

"Poor chap," said Handforth. "That was pretty rough luck."

"Ay, matey, I can still remember pore old Ben as 'e lay there a-dyin'," said Hookey. "Reg'lar pal, 'e was."

"What about the gold you took?" asked Handforth.

"There wasn't no gold by the time we got to that blamed township," said the old man, shaking his head. "Gold didn't mean nothin' to us on the desert—when we was dyn' from thirst. It was so 'eavy that we chucked it away—an' mebbe it saved our lives. We only kep' a few bits o' quartz—an' we on'y kep' those 'cause we forgot a' about 'em."

"So you were practically broke?" asked Reggie.

"I don't remember much wot really 'appened," admitted Hookey. "Somehow or other, I got away. Old Ben's death shook me up proper, an' I didn't want to see that blamed desert no more. The place 'aunted me. But years arter, when I was at sea agin, I kep' thinkin' about that there gold, an' wot a fool I'd bin to let the chance go by."

"Why didn't you go back?" asked Handforth.

The old man gave a bitter laugh.

The POPULAR
Every Tuesday 2d



Edward Oswald 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.

GEORGE W. HARRISON (Harrogate).—Your letter was remarkably short—it consisted of only three lines—yet searching for answers to your two questions has caused me no end of trouble. I looked through my history books and none of the beastly silly things seemed to tell me what causes an earthquake and where they most frequently occur. I shall write a strong letter to each of the authors and tick them off, I think. So I was reduced to asking Churchy, and he told me to tell you that an earthquake is an internal disruption, and that such things occur most frequently in Study D.

ARTHUR SMITH (Wigan).—Och aye, but ye're a cheeky wee bairn! (How's that for a good spot of Lancashire dialect, Arthur?) I don't know how you can assert that Willy writes better stories than I. My minor writes utter piffle—and I jolly well know I can beat him at it every time. (Hear, hear!—ED.) Sorry I can't get that copy of the NELSON LEE LIBRARY for you. Apply to the Editor, and perhaps he'll help you.

WILLIAM KITCHEN (Buxton).—Thank you for your kind words concerning myself. I regret to say it is somewhat unusual for me to receive compliments from readers of the NELSON LEE LIBRARY. Most of them are positively insulting towards me. Yes, I have been captain of the Remove. During my term of office I introduced all sorts of wonderful reforms. Never before had the Form been so much in the limelight, and

everybody agreed that as a captain I was in a class of my own. Yet the ungrateful rotters kicked me out! I was cast out like a—like a— Yes, I was cast out of office. Ah, 'tis a hard, hard world!

DEZMONDE DALLEY (Epsom).—This bright lad has the cheek to ask me a mere twenty questions. Twenty, mark you! I'd like to point out, Dezmonde (I don't believe you when you say that your Christian name is Yugo-Slavian) that the Editor has only given me a stingy half a page for this feature, and so you're going to be unlucky. How about asking me your questions on the weekly instalment plan?

WILLIAM R. OSBORNE (Leicester).—I gave Church and McClure your kind regards as requested, and they wish me to return theirs to you—also their sympathy, and they trust that you'll still be alive when you've read this reply. Cheeky asses—but I've just given Church a black eye and Mac a swollen nose, so I'll let them off. I can't say I am keen on fishing, Bill—the ordinary kind of fishing, that is, such as catching tiddlers. Now big game fishing is all right. I'm going to do a lot of it when I get older and go exploring the mighty oceans. There's plenty of excitement in fishing for whales and sharks and octopi, I can tell you. Just a word of advice if you contemplate doing the same. These denizens of the deep are rather strong and heavy, so don't forget to provide yourself with a strong fishing rod and tackle.

EDWARD OSWALD.

"I'll tell you why," he replied. "'Cause I 'adn't got the money. Me an' old Ben Dalton spent all we 'ad on that fust trip, an' arter Ben died I was broke. You can't go into the desert wi'out burros an' a proper outfit. Leastways, you can't unless you wants to commit soocide."

"Couldn't you get anybody to finance you?" asked Reggie Pitt.

"You mean grub-stake us?" asked Hookey. "Didn't I try? But nobody wouldn't be-

lieve me. They just laughed, an' said I was crazy. Wot did I know about the desert, anyway? Me, a sea-farin' man? Wi'out old Ben, I was lost. If 'e 'ad lived it would 'ave bin different."

"Yes, I can see that," said Nipper, nodding.

"So I just drifted back to the sea, natural like," said the old man. "It was twenty year afore I found myself in New Orleans agin. That would be in the year nineteen

'undred an' eight, or nineteen 'undred an' nine. I don't rightly remember which. I 'ad a bit o' money, so I went on the train as far as Phoenix, in Arizony. An' believe me, or believe me not, almost the fust man I met was Dicky Siggers."

"That was queer, wasn't it?" asked Handforth.

"Not so queer," said Hookey. "Dicky was still the same—didn't look much older, neither, 'ceptin that 'e was a bit shrivelled up, wot wi' the sun an' the desert air. Still searchin' fer gold, 'e was, but when I suggested that we should be partners 'e wouldn't take no notice."

"Didn't he believe your story about the gold?"

"Mebbe 'e believed it, but 'e was broke, an' I hadn't got 'nuff money to supply the outfit," replied Hookey. "It was allus money wot stopped me—an' me knowin' where all that gold was, too. Ay, an' I was pretty sure I could find my way back to that same spot up on the Mesa."

There was something quite convincing in the old man's story.

"And what about the Indians?" asked Handforth.

"The Injuns was in a reservation by then," said Hookey. "Leastways, I think so. Dicky Siggers said they was just as dangerous, though—them Apaches ain't like other Injuns. They're allus tricky an' treacherous. Dicky reckoned as 'ow they'd get narsty even

if that gold strike o' mine wasn't on the reservation. Sort o' jealous, like. Don't want no white folks prowlin' round, as ye might say. Anyways, I couldn't do no good in Phoenix, so I drifted back to the sea agin."

He sighed, knocked out his pipe, and commenced filling it again. The juniors watched him with interest as he manipulated the pouch with his hook. And suddenly he held the hook aloft.

"It wasn't many years arter that that I met wi' my accident," he continued. "Then I wasn't no good for the sea no more. An' now I'm a Punch and Judy man," he said bitterly.

"Didn't you ever ask people to put up enough money to make another trip?" inquired Handforth.

"I asked until I was 'oarse," replied old Hookey. "But I'm allus laughed at. Folks think I'm barmy, I tell ye. 'Old Hookey an' his gold'—that's wot they say, an' then laugh fit to bust."

"How do you know the gold hasn't been found by somebody else?" asked Nipper.

Mr. Webb shook his head.

"If that there gold 'ad bin found, the 'ole world would a-known of it," he replied. "You couldn't 'ave kep' it out o' the newspapers, an' I can tell ye I've 'ad my eyes open pretty well. The gold ain't bin found—an' won't be found, until I goes back to the spot. Them mount'ins keep

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their secret—pertic'ly when there's Injums prowlin' around."

"Well, it's a pity you can't get somebody to put up some money for the trip," said Handforth indignantly. "I've a good mind to speak to my pater about it."

"It wouldn't be no good, matey," said Hookey, shaking his white head. "People don't take no notice o' me. I'm an old seaman—an' old Punch and Judy man. Wot do I know about gold? Wot do I know about Arizony an' the desert? Folks think that I'm jest yarnin'—that it's a pack o' lies from beginnin' to end. Any'ow, when it comes to puttin' up any money, why, they just smile an' go away."

SOON afterwards the St. Frank's juniors took their departure. They were all feeling rather sorry for the unfortunate Punch and Judy man. His story had sounded very convincing while he told it; but only a very few minutes after they had left his presence they felt doubtful. Edward Oswald Handforth was the only one who saw no reason to change his first impression.

"The old boy knows what he's talking about!" he said, as he and the others paused in the little alley near Hookey's curious home. "Gold, by George! Tons of gold! And nobody will help the old chap to find it! Too jolly mean to risk their money!"

"Don't be an ass, Handy!" protested McClure. "It wouldn't be risking money to 'grub-stake' old Hookey."

"Eh?"

"It would be throwing money away!" said Mac.

"You're Scotch—and that's just the sort of thing you *would* say!" retorted Handforth sternly.

McClure flared up.

"Why, you rotter! The Scotch people are jolly keen on finding any sound proposition!" he said hotly. "But they're careful, too. They won't throw their money away!"

"Peace, my children!" murmured Nipper. "We don't want any arguments here, do we? My mind is quite open about old Hookey. I believe there's something in his story—and perhaps he did find a lot of gold out in Arizona. But don't forget that it happened forty years ago!"

"And the gold hasn't been discovered by anybody else since," put in Handforth quickly. "That's the point, my sons!"

An old boatman, in wide, blue trousers and a blue jersey, paused as he was about to pass the group of schoolboys.

"What's that ye're sayin'?" he asked, with a twinkle in his eye. "Gold? I reckon you've bin talkin' with old Hookey, eh?"

"What of it?" asked Handforth.

"Don't you believe his stories about that there gold, young gents," said the boatman. "Old Hookey is a bit touched in the 'ead. Why, 'e's bin tellin' that same story for nigh on fifteen years—ever since he come to these parts."

"And hasn't anybody ever taken any notice of him?" asked Nipper.

"'Tain't likely!" said the boatman, with scorn. "Who'd take notice of an old Punch an' Judy man like 'Ookey Webb? I tell ye he's a bit wrong in the 'ead. 'Tain't 'is fault, pore chap. He can't help it. But you be careful, young gents; don't take no notice of 'is yarns. Old 'Ookey is a caution!"

CHAPTER 8.

Lord Dorrimore's Promise!

HANDFORTH, of course, took no notice of the old boatman. He preferred to believe Hookey Webb's story. It was just the kind of story that Handforth loved to believe. A story of hidden gold—of wild desert places—of Indians! It was a story that stirred his blood.

Nipper and Travers and Pitt and the rest were rather amused. Handforth became more and more excited as they were dressing, and he was still looking flushed and hot even after they had got on board the *Wanderer*. Hookey Webb's story was throbbing through Handforth's brain.

For a time, before dinner and during dinner, he managed to keep himself subdued. There was so much to see—so much to do. And the girls, of course, kept him busy. Irene & Co. were all there, and they were merry, bright-eyed, and gay.

"It's really too bad of old Dorrie to invite us on board like this," said Doris Berkeley, after dinner, as she and some of the others were strolling on the promenade deck. "It makes us long for another voyage, and we know there can't be one."

"Perhaps there *will* be one," said Handforth mysteriously.

"Why, whatever do you mean, Ted?" put in Irene, open-eyed.

"Oh, nothing!" replied Handforth, with a careless wave of his hand. "Nothing! But you never know!"

"Dorrie hasn't said anything about going on another voyage, has he?" asked Winnie.

"Not that I know of," said Handforth, shaking his head. "But after I've had a talk with him—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Cheese it, Handy!" grinned Church. "If you've got any idea like that in your head, you'd better get rid of it. Dorrie won't listen to you, you ass! I expect he's got his plans all cut and dried. He's probably sailing for some odd corner of the world within a few days. You know how he dodges about."

"I know!" said Handforth grimly. "And I know that Dorrie doesn't care twopence where he goes—as long as there's adventure."

"Quite right, young 'un—in fact, absolutely right," said Lord Dorrimore, strolling up. "And where, pray, is there adventure to be found? I must confess that I have exhausted most of the supplies. There aren't many wild corners of the earth nowadays."

Handforth took a deep breath.

"What about Arizona, sir?" he asked triumphantly.

Lord Dorrimore stared.

"Arizona?" he repeated politely. "A wild corner of the earth?"

"Yes, sir."

"My poor, deluded young man, you don't know what you're talking about," said Dorrie. "Arizona is in the United States. And surely we all know that the United States are the most law-abiding, peaceful, humdrum, conventional——"

"Cheese it, sir!" protested Handforth. "There are parts of the United States that are as wild as ever."

There were many chuckles.

"It's all very well to chip me like this, sir, but I'm in earnest," said Handforth, rather aggrieved. "You remember that old chap—Hookey Webb?"

"I am not likely to forget him easily," said Dorrie. "A most interesting specimen of humanity."

"He told us a yarn this evening, sir," went on Handforth, his eyes gleaming. "He said he knows where he can find tons and tons of gold!"

"Mr. Webb is a showman," said Dorrie. "A modest showman, I will admit, but, like the rest of his tribe, he evidently has a vivid imagination."

"I don't believe it!" said Handforth stubbornly. "He didn't ask us for any money—didn't expect that we should give him any. He's not that kind. In fact, he's long since given up all hope of getting anybody to 'grub-stake' him."

"Do you know what 'grub-stake' means?" asked Irene, with interest.

"Well, it means money," said Handforth vaguely. "You provide a chap with enough money to get him grub."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's partially true, old son," grinned Lord Dorrimore. "In the sense that Hookey Webb means it, however, I think it's a bit different. If, for example, you had enough money to grub-stake him and the gold was found, you would have an equal share in the spoils. You see? But for your money he couldn't get the gold at all—and so you receive half. Or, if there are five or six in the grub-stake, the booty is shared."

"Why don't you grub-stake him, sir?" asked Handforth tensely.

He had been angling to say this ever since he had come on board, and now that he had got it out, his face was red with excitement, and his eyes were burning with eagerness.

"Why don't you grub-stake him, Dorrie?" he repeated. "You've got pots of money—tons of it. It won't matter to you whether he finds this gold or not! But it'll mean a tremendous thing for him."

"My dear chap, I don't know what you're talking about," protested Dorrie. "There can't be any truth in old Hookey's yarn——"

"But there is, sir!" interrupted Handforth. "I know it! And I thought it would be a good idea for us to spend the summer holidays—— I mean—— I was going to suggest——"

"Ah, now we're getting at it," grinned Dorrie. "You want me to grub-stake the old fellow so that we can all go on a trip to Arizona, eh?"

"That's it, sir!" said Handforth breathlessly.

"Not a bad idea, young 'un," said Dorrie, to the astonishment of the others. "I dare say there is plenty of adventure to be found in Arizona—even to-day. And as the summer holidays for you fellows are just beginning——"

"Don't forget us, Dorrie," put in Irene.

"Good glory, no!" said Dorrie hastily. "A thousand pardons, young ladies! Why shouldn't you come, too?"

"But you don't mean it, Dorrie!" ejaculated Nipper, staring. "You're not going to take any notice of Handy's rot, are you?"

"It's not rot!" roared Handforth.

"Easy—easy!" chuckled Dorrie. "No need to get excited, Handy! Supposing you give me the yarn that old Hookey told you? Then I shall be in a better position to judge."

"Rather, sir!" said Handforth excitedly.

And there, standing in a group on the deck, the boys repeated Hookey Webb's remarkable story. The girls listened with interest, and Lord Dorrimore nodded every now and again as he took in the details.

"It's plausible enough," he admitted at length. "Hookey isn't the first man who has been in such a position—providing that his story is true. There's many a gold strike been left for years because the first discoverer was unable to get enough money for another outfit. These remote spots in the desert cannot be reached easily. Even to-day they are well-nigh inaccessible. As Hookey has said, money is necessary—and before you can get money you've got to get somebody to believe your yarn."

"Oh, but it must be all bunkum, sir!" said Reggie Pitt sceptically. "I mean to say—forty years ago!"

"Forty years is as nothing in the Arizona desert," replied Dorrie promptly. "I'll warrant that this Mesa, or plateau, that Hookey talks about is exactly the same to-day as it was when he was there in '89. The desert doesn't change much. We don't know very much about the region—the old man wasn't explicit—but I gather that he must mean the extraordinary barren wasteland near the Great Colorado Plateau."

"It's not in Colorado, sir—it's in Arizona," said Handforth.

"The Great Colorado Plateau is in Arizona," nodded Dorrie. "I haven't actually been there—but I've been very close. And I can assure you that the country is not only wild, but difficult, and not without its dangers. Hookey is quite right when he talks about the Apache Indians."

"Quite right, sir?" said Nipper. "You mean that he *was* right? The Indians are in reservations now; they're peaceful."



With a tremendous roar the two motor-boats hurtled through the water. Slowly but surely Lord Dorrimore was gaining on his opponent, and the excited boys and girls let out a rousing cheer. "Come on, Dorrie! You'll win! Hurrah!"

"Many of them are peaceful," agreed Dorrie. "But the Apaches, in particular, are a grim, treacherous race, and up there, on the fringes of their reservations, who is to know what happens?"

"By George! Will you do it, Dorrie?" asked Handforth, clutching at his lordship's arm. "Will you go out there with Hookey? Think of it! For forty years he's been trying to get somebody to grub-stake him. He's given it up as hopeless. It won't cost you much money—only a few pounds—"

"Perhaps a hundred — perhaps two hundred," said Dorrie, nodding. "But that's a trifle to me, as you youngsters know. That's not the point at all. I'm wondering if I should get any excitement by taking this trip. I'm always looking for excitement, you know. I'm pretty well case-hardened, and it needs something exceptional to tickle my palate. However, I dare say you boys and girls would enjoy the trip, and I've nothing else on the stocks at present."

"Oh, Dorrie!" went up a breathless chorus.

"Anyhow, I'll give you this promise, Handy," said Lord Dorrimore. "To-morrow I'll see Hookey Webb, and I'll hear his story myself. If I'm satisfied with it, I'll make a bargain with him, and I'll take you out to Arizona for the fun of the thing."

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Dorrie!"

"It's a cert, you chaps!" yelled Handforth.

"Dorrie means it! We're going on this trip as sure as my name's Jack Robinson!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I mean, we'll be gone before you can say 'Jack Robinson,' as sure as my name is

Handforth!" said Edward Oswald, with a gulp. "By George! A fellow can't help getting mixed, can he?"

NELSON LEE took Lord Dorrimore's arm rather sternly, some minutes later, as they strolled on another part of the deck.

"What's the idea, old man?" asked Lee. "You're not fooling those youngsters, are you?"

"Perish the thought!" said Dorrie.

"Then you actually mean to go to Arizona on this trip?"

"Why not?"

"If you think you can get any pleasure out of it—and if you think you can give the young people any pleasure—go right ahead!" smiled Nelson Lee. "If you mean to use the *Wanderer*, you'll soon be across the Atlantic, and the trip won't be such a very long one. But surely you don't expect to get any gold?"

"Did I say that I expected to get any gold?" grinned his lordship.

"You gave those girls and boys to understand—"

"My dear old sleuth, what's become of your deductive powers?" asked Dorrie. "If these youngsters think that I've got no faith in the gold, they'll lose their interest in the trip. Handforth was the only one to be keen on it at first, but all the others are on the jump now. They're simply dying to go on this trip, and it'll be one of the safest, tamest things that ever happened. At least, I'm afraid it will be from my point of view—and perhaps from yours."

"Am I going, too, then?" chuckled Lee.

"I'd like to see you try to get out of it!" retorted his lordship grimly. "You need a holiday, old man! The desert air is first-class, and it'll put new life into you. You'll get back to St. Frank's for the new term bubbling with health, and ready for another spasm of school life. I wouldn't have your job for a million pounds a year! It's a wonder to me you're not grey and wrinkled."

Nelson Lee pressed his companion's arm.

"You're a good sort, Dorrie," he said dryly. "You're not thinking of yourself at all, but of these young people. You don't believe this yarn of gold and hostile Indians, do you?"

Lord Dorrimore looked across the stretch of sea to the twinkling lights on the Brighton front.

"Charming view, that!" he drawled languidly.

CHAPTER 9.

The Decision!

THE two motor-boats sped over the smooth water with almost incredible velocity. They were going neck and neck, and the roar from their open exhausts was deafening. Behind them streamed two great lines of curling foam.

"Dorrie's winning!" said Nipper confidently.

"Oh, I hope he *does* win!" said Mary Summers, clasping her hands. "It'll be a shame if that wretched Popodos should beat him!"

"Blow Popodos and blow the race altogether!" said Handforth indifferently. "What does the race matter?"

He was not the only one who had lost a great deal of interest in this sporting event. It was Tuesday now, and Handforth had hardly slept a wink all through the previous night; he had been living in Arizona, on the desert, with hostile Indians on every side of him. In his imagination, he had passed through all kinds of perils; he had peopled Arizona with Red Indians of the most ferocious type. Handforth had read a great many stories of the old-time pioneer days, and he seemed to have a curious idea that the conditions in Arizona were precisely the same to-day.

Some of the other fellows had spent a restless night, too, and now that it was Tuesday morning, and the big motor-boat race was on, they only displayed a feeble interest in it. There was the greater issue in their minds. Lord Dorrimore had not yet seen Hookey Webb, and the summer holiday trip was not yet a certainty.

Everybody on the Brighton front was watching the race—which was taking place at a safe distance out. The two motor-boats had appeared from the direction of Shoreham. They were to proceed to a point beyond Kemp Town, on the other side of

Brighton, and then return—the finish being the Palace Pier, on the Brighton front.

"By Jingo, they're shifting!" said Tommy Watson, as the speeding craft receded into the distance. "I say, let's get on to the pier so that we can be on the spot when they shoot past the finishing-post."

"Hear, hear!"

They were privileged people—Dorrie had seen to that—and they were allowed to go to the extreme end of the pier, where they could watch the finish in comfort.

"Here they come!" yelled somebody.

They had only just arrived in time. The

COMING NEXT WEEK!



racing motor-boats were on their way back now, shooting parallel with the Brighton front, and it seemed that they were still fighting one another for supremacy.

"Dorrie's leading—look!" cried Irene. "Come on, Dorrie! You'll win!"

"Hurrah!"

"Dorrie's creeping ahead!"

"Oh, good man!"

It was a fact. Lord Dorrimore's powerful craft was proving the better of the two. Gradually he was forcing his way ahead of the other. They both came hurtling along, and the air was filled with the tremendous noise of the engines. As they shot past the Palace Pier it was seen that Lord Dorrimore's boat was a clear length ahead of the other, but it had been a very near shave. Alexis Popodos had been beaten, so to speak, by a head.

"THEY'RE both coming in!" said Nipper. "They're coming to the pier. I say, what a chance to grab hold of Popodos and make him shell out!"

"Rather!" said some of the others.

"Oh, bother Popodos!" said Handforth. "We want to grab Dorrie. We'll take him to Hookey Webb, and Hookey will tell the yarn——"

"I thought you wanted to see justice done?" asked Church sternly.

"Eh?"

"Yesterday you could think of nothing

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else but making Popodos pay Hookey Webb for the damage he had done to the Punch and Judy show," said Church. "Now you say, 'bother Popodos.' I'm surprised at you, Handy!"

"Rats!" said Edward Oswald. "Hookey needn't bother about his silly Punch and Judy show any longer! Dorrie is going to grub-stake him, and we shall all be off to Arizona before the week is out!"

"That doesn't make any difference to the justice of the thing," said Nipper. "If Popodos shows his face here, we'll nab him!"

And Popodos did show his face.

Evidently he thought that the St. Frank's fellows would overlook that little affair of yesterday. But the St. Frank's fellows didn't, and when it came to the point Handforth was one of the first to go to the attack.

Popodos had hardly set his feet on the pier before he was surrounded by a mob of schoolboys. He looked at them, his face full of alarm, and he was flushed with anger, too.

"What is this?" he asked impatiently. "I cannot be bothered. I sign no autographs."

"We wouldn't have your silly autograph as a gift!" said Handforth scornfully. "You were beaten in the race anyhow——"

"It was I who won!" broke in Popodos excitedly. "Ask my mechanic! A cylinder was mis-firing, and but for that I should have won the race."

"He's not even a sportsman!" said Nipper contemptuously.

Alexis Popodos flushed, but before he could speak Handforth pressed forward.

"Never mind the race," he said. "Yesterday, Mr. Popodos, you smashed up a Punch and Judy show on the beach, after nearly running us down in the water. What about it? It'll cost you ten pounds to repair that damage and to compensate the old showman. Are you going to whack out now, or shall we turn you upside-down?"

"I will pay nothing!" shouted Popodos. "This is an imposition! I will not suffer it! Go away! I will appeal to the police!"

"Grab him!" said Reggie Pitt grimly. "He's not going to shell out, so we'll tip him up!"

Popodos was seized by all hands.

"Now!" said Nipper. "You've got ten seconds, Mr. Popodos. Are you going to do the right thing?"

"Help!" screamed the Greek. "This is an outrage! I will not submit——"

"Over with him!" roared Edward Oswald. And Mr. Popodos was violently turned upside-down.

Apparently he did not like being stood on his head, for he struggled frantically and uttered all sorts of wild threats.

"Let me go, you young ruffians!" he shrieked.

Obligingly the juniors granted his request, with the result that the Greek swayed over and crashed to the deck. But they hadn't finished with him yet. The man was an out-and-out rotter, and he thoroughly deserved drastic punishment.

Once more the St. Frank's fellows swarmed round their victim. Handforth sat on his head, Nipper deposited himself on Popodos' chest, while the others squatted themselves on various parts of the struggling man's anatomy.

"Are you going to pay that money?" demanded Nipper.

"Gr-r-r-oooh!"

"If you don't we'll frog's-march you!"

"Gr-r-r-oooh!"

"And bump you!"

"Gr-r-r-oooh!"

"And then we'll duck you in the sea!"

Mr. Popodos uttered another "Gr-r-r-oooh!" He was unable to utter anything else. Handforth, sitting on his head, prevented that!

FORTUNATELY for him, Nelson Lee and Dorrie and some of the pier officials came along at that moment. Popodos was released, and now he was only too willing to hand over the money that had been demanded.

Dorrie took the two five-pound notes from the Greek.

"You'd better take charge of these," he said, turning to the leader of the officials. "Send them to one of your local hospitals. In the meantime, I'll see that old Hookey Webb is compensated with the same amount."

He pressed the two notes into the surprised man's hand, and promptly forgot the whole incident.

So it was really Dorrie who compensated Hookey Webb—and Mr. Alexis Popodos had contributed ten pounds to a Brighton charity.

The St. Frank's fellows took Dorrie and Nelson Lee in charge, and they escorted them to Hookey Webb's curious home. In the meantime, Irene & Co. had been to fetch Hookey himself, and the two parties arrived almost at the same minute.

Hookey's home was packed to overflowing when they were all inside, and the old man hardly knew whether he was on his head or his heels.

"It's all right, Hookey," said Handforth. "This gentleman is Lord Dorrimore. He's interested in your story about the gold, and if you can satisfy him that it's true, he'll probably grub up some stakes. I mean, he'll grub-stake you."

"This ain't a joke, is it, young gents?" asked Hookey, looking round, his bright, beady eyes aglow with suspicion. "It wouldn't be the first time as I've been fooled—an' I don't take kindly to that sort o' thing."

"We're not trying to fool you, Hookey," said Dorrie. "This youngster is quite right. I'm interested in your gold story, and I should like to hear it from your own lips. If you can convince me, I'll fit out an expedition, and we'll go to Arizona!"

DORRIE and Nelson Lee exchanged glances after Hookey Webb had finished. They, like the younger people, were impressed by the old man's earnestness—by his convincing story. Somehow, it seemed to ring absolutely true.

"And look ye here, mister!" went on Hookey, pulling an old leather purse from his pocket. "Look at these! They ain't much, but if you knows anythin' about quartz maybe you'll think I ain't such an old fool, arter all."

He produced some small fragments of milky quartz, and tipped them into Lord Dorrimore's palm. They were white and as crisp as sugar, and they were veined with dull, yellowish streaks.

"By the Lord Harry!" ejaculated Dorrie, as he held out his palm to Nelson Lee. "Those veins are gold, sure enough!"

Lee nodded.

"Where did you get this from, Webb?" he asked.

"There's a wall of it," said Hookey Webb dreamily. "Reachin' up as far as you can see—an' stretchin' in both directions. Tons of it, mister! An' it ain't all white quartz like that. There's gold—solid!"

"And you've kept this for forty years?"

"May I never breathe agin if that's a lie!" said Hookey impressively. "For forty years I've kep' that quartz—the only proof o' that big strike o' mine, back in 'eighty-nine. I've shown it to others, but they wouldn't believe me. Said I was tryin' to pull some sort o' confidence trick on 'em!"

"Well, I don't think so," said Lord Dorrimore. "I'm with you, Hookey. Partner, shake!"

Hookey made a choking sort of cry.

"Ye mean it?" he gasped. "Ye mean that ye'll take me into Arizony, an' pay for the outfit?"

"I mean it," said Dorrie quietly. "Here's my hand on it, Hookey!"

They shook, and Hookey's hand was quivering. His eyes were aglow, and his whole frame tense.

"Partner, I won't let ye down," he said, in a whisper.

NELSON LEE slapped Lord Dorrimore on the back when, later, they found themselves alone.

"Of course, old man, there'll be no gold," he said. "But you're a regular sportsman! You're not only pleasing these boys and girls, but you're giving new life to that unfortunate old man."

"Rubbish!" growled old Dorrie. "You may think I'm several kinds of an ass, but I *do* believe that Hookey's story is genuine, and that we shall find gold."

"It's madness, man!" said Lee. "Forty years ago—"

"I don't care if it was four hundred!" broke in Dorrie. "Out there, in the Arizona desert, forty years is just a minute! Hookey gave us all the details; the location is quite near the Indian reservation, and I don't suppose any prospectors have been there since the old days. Those Apaches are too infernally treacherous and dangerous. I tell you Lee, I've got faith in this thing."

Lee chuckled.

"Go ahead, then," he said dryly. "The boys have faith in it, too, and so have the girls. I'm all for it because it will be a perfectly safe undertaking, and it will provide the youngsters with a really splendid holiday."

BUT for once Nelson Lee was wrong. That trip into the heart of the desert regions of Arizona was to prove the very opposite of safe! Little did the party realise what perils it was setting out to face!

(The Boys of St. Frank's searching for gold in the heart of the desert! Doesn't that sound thrilling, chums? Make sure you don't miss reading the next yarn in this wonderful new holiday-adventure series. It's entitled: "The Arizona Gold Quest!" Order your next week's copy of the Old Paper NOW!)

Gossip ABOUT St. FRANK'S



Things Heard and Seen By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

HANDFORTH was very excited when I saw him the other day. He was a bit mysterious, too, and told me to keep my eyes on the Palladium, in Bannington. I asked him if he thought it was liable to get lost if it wasn't watched; but he scorned my feeble attempt at humour, and told me to look out for the great new film—and a talkie film at that—in which he himself would be appearing. I couldn't help chuckling. Of course, I knew all about that little affair in the Isle of Wight, when a crowd of the juniors had appeared in a crowd scene for a new talking film. I ought to know, considering that I've written all about it! I told Handy gently that he mustn't expect to see that film in Bannington for quite a few months. I believe he thought I was mad. He had been expecting it immediately. The silly chump didn't know that there's a pretty big gap between the making of a film and its public exhibition. It'll be getting on for Christmas-time, I expect, before the Bannington public has the doubtful pleasure of seeing the St. Frank's juniors on the film. According to all I hear, the Bannington public sees more than enough of the juniors in the flesh!

SEVERAL readers have asked me why I don't relate more adventures of Nicodemus Trotwood and his twin brother, Cornelius. They grumble because the twins are hardly ever heard of. Surely, they say, there must be many misunderstandings caused by the uncanny likeness between the two. Well, yes, that's true. But if I featured all these incidents, instead of ignoring them, you would very soon get fed up with the Trotwood twins. Perhaps I've

been a little too careful, though, and when the Trotwood twins get mixed up in an exceptionally diverting incident I'll record it in one of the stories.

THERE'S been a regular nightmare up at the office just lately, the Editor tells me. Of course, I needn't say that E. O. H. is responsible. He's been pestering the Editor for some letters

from you readers, so that he can reply to them in that new feature of his, which has been in the Old Paper for some weeks now. He had been pestering me first, and I had point-blank refused to surrender any of your letters into his careless hands. But the thing became so acute that the Editor and I had a confab, and Handforth had his way—as usual. I've never known such a chap for getting his own way. And the rummy thing is, although you get so wild with him, you still like him. Any, how, he's been dealing with some of your letters recently, and if he's made a mess of the job—which we can take for granted he has—I know you'll take it in the

OUR READERS' PORTRAIT GALLERY



Freda Finney

right spirit. You can be quite certain that all your letters—those addressed to the Editor and myself—will get back into our hands in due course. Before Handy was entrusted with a single letter, he gave us his solemn word that he would return them to us after he had finished with them. Church and McClure are keeping their eye on him, too, so it's all right. I had a letter from Church the other day, and he tells me that he found Handy using somebody's letter as a jam cover, to keep the wasps out of the pot. The letter was rescued, but I'm afraid it's a bit jammy. Handy is so absent-minded! But I've never

known him to break his word, so I'm really quite comfortable about the safety of all the letters. And by now, of course, he'll have his own correspondents to deal with.

* * *

THE charming young lady whom you see here this week is Miss Freda Finney, of East Fremantle, Western Australia. She doesn't say so in so many words, but I believe she's really English, as she tells me she'd like to surprise her father and mother in England—who are both readers of the Old Paper—with the sight of their beloved daughter's face on this page. Jerry Dodd was rather dished when I showed him the photograph. He stuck his chest out proudly, and remarked that the Australian girls are the prettiest in the world. I didn't actually deny it, but I pointed out that Miss Finney is, as far as I know, a native of the homeland. If I'm wrong, it's up to Miss Finney to tell me so—and then Jerry will have a real laugh over me. But for the present I'll continue to think that England's loss is Australia's gain.

* * *

MY memory isn't cast-iron, but I can't recollect ever having said that Nipper is the champion boxer of the Junior School. H. C. Woodard of Cheshunt, tells me that I did say this. Personally, I think I said that Nipper is the champion boxer of the Remove—which is quite true. Ernest Lawrence is unquestionably the best Junior boxer at St. Frank's, but he's in the Fourth. By the way, about this H. C. Woodard merchant. How am I to know whether this correspondent is a boy or a girl, or a man or a woman? I'm not a magician, and I can't fill in the "H. C." from my own imagination. Sometimes the handwriting gives me a clue, but even this cannot be relied upon, and certainly I mustn't jump to conclusions. It would help a lot if all you readers gave me your full names. If you like to add an indication of your ages, all the better.

* * *

THERE'S likely to be a bit of trouble over a footpath near the River Stowe, just before you get to Bellton. When I was down at St. Frank's the other day I found that this footpath had been blocked up. Some sort of quarrel has arisen between the owner of the land and the local council. The council people say that the footpath is a public one, and the landowner maintains that it isn't. So it looks like trouble. The St. Frank's chaps are quite keen about it, and, of course, they're using the footpath just the same as ever. The fact that it's blocked up doesn't make any difference to them. As Crowe, of the Fourth, remarked to me, it only takes them about five minutes to remove the obstructions, and it's very interesting to see how long it is before the barrier is built up again. This squabble has nothing to do with St. Frank's, but the chaps have taken sides with the council. I haven't met

the gentleman who owns the land, and at the moment I don't quite know who he is. But there's bound to be an awful bother about this later on—especially when Handforth gets back to the old school.

* * *

JOHAN T. POTTER, of Weston-super-Mare, rather thinks that Gore-Pearce should have been expelled long ago—particularly for his part in trying to get Nipper expelled, some time back. Well, of course, I can do nothing but agree with this reader. It's always been a mystery to me why Gore-Pearce still remains at St. Frank's after that affair. It isn't as though he has a redeeming quality. As far as I have been able to discover, Claude is a rotter through and through. I'd very much like to see the last of him. And, following John T. Potter's letter, I made a point of having a word with the Head. I asked him why the authorities allow Gore-Pearce to remain. Dr. Nicholls reminded me that Gore-Pearce had been so conscience-stricken by his dirty work that he had become positively ill; he had shown full evidence of regretting his villainy. If he had been expelled, he would have gone completely to the bad. But by giving him another chance, there was always the hope that he would redeem himself. Well, I think the Head has got a wrong idea about this. I don't see any hope of making a decent chap out of Claude, and by letting him remain at St. Frank's Dr. Nicholls is taking a big chance. But Dr. Nicholls is a man of unusual ideas, and there is no question about his kindness of heart. I am quite sure that any other headmaster would have pitched Gore-Pearce out long ago.

* * *

I WAS tremendously surprised to run across Lord Dorrimore this week. I thought he was out in Patagonia, or Chili, or some such outlandish spot. He's a regular bouncer for blowing in unexpectedly. Curiously enough, I was in the Editor's office at the time, having a jaw with the Ed. about that Sectional Map. Well, perhaps I'm putting it rather mildly when I say that I was having a jaw with him. To tell you the truth, he was going for me bald-headed. And the worst of it was, I couldn't say much, because I know I'm frightfully to blame about it. I was just telling him that I *am* on the last lap of that map, and he was looking at me with a doubtful eye, when in blew Dorrie. I've never been so pleased to see anybody. Dorrie saved my life, because the Editor was so pleased to see him that he promptly forgot about the map, and the whole subject was shelved. Of course, we all went out to lunch, and Dorrie tells me that he's as keen as mustard on motor-boat racing just now, and he wants to take a crowd of the St. Frank's fellows on a summer holiday trip somewhere. By the time these lines appear it is quite likely that he'll have fixed up something. Old Dorrie is a pretty fast worker.

EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

Start Reading This Week's Rousing Instalment Now, Chums!

RIVALS of the RAMPANT!



By STANTON HOPE

The Undersea Mystery!

ROLLING over on to his back, Jack vigorously slashed the water into foam, and Ginger joined battle.

"Whooh! Steady on, J-Jack! Faints!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Jack in sheer high spirits. "Bet you can't do this!"

And he proceeded to turn a back somersault twice.

"Jolly good!" applauded Ginger. "Now clap your lamps on me."

Lying on his back, he propelled himself along feet-first until his toe touched against a passing jellyfish, which set him into vigorous motion in the opposite direction.

"Stung?" queried Jack.

"N-no," spluttered Ginger; "but the feel o' that sort of thing makes me go all cold and goosey. Race you to the shore!"

The chums had been some minutes in the water, and they beat their way shoreward, using a fast crawl.

They had got farther out than they had intended, and the outgoing tide made swimming hard work. Jack looked up to see what distance more he had to go, and suddenly noticed a youth garbed in navy

blue moving hurriedly among the cliffs. So quickly did the sailor disappear that Jack wondered if he had been "seeing things" in the deepening dusk of evening.

The matter might have occurred to him as strange, but just then a startled yelp from Ginger ahead took it from his mind.

"Great whelks! What's biting you, Ginger?" he panted, swimming quickly to the side of his chum. Ginger trod water and fumbled at his neck.

"It's—it's gone—the locket!" he blurted out. "I bumped into some driftin' seaweed, Jack, and then I noticed that I hadn't got it on me."

"You've got a scratch on the neck,

where a stalk of the weed caught you," said Jack. "It must have caught the tape as well, and snapped it."

Ginger groaned.

"Just my b-beastly luck!" he mumbled. "I could get another locket better'n that one in Woolworth's, but I wouldn't have lost them portraits for anything in the world. They're the only ones I had, raggie, of dad and ma."

"You're sure it hasn't caught up in the weed?" queried Jack.

A submerged village—and a haunted one at that! When Jack and his "raggie" Ginger Jones, first hear this "yarn" they are inclined to scoff, but when they themselves see and hear curious things—well, they begin to think that there must be something in the story, after all!

"Certain. The locket was pretty heavy, old chum, and it's gone down to the bottom of the sea."

"It mayn't be so deep here," suggested Jack, to comfort Ginger in his distress. "Let's dive down and have a look for it."

In his heart he believed it would be about as hopeless as looking for a penny dropped among the Paggleshale sand cliffs, but he set the example by taking a few deep breaths, kicking up his heels, and swimming rapidly below the surface.

He estimated that the water would be about two or three fathoms, for it was getting on toward low tide. He was surprised, therefore, when not more than about eight feet below the surface he struck bottom. It was gloomy here below and, although he swam with eyes wide open, he could not see anything clearly, but groped about with his hands on a rough, hard surface.

Then Jack suddenly lost touch, and decided that what he had struck upon was merely a rocky shelf.

Unable to stay down any longer, he kicked his way to the surface and found Ginger already up and blowing like a grampus.

"Wh-what luck, raggie?" gurgled Ginger. "Hanged if I could find the seabed at all, let alone the locket."

Jack admitted his own lack of success, but mentioned the ledge upon which he had struck.

"It might have been the roof o' one of the old Paggleshale houses," commented Ginger, his teeth chattering. "But let's get back to the beach, Jack: I—I'm afraid the locket's gone for good."

Jack insisted, however, on another attempt, and told his pal to wait "half a minute." What he had struck below the surface was not the ordinary roof of the sloping variety. Nor was it a ledge of

rock, because he remembered hearing that there were no rocks along this part of the coast. It was a small building of some sort covered by the sea, and curiosity beside anxiety to find Ginger's prized belonging, urged him on to another attempt at salvage.

After gulping a few more deep breaths of the evening air into his lungs, Jack kicked up his heels and once more beat his way downward. This time, probably owing to having drifted slightly on the tide which was becoming slack, he missed the building altogether and estimated himself to be in about two and a half fathoms—fifteen feet—of water.

And then, with eyes almost staring out of his head, he saw a form—ghostly, grey and bent—ambling along on the sea-bed ahead of him in the liquid gloom.

So great was the shock that Jack involuntarily drew a breath and, half-choked by salt water, clawed his way upward.

Little Ginger Jones, pale and cold-looking, was treading water a couple of oars' lengths away and gave a startled cry at the sight of his chum.

"J-jumpin' jellyfishes!" he ejaculated. "Got a touch of cramp?"

Jack spluttered the water out of his system and shook his head, to clear his salt-reddened eyes.

His pal took the shake of his head to indicate a negative reply to his question.

"Well, what's up, raggie?" he gasped, coming alongside. "You look as though you'd seen a spook!"

"Tar me, I believe I have," responded Jack, finding his tongue. "Maybe that old salt's yarns are playing on my imagination, but twice since we've been out here, I've seen things."

"What the thump d'you mean?"

"A few minutes back," Jack replied, "I saw what looked to me like a sailor by

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. Thanks to Jack and Ginger, Rampant win the regatta. Afterwards the two boys obtain permission to walk back along the coast to Porthaven. They set out, unsuspecting of the fact that Busky is following them. They come to a particularly bleak part of the coast, where once stood the village of Paggleshale, but which is now in ruins, having been "swallowed up" by the encroaching sea. A fisherman tells the two boys that the place is haunted, but they only laugh at him. They decide to go for a swim, and use a cave as a dressing-room. While they are swimming, Busky, unknown to them, enters the cave.

(Now read on.)

those sand cliffs, and the chap seemed to vanish into thin air. Down below I saw another blessed spook of sorts—a shapeless-looking brute, with a head too big for his—or its—body.”

Ginger looked concerned.

“Here, the cold’s numbing your giddy figurehead, old top,” he said. “Come on back to the beach with me afore you start spotting sea-serpents!”

“It’s got me licked!” muttered Jack, in perplexity. “I’ve heard before to-day of swimming and diving giving a chap cramp, but I’ve never heard of ’em giving him bats in the belfry! Before I go back to the beach I’m going to take another quiz and see whether I was awake or dreaming. I’m going down again.”



Swimming through the water, Jack suddenly saw something which made him stare in surprise. Walking along the bed of the sea was a curious shape—a ghostly, grey form with a head which seemed too big for its body!

“Don’t be a howlin’ ass!” exploded Ginger in alarm; but before he could intervene, Jack kicked his way below for the third time.

Down, down he went, and in fresh amazement saw that the farther down he got, the paler green became the water. A light was shining from a circular port in a squat building among the Paggleshale ruins under the sea!

Not a sign was there of the moving figure he had seen before, but this was as great a mystery. How the light was produced he knew not, but it was clearly diffused from the building, and it afforded a measure of illumination to the sand, which had silted up near it.

Swimming at this depth under the sea was trying enough to the lungs in the ordinary way, but this fresh wonder made Jack the more breathless. There were two and a half fathoms of water over his head, and, if he left it too long, he might not be able to reach the surface.

He was about to take-off from the bottom when in the illumination of that mysterious undersea light he saw a dark object rather larger than a penny on the sand, and frantically clawed at it. Then in desperation he kicked himself upward and, with almost bursting lungs, cut through the surface and drank greedily of the evening air!

"Jack!" hooted Ginger, beating his way toward him. "You've got it!"

His chum let him take the locket and tape from his almost nerveless fingers, and spluttered a remonstrance when Ginger, in his glee, clumped him on the back.

Almost too exhausted to speak, Jack, by a gesture, indicated the beach and, turning on his back, swam in leisurely fashion to the shore, his raggie close by his side.

Both youngsters were tired and chilled to the bone from their long immersion in the sea, following the hard water sports of the afternoon. Moreover, Jack himself was more bewildered than he had ever been in his life.

They rested for a minute or two, and Ginger stuttered his heartfelt thanks for the return of the locket, with the precious portraits in it. Next they performed some of the exercises taught them at the naval schools to restore their circulation. Finally, Jack told his astounded chum of the mysterious light from the old building under the sea which once, no doubt, had been part of the lost village of Paggleshale.

"Pink me, it's a fair knock-out!" exclaimed Ginger. "What are we going to do?"

"Get dressed!" snapped Jack. "I shall be able to think better when I've got into dry togs. Besides, the sun's getting low and we promised P.-o. Teak faithfully that we'd show up at the schools by nine-thirty."

"True," said Ginger. "Whatever happens, matey, we mustn't let him down."

In the gathering dusk, they made their way among the sand and sea-smoothed bricks of the shore and among the ruins of cottages at the foot of the crumbling cliffs.

"Here you are, Jack," piped Ginger. "Here's the place!"

One after the other, they tumbled into the sandy depression bordered by the walls of a one-time cellar. And, simultaneously, they uttered gasps of dismay, for the carpet of dried seaweed was as they had left it, but their naval uniforms and other clothes had gone!

Shadows of the Dusk!

"GREAT guns!"

"Sufferin' shrimps!"

The two boys uttered cries of amazement as, with staring eyes, they regarded the carpet of dried seaweed where they had stowed their blue uniforms and under-clothes.

"Well, tar me!" added Ginger. "It's a fact this giddy coast is haunted! That old fisherman who spun us the yarn about the spooks he had seen among the sand cliffs, was just about right!"

"It's a fact our togs have vanished," muttered Jack grimly, "but whether a spook took 'em or not is another matter."

Then suddenly Ginger forced a laugh.

"What a couple of prize lubbers we are!" he cried. "There's no mystery about this, at any rate, raggie; we've simply come to the wrong cellar."

"Oh, rot!" retorted Jack. "We put this seaweed here ourselves."

This took Ginger aback once more, but when he spoke there was still a faint tone of hope in his voice.

"The stuff we gathered wasn't the only seaweed around these parts," he said. "Let's take a squint into some of the other hollows about here."

The sand hillocks formed at the foot of the cliffs, which had been crumbling away by the action of the sea, were full of queer caves and the remains of the ancient village. There were even depressions surrounded by walls, which denoted other cellars of former days, but although Jack and Ginger looked into several of them, there was no sign of their missing uniforms. Dispirited, they returned to the one which both now knew definitely to be that in which they had disrobed before their adventurous swim.

"This is the place, old son," said Jack dismally; "and how the thump we're now going to get back to the Rampant by half-past nine has got me beaten!"

"I wouldn't have had this happen for worlds!" moaned Ginger. "P.-o. Teak let us hoof it back from Sandeliff instead of going with the other chaps in the chary-banc, and now he'll think we've let him down. What the dickens is to be done?"

"Ask me another!" said Jack. "The only thing I can think of is to put on full steam along the coast and try and borrow some togs at a fisherman's cottage, 'cause it's a cert we can't steer a course through the Porthaven streets in wet swimming costumes!"

This, they thought, was the limit in the surprises of that eventful evening—although another and bigger one was in store for them before they were destined to set foot in Porthaven again!

There had been that mysterious moving figure which Jack had dimly seen under the sea when he had been diving three fathoms down for Ginger's lost locket. Then there had been the equally mysterious light shining from a port in one of the buildings under the water.

Yet the least startling thing was the one that Jack now remembered the clearest.

During the brief swimming race, which he and Ginger had had, he had glimpsed a figure in blue slipping away among the cliffs. So hurriedly had the form vanished from his view that he had afterwards thought it must have been a figment of his own imagination. The discovery that the uniforms were missing, made him remember this small incident with sharp significance.

"Belay a minute, Ginger," he said. "Togs can't up-anchor and get under way by themselves."

"Someone must ha' taken them!" snorted Ginger.

A flicker of a smile curled Jack's lips, despite the chill of the evening air on his wet body.

"At times you're bright enough to gain your promotion, raggie!" he murmured. "That's exactly what I do mean, as a matter of fact. I'm certain now I spotted someone dodging around near the cliffs, and it must have been that chap who bagged our duds."

"May his p-pet rabbits m-moult!" stut-tered Ginger through his chattering teeth. "Most likely it was some b-beastly tramp who took the uniforms and intends to sell 'em for a night's doss."

"He looked more like a sailor from the glimpse I got of him," returned Jack. "Surely it can't have been one of our own crew from the schools who was playing a jape on us?"

Ginger tried to whistle.

"There's only one lubber who'd ever play a tom-fool jape like that," he said, "and that's the chap who's always up against you—Busky Smith, I mean."

"I had him in mind," Jack responded; "but then Busky was going back to Port-haven with the rest of the chaps. Still, if the togs were hidden merely as a jape, there's a chance for us to find them. So far as I can judge, that chap I saw was making for up there."

He pointed with a finger farther up the cliffs, and Ginger started to move in that direction.

"Half a mo'!" exclaimed Jack.

Stooping down, he carefully looked among the sand in the uncertain light of dusk and speedily found what he sought.

"Pipe these, Ginger!" he cried. "Here are distinctly the marks of someone's 'pusser's crabs'!"

Little Ginger Jones also examined the sand and saw the distinct prints of boots, suggestive of the Navy regulation variety,

(Continued on next page.)



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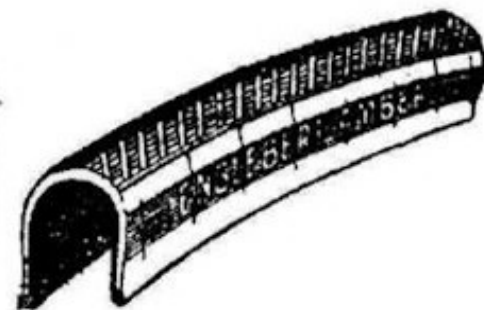
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RIVALS OF THE RAMPANT

(Continued from previous page.)

or "pusser's crabs," as they are sometimes called by the lower deck ratings.

"Here's a print as plain as your face, Ginger," said Jack, after a pause. "It was made by a right boot, and you can spot the mark of the steel moon under the heel."

"Aye," remarked Ginger, "and it looks to me like a size eight."

"And here's a mark made by the left boot," resumed Jack, pointing out another footprint; "but the heel's different, and it looks as though the steel bit is broken or missing."

"It strikes me," grinned Ginger, "that in joining the Navy and followin' in the wake of Nelson, you've missed your mark, matey! You ought to be setting up in opposition to Nelson Lee!"

"You don't need to be a giddy detective to size up the meaning of these footmarks," Jack retorted. "The chap who snaffled our togs was wearing 'pusser's crabs,' size eight, and with the steel moon under his left heel missing."

"Most likely that rotter, Busky, then," Ginger suggested.

Jack flapped his arms vigorously to warm his chilled body.

"We'll bear him in mind," he said grimly. "There are plenty of bigger chaps than Busky in the Rampant, but he's the only fellow among the Preliminaries who takes size eights. We'll take a squint at his boots when we get back and note if the left has a dud heel."

More convinced that a caddish jape had been played on them, the two pals began searching among the sand cliffs. As they reasoned it, the japer could hardly have taken their uniforms far and certainly not back to Porthaven with him. The deduction was, therefore, that he had merely shifted them to some other hiding-place, but there were dozens of such spots where the gear might have been concealed—and twilight was fast giving way to darkness.

Clambering around among the sand cliffs and the ruins of old Paggleshale warmed them again, but at the end of fifteen minutes they had failed to locate their clothes.

"What price trying that house overhanging the cliff up there?" queried Ginger suddenly. "That's the very sort o' place where the japer might have left our duds."

"If he's left 'em," groaned Ginger.

Both were tired, and their feet were sore from contact with the rough edges of the numerous old bricks scattered among the

sand. All about them were caves formed by the action of the wind and sea, and the sand-covered foundations of destroyed dwellings. They moved gingerly among them, aware that a thorough examination of the "haunted coast" would take them all night.

Suddenly they stopped short, and Jack gripped his pal's wrist. The coast in their immediate vicinity appeared deserted save for themselves; yet there came to them a rumbling sound in crescendo, like that of deep voices in conversation.

"Togs or no togs I'm going back to Porthaven!" gurgled Ginger. "I'd sooner take another ride on a giddy old target-ship under shell-fire than hang around a place peopled with beastly spooks!"

Then from a few yards ahead there was the distinct rattle of a chain. Something began to take form in the gathering darkness—a head rose, as it were, from out the earth, and a body and arms attached to it next came into view!

The jaws of the two Navy boys sagged like trap-doors, and then, emitting a choking gasp, Ginger turned abruptly and flung himself into a depression of sand to the left. Jack hesitated but a fraction of a second more, and leaped after his chum, stumbling headlong in his haste.

Half-dazed by the fall, Jack slowly raised himself on hands and knees and felt under his fingers something different in texture from the sand. Then, in the dim light, he saw on what he had fallen.

"Ginger," he whispered, "our togs!"

Stumbling into that partly buried cellar, which they had not visited before, they had alighted upon their missing uniforms and under-clothes!

Even this discovery, however, failed to rouse the red-haired Cockney lad from the awe produced in him by the shadowy figure which had lifted out of the earth.

"Aye, that whiskery old fisherman was right, Jack," he muttered, without even glancing toward the uniforms. "And to think we laughed at him when he said about the spooks coming up out of the ground and going back to the locker of Davy Jones!"

"Clew up your jaw tackle, matey," Jack whispered. "Before I'll believe that's a spook, I want to see him go walking down into the sea, with my own eyes."

Silently, he crossed the small depression and peered up above the rampart of sand formed by the action of wind and waves between the old cellar and where the "spook" had appeared. And Ginger, more superstitious than Jack, boldly raised himself to have another look, even

though he crossed his fingers as he rose.

The shadowy figure was standing there in the gloom, his back toward the chums. Then, one after another, three more forms rose up among the sand hillocks, and there came the sound of a clanking chain and a dull thud.

"Groogh!" gasped Ginger.

"Clew up, I say!" muttered Jack harshly. "D'you want 'em to hear us?"

"C-can spooks hear?" Ginger stammered.

"Spooks my eye!" grunted Jack. "Those lubbers are solid flesh and bone, and they've got some game on. In my belief, raggie, it's not only the fish around this coast that's fishy!"

A voice spoke from the gloom.

"Kick the sand over it; make it good and deep, as we shan't be coming back till Thursday."

From their hiding-place Jack and Ginger saw the forms bend and move about, and imagined rather than saw that they were kicking and scraping the sand about. Then, after about five minutes, during which nothing else was said, the quartette filed away.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" panted Ginger. "They're not spooks, so what the thump are they? Smugglers, d'you think?"

"My hat, they may be!" exclaimed Jack. "Let's trail 'em!"

"What, in wet swimming costumes?" shivered Ginger. "No jolly fear! I'm getting my duds first! Besides, supposing they were going to Porthaven? A couple of prize chumps we'd look shadowing 'em like this!"

Obviously the most sensible thing to do was get into their clothes. But changing back into uniforms in the darkness was by no means the easy task of discarding them, and getting into bathing costumes earlier in the evening.

In the first place, their flannel vests, socks and other things were full of sand, and their bodies were not yet dry, despite their wanderings since they had left the water. Ginger split a perfectly good pair of Service socks in his haste, and Jack took the best part of ten minutes before he was in Navy rig and ready to move off.

They had hoped to find footprints showing the way taken by the men they had seen, but were baffled by the darkness, and Ginger heartily berated the old salt who had marched off with their only box of matches.

Abandoning the task of trying to get on the trail of that mysterious quartette, they returned to about that spot where they had seen them emerge from the ground. Here they scraped about in the

thick sand for some time, but without any result.

Finally they decided that nothing more could be gained by hanging around there that night, and that they would have a search by daylight when next they were at liberty. What they had seen, though, had made them equally convinced that the strange house with the light under the sea was connected with the four men.

What was the meaning of it all? Were there actually smugglers operating along the "haunted" coast? Was that house covered by the sea a secret lair used in connection with their nefarious exploits?

These were questions that Jack and Ginger keenly discussed as they tramped along in the direction of Porthaven, and to which they were determined to find an answer. What they couldn't decide was whether to inform the authorities at H.M.S. Rampant of what they had seen, and so decided to leave this over until the morning before making up their minds.

At last, breathless and perspiring, they reached the great gates of the naval schools in Porthaven, and were promptly challenged by one of the Marine sentries. The petty-officer on duty came out of the guard-room, and while Jack and Ginger stood to attention, regarded them sternly.

"Half-past nine was your time for reporting back, my lads!" he snapped; after which laconic remark he entered their names in a book, bracketed them together, and added the words, "Adrift over leave one hour."

(That will mean trouble for Jack and Ginger—and it's all through Busky Smith. Next week, however, Jack gets a bit of his own back; so much so, in fact, that Busky wishes he'd never even thought of playing that trick on the two chums. Read all about it in next Wednesday's exciting instalment.)

IF YOU'RE AT THE SEASIDE—

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HOW TO JOIN THE LEAGUE

ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE APPLICATION FORM No. 108.

SECTION

A

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I desire to become enrolled as a Member of THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE, and to qualify for all such benefits and privileges as are offered to Members of the League. I hereby declare that I have introduced "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY" and THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE to one new reader, whose signature to certify this appears on second form attached hereto. Will you, therefore, kindly forward me Certificate of Enrolment with the Membership Number assigned to me, and Membership Badge.

SECTION

B

MEMBER'S APPLICATION FOR MEDAL AWARDS.

I, Member No..... (give Membership No.), hereby declare that I have introduced one more new reader, whose signature to certify this appears on second form attached hereto. This makes me (state number of introductions up to date) introductions to my credit.

SECTION

C

NEW READER'S DECLARATION.

I hereby declare that I have been introduced by (give name of introducer) to this issue of "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY."

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(ADDRESS).....

INSTRUCTIONS.

INSTRUCTIONS.—Reader Applying for Membership. Cut out TWO complete Application Forms from Two copies of this week's issue of THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY. On one of the forms leave in Section A, crossing out Sections B and C. Then write clearly your full name and address at bottom of form. The second form is for your new reader, who fills in Section C, crosses out Sections A and B, and writes his name and address at bottom of form. Both forms are then pinned together, and sent to the Chief Officer, The St. Frank's League, c/o THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4.

Member Applying for Bronze Medal: It will be necessary for you to obtain six new readers for this award. For each new reader TWO complete forms, bearing the same number, are needed. On one of the forms fill in Section B, crossing out Sections A and C, and write your name and address at bottom of form. The other form is for your new reader, who fills in Section C, crosses out Sections A and B, and writes his

name and address at the bottom of the form. Now pin both forms together and send them to the Chief Officer, as above. One new reader will then be registered against your name, and when six new readers have been registered, you will be sent the St. Frank's League bronze medal. There is nothing to prevent you from sending in forms for two or more new readers at once, providing that each pair of forms bears the same date and number.

Bronze medallists wishing to qualify for the silver medals can apply in the same way as for the bronze medal, filling in Section B. Every introduction they make will be credited to them, so that when they have secured the requisite number of readers they can exchange their bronze medal for a silver one.

These Application Forms can be posted for ½d., providing the envelope is not sealed and no letter is enclosed.

A FEW OF THE ADVANTAGES OF JOINING THE LEAGUE.

You can write to fellow members living at home or in the most distant outposts of the Empire.

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If you want to form a sports or social club, you can do so amongst local members of the League.

You are offered free hints on holidays, whether walking, biking, or camping.

You can qualify for the various awards by promoting the growth of the League.

If you want help or information on any subject, you will find the Chief Officer ever ready to assist you.

NOTICE.

The St. Frank's League has now attained such proportions that we are compelled to discontinue the offer of gold medals in connection therewith. The silver and bronze medals will still be available, however, as heretofore, to those who qualify for them in accordance with the rules.

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.*

Some Holiday Suggestions!

HURRAH! Only a few days now to August Bank Holiday, chums! Aren't you looking forward to it? I know I am!

August Bank Holiday is undoubtedly one of the most popular national holidays in the year. It comes in the middle of the summer, and so everybody looks forward to having a really enjoyable time in the open air. Let us hope, fervently, that the Weather Clerk will be kind to us.

Many readers, I expect, will be going away to the seaside or country. Others, not so lucky, will have to be content with staying at home and just "pottering about." But perhaps these latter folk are not so unlucky after all. There are numerous ways in which you can enjoy yourself if you are not "by the sea," which include cricket, tennis, camping out, walking and cycling.

Those of you who are cricket and tennis enthusiasts will naturally spend most of the holiday playing cricket and tennis. Camping out I discussed in this chat only a few weeks ago. About walking and cycling, however, I should like to say a few words.

Personally I think that when you're going for a day's walk or cycling trip the best idea is to start with no fixed destination in mind. If you do this you can amble along just how and when you like. No hurrying to reach so-and-so place by a certain time is necessary. If you come across a particularly

delightful or interesting spot then you can stop to "investigate" it without fear of interrupting your schedule.

Another good plan is to keep off the main roads. This applies particularly to cyclists. Nothing is more annoying; nothing tends more to spoil your complete enjoyment than to have a constant stream of motor-cars whizzing by you at umpteen miles an hour, some of them missing you by mere inches and almost causing the handlebars of your bike to wobble with the rush of air as they snort past!

There are numerous bye-roads and lanes you can take. These

are sure to be less congested with traffic, and some of them lead into really gorgeous country. The surface of many of these secondary roads is just as good as that of the main roads; others are quite rideable.

(Continued on next page.)

THIS WEEK'S WINNING LETTER

To the Chief Officer.

Dear Sir,—I am writing this letter to bring to your notice the "Extraspeh" Hobby and Correspondence Club, of which I have the honour to be president.

This club is unique, I think. It is run by means of correspondence packets. These contain members' letters, and are circulated among the other members, who are thus able to receive as many as twelve letters at once.

The Hobby Club is divided into sections, each one of which is in charge of a separate secretary. Here, again, the packet method is in use. These packets contain articles, newspaper cuttings, hints, etc., relating to the hobbies of the respective members to which they are sent.

Do you know of another similar club which is run on these lines?

I may add that the subscription is only 6d. per year.

We also have the "Extraspeh" magazine, which is the official organ of both the correspondence and hobby sections of the club.

At the moment we want as many new members as possible, and I shall be pleased if you will put a notice to this effect in the Old Paper.

Wishing the St. Frank's League and the Nelson Lee Library all the best, I am, yours sincerely,

(Signed) EDDIE B. WATERFIELD,

(S.F.L. No. 6139).

(For the above letter, E. B. Waterfield, of Burton-on-Trent, has been awarded a useful pocket wallet.)

All members of the St. Frank's League are invited to send to the Chief Officer letters of interest concerning the League. The most interesting will be published week by week, and the senders will receive pocket wallets or penknives. If you don't belong to the League, join immediately by filling up the form on the opposite page.

The St. Frank's League Corner!

(Continued from previous page.)

Have any of you living in or near London thought about going for one of those rambles into Metro-land organised by the Metropolitan Railway? You travel to a certain station, walk from there via a specially selected route to another station, and from this point train home again. There is a series of these rambles—full particulars are given in a booklet which can be obtained from any Metro station—and the actual walking distance between any of the two selected stations varies from five to eleven miles and, in some cases, even more. A most delightful day's outing can be obtained in this way, and you pass through some of the most beautiful scenery in Surrey and Bucks and Middlesex.

Anyway, whatever you do, here's to wishing all my clans a really enjoyable Bank Holiday.

Cheerio mail next week!

THE CHIEF OFFICER.

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED.

Alfred Parker, 147, Malvern Road, West Kilburn, London, N.W.6, wants correspondents anywhere, especially U.S.A. and South Africa.

Cyril Victor Parley, 4, Hawthorn Terrace, Church Road, Dublin, wants correspondents aged about 16; interested in swimming, cycling, athletics and stamps.

Geo. C. Foster, 59d, Linden Gardens, Bayswater, London W.2, wants to hear from readers.

Miss Jessie Kearney (15), 105, Kent Street, Ascot Vale, W.2, Melbourne, Australia, wants to hear from girl readers.

Tom Rex, 5, Gladstone Street, Leichardt, Sydney, N.S.W., Australia, wants to hear from readers anywhere; particularly those living in London, Africa, Canada, France.

W. Noel Darnell, Eldorado, 15, Beach Street, Kogarah, N.S.W., Australia, wants to hear from stamp collectors anywhere.

E. C. Barnes, 265, Charles Street, Launceston, Tasmania, wants to hear from stamp collectors in South Africa.

B. W. Cooke, 3, Castle Villas, Leicester Road, Ashley-de-la-Zouch, offers back numbers of the N.L.L.

Edwin C. Bauer, Library Buildings, Alexandra Road, King William's Town, South Africa, wants correspondents who are keen on photography and poultry farming.

George Oakley, 14, Barton Street, West Bromwich, Staffs., wants copies of the N.L.L., old series.

Sydney Pickford, Everard House, Rhos Road, Rhos-on-Sea, Colwyn Bay, N. Wales, wants to correspond with readers interested in stamps and fretwork.

H. Ransom, Lower Ford, Stoodleigh, Tiverton, Devon, has a large collection of stamps for sale. Would like also to hear from readers interested in bell ringing.

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