

HANDFORTH FALLS IN LOVE! SEE THE FUNNIEST STORY OF ST. FRANK'S EVER WRITTEN!

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"WEMBLING"
at
WEMBLEY

READ THIS
WEEK'S AMUSING
ACCOUNT OF A DAY
AT WEMBLEY WITH THE
BOYS OF ST. FRANK'S!

There could be no doubt that Handy
was smitten by this dark, fluffy,
bobbed haired waitress.

*(From This Week's
Great Holiday
Story.)*



Handforth's fist shot across the table, and landed squarely in the centre of McClure's chest.



"WEMBLING" AT WEMBLEY!

*A Long and Laughable
Whitweek Story of the
celebrated Boys of St.
Frank's at the Wembley
Exhibition.*

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

CHAPTER I.

WHIT-MONDAY MORN.

"NOW then, lazybones! Up you get! Show a leg!"

In this disrespectful fashion Willy Handforth addressed his elder brother as he shook him vigorously by the shoulder. It was Whit-Monday morning, and the Handforths were at home, at their father's London house.

Edward Oswald Handforth opened his eyes, blinked, and regarded Willy as though he were some undesirable insect.

"Clear off!" he said sleepily. "What are you doing in my bed-room? If you don't get out of it I'll—"

"My dear ass, it's nearly eight o'clock, and you're expecting Church and McClure at half-past," interrupted Willy. "Besides, we're going to Wembley this morning, and you've arranged to meet all the chaps."

Recollection dawning, Handforth yawned.

"By George, yes!" he exclaimed. "Nearly eight? All right, I'll get up—but I won't move an inch until you get out of this bed-room. You don't think I'm going to have you standing by, making funny remarks?"

His minor sniffed.

"I've got something better to do!" he

said tartly. "I'm going to feed my monkey, and——"

"Don't you bring that monkey in here!" said Handforth darkly. "I don't forget what happened on Saturday morning, when you sat the beastly thing on my pillow! I woke up and thought I was in the Zoo!"

"That's nothing new," said Willy. "You always think you're in the Zoo when you're dressing. You must look in the glass to put your tie straight."

And with this parting shot, Willy sauntered out of the bed-room, and made his way into his own. He went to the window, looked out, and whistled from sheer over-exuberance.

It was a glorious June morning, and real summer. The sky was blue, and flecked with a few fleecy clouds, and the sun was already beating down with an intensity which indicated plenty of heat to come.

Willy whistled untunefully, and made the air hideous with his morning song. Just down below, on the lawn, Sir Edward Handforth, his respected pater, was having a glance at the morning paper. Sir Edward looked up, removed his glasses, and frowned.

"There are quite enough uncouth noises in this neighbourhood, William, without

your adding to them!" he said, frowning. "Cease that infernal din this instant!"

The whistling stopped as though a tap had been turned off.

"All right, pater," said Willy cheerfully. "It's a funny thing, though—I always thought you liked music." He turned away from the window. "Must have got out of bed the wrong side this morning," he decided. "Queer old bird, the pater."

And he commenced whistling again, even shriller than before, and proceeded to get into trouble with his mother. She, on her part, was longing for the day when holidays would be over. Both Sir Edward and Lady Handforth were generally worn and haggard by the last day of every vacation.

In the meantime, Handforth was deciding whether he should get up or not. He took a look at the sky through the window, and decided that he would. Then he closed his eyes, and concluded that the bed was jolly comfortable. And there wasn't any hurry, anyway. Church and McClure wouldn't be on the spot until half-past eight—and, at a pinch, he could easily nip downstairs in time, even if he didn't turn out until twenty-five past.

So the bed won the battle over the blue sky, which was rather lamentable. But Handforth didn't actually go to sleep again. He lay in bed, with a dreamy expression in his eyes. He seemed to have suddenly remembered something. First he turned a delicate shade of pink, then he smiled at nothing, and finally he closed his eyes and looked serenely happy.

At this moment something icily cold touched one of Handforth's feet. He gave a violent start. He was quite alone in bed—he wouldn't sleep with his minor for a fortune. Indeed, his mother insisted that they should have separate bed-rooms.

She had tried one bed-room for them earlier, but had discovered that it would be necessary to refurnish it about once a

week. So it was safer, quieter, and much less expensive to let them have a room each.

Handforth looked startled. He couldn't feel anything now. And when he stared down the bed at his feet there was no lump there—nothing at the bottom of the bed to account for that icily cold touch. It was really one of the most extraordinary things that had ever happened.

Then, as he lay there, watching, it seemed to him that there was a slight movement beneath the sheets. Yet he himself was

perfectly still. He suddenly threw the bed-clothes back with a feeling of alarm.

"Great jumping corks!" he gasped blankly.

There, calmly worming its way up from the bottom of the bed, was a snake! A real, live active-looking snake. It paused for a moment, and gazed at Handforth with its strange-looking eyes.

With one leap, and a howl like some creature from the forest, Handforth charged out of bed. He grabbed the snake by the tail, swirled it round, and slung it through the window with one movement.

"Thank goodness!" he breathed. "My hat! What a narrow escape!"

He sank down on the bed, pale and shaky, trying to collect his thoughts. Then, gradually, a hard, keen glitter entered his eyes. Possibly he was wrong, but somehow he could not help connecting the snake's presence in his bed with Willy's recent visit.

PORTRAIT GALLERY AND WHO'S WHO. Fourth Series—Sixth Form.

NOTE.—The average age of Sixth Form boys is 18.



No. 5.—Arthur Morrow.

Fenton's closest friend, and one of the most popular seniors in the school. Morrow is a genuine brick—good-natured, kindly, and a sound sportsman. He possesses a rare gift of understanding, and hasn't an enemy.

CHAPTER II.

GREAT SNAKES!



SIR EDWARD HANDFORTH nodded approvingly.

He was still reading the paper, but it was one of his habits to nod his head approvingly when he read an article that pleased him. He had

just finished the leader. It was wholly political, and it exactly expressed the views that Sir Edward himself had been advocating at meetings for the past twelve years.

"The man who wrote this article," said Sir Edward, "is a man with brains! He has sound reasoning, fine judgment, and his views are amazingly accurate. Splendid!"

He spread the paper out, and sought for further interesting topics. At any moment he was expecting the breakfast-gong to sound, and he stood on the lawn, in the shade of one of the leafy trees.

Sir Edward was quite unaware that something had recently shot out of Edward Oswald's window, had caught in the tree branches, and was slowly but surely dropping down from twig to twig. Finally, it seemed to lose its grip, and came the rest of the way with a run.

Plop!

Handforth's recent bed-fellow landed fairly and squarely in the centre of Sir Edward's newspaper. And Willy, who happened to glance out of one of the upper windows at the moment, was bereft of all further songs to see his father suddenly leap about three feet into the air, give a roar like a rhinoceros, and dash across the lawn at full speed.

Sir Edward was not easily startled out of his usual dignified calm. But when snakes drop out of his trees in the temperate climate of London, it was decidedly time to do something about it.

Griggs, the gardener, was busily annihilating some green flies on some of the flowers on the other side of the garden. He turned, startled, as Sir Edward panted up.

"Snakes!" gasped Handy's pater.

"Beg pardon, sir?" asked Griggs, staring.

"Snakes, man!" roared Sir Edward, red in the face with heat and alarm. "Confound you, Griggs! Haven't you got any sense this morning?"

"But—but I don't understand, sir——"

"What do you mean by allowing snakes to roam about this garden?" demanded Sir Edward. "Good heavens! I might have been bitten! It dropped right out of the tree! Fell into the middle of my newspaper! Upon my soul! I've never had such an experience in my life!"

Griggs was dumbfounded.

"Snakes, sir?" he repeated incredulously. "Outer them trees?"

"Yes, outer them trees—— I mean, out of those trees!" snorted Sir Edward. "What do you know about it, Griggs? I had not the slightest idea that snakes flourished——"

"Rummy—that's what it is, sir!" commented Griggs heavily.

He gazed at Sir Edward rather suspiciously. He had always thought his master was quite a temperate man. Still, when he saw snakes at eight o'clock in the morning, on a fine summer's day——

And then Griggs abruptly cocked his head to one side, scratched an inch of his chin, and nodded.

"Ah!" he said sagely. "I reckon I've got it, Sir Edward. Like as not your young Master William will know something about that there snake."

"Master William?" ejaculated Sir Edward. "Rubbish! Stuff and nonsense! Do you mean to tell me that my sons go about with snakes? You're getting more foolish every day, Griggs!"

He stalked away, mopping his brow. Now that the alarm seemed to be over, he dimly realised that he had been somewhat undignified. And he went back to the other side of the lawn, picked up his paper, and looked round cautiously. After all, it had been a mistake to leave the snake there without seeing where it went to.

"Ripping morning, pater," said Willy, strolling down the garden path with his hands in his pockets. "Congrats."

"What do you mean, young man?" asked Sir Edward, frowning.

"Why, I never knew you could sprint like that, pater," said Willy. "As for clearing hurdles, I bet you'd——"

"William, say nothing about that!" ordered Sir Edward, feeling in his pocket. "On no account let your mother know. H'm! You're going to Wembley to-day, aren't you?"

"That's the programme, dad."

"Got some money?"

"You gave me ten bob last night," said Willy, failing to add that his father had also added another pound.

"Ten shillings, eh?" said Sir Edward. "Hardly enough! I've got some loose silver here—take this, my boy."

"Thanks awfully, pater," said Willy, pocketing about twelve shillings. "It's all right—don't worry, I shan't let on about that little weight-reducing stunt of yours. Keep it up, pater—it'll do you good!"

Willy strolled off, leaving his father looking after him in a rather helpless way. Sir Edward was always rather helpless when dealing with his youngest offspring.

And Willy, getting indoors, pulled a long black thing out of his waistcoat and gazed upon it lovingly. It was nothing more nor less than the snake which had been causing all the trouble. It was rather remarkable that Sir Edward hadn't seen the bulge.

"Sebastian, old lad, I nearly lost you that time, but it was worth it!" he said confidentially. "You gave old Ted a fright, you made the pater do a few stunts, and you've earned me twelve bob! Keep on like that, my lad, and you'll make a way for yourself in life!"

CHAPTER III.

TWO VISITORS.



EIGHT-THIRTY was near at hand, and Handforth was just finishing his toilet. As a rule, he dressed, and got down in about six minutes. Seven was the outside, and his record was two and a half. But this morning, for some reason, Edward Oswald was making himself resplendent.

He out-Archied Archie Glenthorne himself. Attired in Oxford bags, he surveyed himself in the mirror. His shirt was just right. His necktie set with a beautiful twist to it. Altogether, he considered he was looking his best—which was saying a lot. He took at least five minutes to brush his hair.

And just as this was completed to his satisfaction, there came a tap at the door.

"Come in, fathead!" he sang out, without turning.

The door opened, and a parlourmaid entered.

"If you please, Master Edward—" she began.

"Oh, it's you, Ellen!" growled Handforth, looking round. "If you're going to tell me I'm late for breakfast, I'll jolly well tell you off!"

"The gong hasn't sounded yet, Master Edward—"

"Then what do you want to come bothering now for?" asked Handforth. "By the way, Ellen, how do I look? Not bad, eh?" he went on, turning himself round for her inspection. "I've been rather particular this morning, you know," he added carelessly. "We're going to put in the day at Wembley."

The maidservant smiled, and nodded approvingly.

"You're looking wonderful, Master Edward," she said, with perfect gravity. "I do hope the weather keeps fine for you. I'd love to go to Wembley again. I went last year."

"That's nothing," said Handforth. "I went three times last week! Jolly fine place, Wembley. You never get tired of the Exhibition—particularly the restaurants."

"Yes, sir," said Ellen. "But I just come up to tell you that two young gentlemen have called—"

"Oh, good!" said Handforth. "Old Church and McClure. I'll tell you what, Ellen, shove 'em in the dining-room, and tell 'em to wait. Tell 'em I'll only be two ticks."

"Very good, Master Edward!" agreed the maid.

She went off, and five minutes later Handforth himself strolled sedately down the stairs, crossed the hall, and made for the dining-room. He rather prided himself that he would show Church and McClure up

pretty strongly. He never did think much of the way they dressed.

He entered the dining-room, took two steps forward, and halted.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" he ejaculated, staring.

Seated on the corner of the table was Chubby Heath, of the St. Frank's Third Form. And investigating a dish on the sideboard was Juicy Lemon, his boon companion. Juicy had just selected a banana, and he proceeded to peel it leisurely.

"Hallo, Handy!" he said, with a nod. "Ripping morning. How's things? Willy all serene?"

Handforth simply stared. He had expected to find Church and McClure, his own chums of the Fourth Form. And it was rather a shock to him to discover these fags in possession. Chubby Heath was eating an orange, and he was amusing himself by placing the pips between finger and thumb, and projecting them with hurtling force at the oil paintings.

"Bullseye that time!" he announced. "Got him fairly on the nose. What-ho, Handy! Got over that affair yet? Feeling all right after being nearly killed in that explosion at St. Frank's?"

Handforth found his voice. He really seemed to find about three voices all rolled into one, and when he spoke the windows rattled.

"What are you doing here?" he bellowed. "Never mind about any explosion! What are you doing here, you young asses?"

"We're waiting for Willy," replied Chubby Heath. "But what's the idea of trying to burst your vocal chords? You've seen us before, ain't you? We're always going about with Willy at St. Frank's—"

"That's not the point!" roared Handforth. "You've got no right in this house at all! I was expecting Church and McClure. I come here, and find you two idiots burgling our food!"

"Oh, cheese it!" said Juicy, eyeing a pineapple with some doubt. "What's it put on the sideboard for? Visitors, of course! I say, Chubby, what about halves?"

But the pineapple was saved from an untimely fate by the appearance of Sir Edward. He had really come in to find out what all the noise was about. Then he saw the two fags.

"Oh—ah—yes!" he said gruffly. "Friends of yours—eh, Edward? I understood they were coming. But not quite so much noise, if you don't mind. Good-morning, boys—"

"Good-morning, sir!" chimed in Chubby and Juicy, making strenuous efforts to hide all traces of fruit—which was rather difficult, considering that orange pips were all over the floor, orange peel on the table, and a banana skin sticking out of Juicy's pocket.

"Friends of mine?" repeated Handforth, with a sniff. "These? I wouldn't touch 'em with a bargepole! They're Willy's

young pals! How on earth they got here is a mystery to me!"

But it seemed that Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon were quite welcome, for Sir Edward smiled upon them, shook hands, and then took himself off. Edward Oswald felt that the house was becoming a positive home for fags.

CHAPTER IV.

OFF TO WEMBLEY.



BREAKFAST was over, and it was practically nine o'clock before Church and McClure, of the Fourth, put in an appearance. They rang the bell, and marched into

the hall as bold as brass—just as the clock was striking the hour. They found Edward Oswald waiting for them with a grim, severe expression.

"Oh, so you've come?" asked Handforth, glaring.

"Didn't you ask us to come?" said McClure, in surprise. "What's the idea of this refrigerating reception? Aren't you pleased to see us arrive on the tick?"

"The tick?" roared Handforth. "You're half an hour late!"

"Rats! You asked us to be here at nine!" said Church.

"Nine! Nothing of the sort!" said Handforth, with a start. "Oh, well, it doesn't matter! You've missed breakfast, that's all. It serves you right—you'll have to go hungry until we get to Wembley."

"We had breakfast before we started," explained Church. "And we shan't need anything at Wembley until lunch-time. It's no good going to a place like that to eat. We want to see the sights."

Handforth said no more about his chums being late. Now that he was reminded of it, he remembered that nine o'clock had been the fixed hour. So, upon the whole, he let them off.

"Come on—we'll start straight away!" he announced. "We're going to meet Pitt and Grey, and lots of the other chaps in the Exhibition, so we don't want to waste any time."

"Isn't your minor coming?" asked McClure.

Handforth looked distressed.

"Don't talk to me about my minor!" he growled. "He put that rotten snake of his in my bed this morning, and I haven't been able to biff him for it yet. I believe he's going to Wembley, but if he interferes with us, it'll only take me two minutes to chuck him into the lake!"

"How about your sister?"

"Ena?" said Handforth. "Oh, she's not going—at least, I don't know whether she is or not," he added frankly. "I haven't seen her this morning—lazy young bounder!

I believe she's going to meet some of her pals—Irene and the rest. But we needn't bother about those giggling flappers," he added carelessly. "Let's be off."

They started, and Church and McClure were feeling slightly dazed. To hear Irene referred to as a "giggling flapper" by Handforth was something unusual. If they had used those words last term at St. Frank's, Handforth would have turned Study D into a bear garden.

They were frankly nonplussed, but said nothing. It was far wiser. And they proceeded on their way to Wembley. Handforth wanted to take a taxi all the way, but Church and McClure refused to submit to this lavish display of wealth.

"It's sheer extravagance," said Church firmly.

"I'm paying, fathead!" roared Handforth.

"That doesn't matter—we're not going to let you chuck good money away," retorted Church. "The best way is to go to Marylebone Station, and then get an electric train. It takes us straight into the centre of the giddy Exhibition. No need to walk miles from the entrances."

"My hat! I hadn't thought of that!" said Handforth. "That'll come in useful another time."

"Another time?" repeated McClure. "Why, you've been to the Exhibition goodness knows how many times this year! And the place is only just opened! You went about four times last week!"

"It's a marvellous exhibition," said Handforth impressively. "You can't see it all in a day."

"Oh, well, you get tired of the switchback after once or twice," said Church. "And those roundabouts aren't particularly exciting. Of course, it's decent on the lake—"

"What about the Exhibition?" asked Handforth. "It seems to me, my sons, that all you care about is the Amusement Park!"

"What else are we going for?" asked McClure, in surprise.

Handforth refused to discuss the matter, and his chums were more puzzled than ever. Until now, they had never known Handforth to take such an interest in the Exhibition.

They arrived among thousands of others, for the fine weather had drawn a huge Bank Holiday crowd. And it seemed problematical whether the other St. Frank's fellows would ever be located. Handforth had forgotten the meeting-place, and Wembley is a considerable size.

But Church and McClure were not so forgetful. They waited in front of India, and just facing the lake. This was the agreed-upon spot. And almost at once they ran into Archie Glenthorne and Alf Brent.

Then Reggie Pitt & Co. were sighted, to say nothing of the Onions Brothers.

and Buster Boots and Bob Christine. In fact, all the prominent members of the St. Frank's Fourth Form were bent upon wembling at Wembley.

CHAPTER V.

STRANGE CONDUCT OF HANDFORTH.



"**W**HAT-HO! Greeting, and all that kind of stuff!" said Archie Glen-thorne, as he adjusted his monocle. "Good gad! Handforth, old fright, allow me to congratulate you! I mean to say, this frightfully swagger attire, what? Why, dash it, you've absolutely beaten the record!"

Handforth beamed.

"Think so?" he asked. "Good! The fact is, Wembley's a smart place, and it's just as well to look your best."

"Absolutely," agreed Archie. "Well, laddies, what about it? Is this where we trickle? We've seen the old Exhibish, so now let us away homewards——"

"You ass, we've only just arrived!" grinned Reggie Pitt.

"Absolutely! But I mean to say!" protested Archie. "Crowds and all that. I'm fearfully afraid there'll be a frightful amount of fearful pushing and shoving and what not. It makes a chappie so dashed hot and bothered!"

"Leave him to me, you chaps!" grinned Alf Brent. "I've got a nice little programme for Archie."

"Put him through it!" said Tommy Watson with a chuckle.

"Oddslife!" gasped Archie. "You don't mean to say——"

"First of all, India, because that's nearest!" said Brent, taking out a paper and looking at it. "Then I'm going to take him through Burma and East Africa, and then we'll drift on to Canada, drop into Australia, and then work our way round to the Palace of Arts and the Palace of Industry. That's just to start with."

Archie looked weak and helpless.

"Good gad!" he said in a hollow voice.

"I suppose we shall get through that programme by lunch-time," continued Alf Brent, with a wink at the Fourth-Formers. "It'll take us a bit of time to go through the Palace of Engineering. And, strictly speaking, we ought to go through South Africa and a few of those other places. Then we can end up by two or three hours in the Amusement Park."

"S O S!" breathed Archie feebly. "Phipps, laddie, hear the young master's cry and fly to his assistance!"

"You haven't got Phipps now, Archie—you've got me!" said Brent grimly.

"Phipps is left at home, and you're done. We've come to the Exhibition, and I'm going to make you see everything—even if I have to carry you round!"

All the sun had gone out of Archie's life, and he looked at Alf with a glassy gaze. But Alf was firm.

"Come along!" he said, taking Archie's arm. "See you later, you fellows—we're bound to run across one another some time during the day. We can't very well go round in a great crowd."

"That's a good idea!" said Handforth, as the chums of Study P went off together. "It's no good spoiling things by crowding together. Let's enjoy things in twos and threes."

"That's what Jack and I thought," said Reggie Pitt.

"Begad, the same here!" agreed Tregellis-West. "Tommy an' I are waitin' here for Nipper. The frightful ass is late."

The juniors separated, and Handforth & Co. found themselves being pushed by the crowd along one of the asphalt pathways. There were so many people about that it was rather awkward to stand still talking.

Handforth was looking at his watch anxiously.

"H'm! Time's getting on!" he said. "Well, I suggest we go to the Palace of Engineering to start with."

His chums made grimaces.

"There's nothing in there to look at!" objected Church.

"The Palace of Engineering!" said Handforth firmly. "And don't you try to get out of it! I'm taking you about to-day, and I'm going to show you a few things worth seeing. And if you try to give me the slip I'll find you again in two minutes."

Church and McClure gave it up as a bad job, and resigned themselves to going through the Palace of Engineering. After all, it might be very interesting, and it wouldn't be quite so hot in there.

They were going along, talking, when suddenly Church grabbed at McClure's sleeve.

"My hat!" he muttered. "Look at that!"

"Look at what?"

"Look at Handy!"

For some extraordinary reason, Handforth had dropped behind, taking advantage of the fact that his chums were conversing. And now, under the impression that he had given them the slip, he was pushing his way through the people in no uncertain manner.

"Well, I'm blessed!" said McClure blankly. "And he was just telling us not to bunk! He's done it himself!"

"Come on!" said Church quickly. "We can't let him go off alone—goodness knows what he'll get up to! He's been rather queer all the morning, and I noticed something funny about him on Saturday, too."

"That's what I thought," agreed McClure.

"There he goes! I say, we shall have to buck up, or he'll escape altogether!"

They were compelled to push their own way along, regardless of the throng. For if they once lost sight of Handforth amid these thousands, the chances were they would never find him again.

CHAPTER VI.

STILL STRANGER CONDUCT OF HANDFORTH.



EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH breathed a sigh of relief.

He was standing on the asphalt path near one of the Exhibition's smaller restaurants. It was a tasteful, dainty little luncheon-room, with delicately curtained windows, and neat little tables inside, with pretty covers and many flowers.

Handforth was looking back in the direction he had just come, and a sigh of satisfaction escaped him.

"Good!" he murmured. "They'll never find me again now, and I can easily ask 'em what the dickens they meant by giving me the slip!"

This was nothing more nor less than barefaced, considering that he himself was the culprit. And Handforth proceeded to lounge elegantly in the restaurant, just as though he were the owner coming to inspect it.

His satisfaction might not have been so great had he known that Church and McClure were watching him from behind a neighbouring kiosk. And as he passed through the doorway, they glanced at one another blankly.

"He's gone in there!" said Church.

"In that eating-place!" ejaculated McClure.

"As clear as daylight."

They came from behind the kiosk and advanced. It struck them as an extraordinary thing that Handforth should sneak into a restaurant alone. Even Fatty Little would hesitate before doing a thing like that, although Fatty regarded food as a religion.

For Handforth to slip off to feed himself in solitude was too remarkable for words. For Edward Oswald was open-handed—as generous as anybody possibly could be. It had sometimes been said in the Fourth that he absolutely kept Church and McClure. This was not strictly true, but his chums undoubtedly found him lavish to a degree.

And here he was sneaking into a restaurant alone!

"Of course, we can't allow this," said Church firmly. "We'll go in. And we'll show him that it isn't such an easy matter to bunk off like that. Besides, what does



"What-ho! Greeting, and all that kind of stuff!" said Archie Glen-thorne, as he adjusted his monocle. "Good gad! Handforth, old fright, allow me to congratulate you! I mean to say, this frightfully swag-ger attire, what? Why, dash it, you've absolutely beaten the record!"

he want to eat for? He had a good breakfast!"

They entered the restaurant, and found Handforth in no time. The place was not packed by any means, for it was a long way from the lunch hour. Edward Oswald was sitting at a table by himself. He didn't see his chums enter, and he didn't seem to be taking any notice of anybody except the waitress.

At least, Church and McClure assumed that she was the waitress belonging to his table. For Handforth was gazing at one young lady in particular with a fixed, intent regard.

All the waitresses in this restaurant were daintily attired in pink and blue, and they wore little frilly aprons and neat caps. They were particularly attractive. And the one upon whom Handforth was bestowing his gaze was a small, nice-looking young lady with dark, fluffy bobbed hair.

"The ass must be going dotty!" murmured Church.

They went over to his table, and sat down. They looked straight at him, but he didn't seem to see them. His gaze was

still elsewhere. Right in front of him they sat, and he took no notice.

"What's the idea, old man?" asked Church abruptly.

Handforth came to earth, and gave a violent start.

"Eh?" he gasped.

He gazed at the pair in a scared sort of way, and at the same time the colour rose to his face, and he went a beautiful red. His embarrassment was awkward.

"Yes, and so you jolly well ought to blush!" said McClure.

"Blush?" ejaculated Handforth faintly.

"Leaving us standing like that and sneaking off!" said McClure indignantly. "That's a nice thing to do, after what you've said to us. It's the first time I knew you included gorging as a secret pastime!"

Handforth gave a kind of gulp, and a light of keen relief entered his eyes. Why he should look relieved, his chums didn't know. Then, with all his usual assurance, he blustered.

"What rot!" he said. "What are you talking about? I looked round, and you chaps weren't with me, and so I came in here. Anything funny about that?"

This was sheer pretence.

"Look here, Handy, did you give us the slip or not?" asked Church pointedly.

"The slip?" said Handforth. "The fact is, I—I—"

His voice trailed away, and a strange, soft expression came into his face—an expression, indeed, which Church afterwards described to McClure as being "fearfully soppy." Edward Oswald was sitting back in his chair, watching the waitress as she crossed to his table. His interest in his chums, and in his general surroundings, had apparently waned.

"Your roll and butter, sir," said the girl sweetly.

"Oh—er—rather!" blurted out Handforth. "Thanks! Ripping! I—I say, Miss, I—I—"

"Sir?" she asked, half turning back.

"I—I'd like a cup of coffee, please," said Handforth.

She nodded, and went away. Handforth breathed heavily, a dreamy look crept into his eyes, and he leaned one elbow on the table, and rested his chin in his palm. He remained in this attitude, having completely forgotten that his chums were watching him all the time.

CHAPTER VII.

THE AWFUL TRUTH.



CHURCH and McClure exchanged significant glances.

"He's forgotten we're here!" whispered Church.

"Poor old chap! He must be going off his rocker! That's what it is! I shouldn't be

surprised if that awful experience at St. Frank's has affected him."

"You've hit it!" agreed McClure with concern. "But we were in that as well, you know—and we're all right."

"Sometimes an adventure sends some people dotty, and others are as sane as anything," said Church. "Look at him! If he likes, he can hear every word we say—and he doesn't pay any attention."

Handforth had gone into a kind of dream.

He still sat there with his chin in his palm, and his roll and butter lay untouched. And his chums looked at him with deeper and deeper anxiety. It wasn't so long ago since that dreadful affair at St. Frank's. Only a few days, in a way of speaking.

The famous old school had been partially demolished by a devastating explosion, and some new plans regarding the scholars were now being mapped out by the Board of Governors and by the headmaster.

During that trial, Handforth & Co. had been imprisoned in a tunnel, and not only they, but everybody else, had thought that they would perish. This strange behaviour on Handforth's part was possibly an aftermath.

"Rolls and butter, too!" exclaimed Church. "With his pockets bulging with money, he doesn't even order a plate of ham, or something tasty. Oh, he's certainly dotty."

Handforth suddenly came to himself.

He looked across at his chums, started, and then smiled in a queer kind of way. He picked up his roll, broke it, and proceeded to smear it with mustard.

"Oh, you chaps are still here, then," he said tartly.

"Of course we're still here—didn't we arrange to go round the Exhibition together?" asked Church. "We're waiting for you to finish that hot snack."

"Oh, yes, of course," said Handforth hastily. "What do you mean—hot snack? I'm only eating rolls and butter."

He took a bite, and Church and McClure watched with interest. For a second or two, Handforth didn't notice anything wrong. Then he abruptly ceased eating, and his face assumed an extraordinary expression of consternation.

"Great pip!" he gurgled, bolting the mouthful with one gulp. "Oh, my goodness! What the dickens—"

"You'll be charged extra for all that mustard," said Church. "I've heard that it's pretty good as a medicine—but, dash it all, there's no need to take it by the spoonful."

"I—I thought it was butter!" breathed Handforth, holding a hand to his mouth. "I'm all burnt! Where's—where's the—"

He paused, and a soft light came into his eyes.

"Better go and grab the waitress, Churchy, old man," said McClure. "It'll be hours before she comes here, and Handy wants a drink of water. You know what

these waitresses are—slow as the dickens."

Handforth flared up
"Rot!" he snorted. "She's never slow! She's the smartest waitress I've ever seen—always on the spot—"

He paused, turned red, and looked confused.

"She's always smart?" repeated Church, staring. "How do you know? Have you been here before?"

"Don't—don't bother about that water," said Handforth carelessly. "It doesn't matter—my mouth's all right now. If you fellows can't behave yourselves, you'd better go out of here. I'm not altogether sure that I like being seen with you—you both look a bit untidy."

He eyed them critically, and Church and McClure were more than ever convinced that something drastic had happened in their leader's intelligence department. It wasn't like him at all to criticise their appearance, and to eye them up and down as though they were tramps. And his own smart appearance was most unusual, too.

He was just about to address them again when the waitress came up with his coffee. She tripped along, smiling, and placed the cup in front of him, and passed him the sugar.

"Will there be anything else, sir?" she asked.

"Dunno!" said Handforth softly. "I—"

"I'm so glad it's turned out so nice for the Bank Holiday," said the waitress in a conversational tone. "You were hoping it would be fine, weren't you?"

"Was—was I?" asked Handforth, that soft look appearing again.

"Why, yes, when you were in here on Friday," said the girl, glancing across at the startled Church and McClure. "Is there anything I can get?" she added, coming down to business.

"Two coffees, please," said Church, on the spur of the moment.

She went off, and Handforth followed her movements down the room, until she got as far as the serving counter. In order to do this he had to dodge every now and again to keep her in view.

"That girl's got a giddy nerve!" said McClure with a sniff. "Talking to you about the weather, Handy! Not so very good looking either—"

He paused, for Handforth had suddenly pushed back his sleeve.

"Say that again!" he muttered thickly.

"Say what?" gasped McClure startled.

"About that girl!" roared Handforth.

"Eh? I only said she wasn't good looking—"

Biff!

Handforth's fist shot across the table, and landed squarely in the centre of McClure's chest. His chair tipped back, he gave a wild howl as he lost his balance, and the next moment he crashed over backwards.

CHAPTER VIII.

WORSE AND WORSE!



UNFORTUNATELY, McClure's troubles were even more severe.

He landed on the floor with a fearful thud, clutched at anything that he could grab hold of, and seized the cloth of the neighbouring table, against which he had fallen. With one beautiful sweep he pulled the cloth off, and emptied the entire contents of the table over himself.

The crashing and smashing was appalling.

"Great Scott!" gasped Handforth blankly.

"Now you've done it!" said Church.

"You silly ass! It'll cost you a quid to pay for that damage!"

Church seemed to think more about the damage to the crockery than McClure, who was slowly and painfully sitting up amid the debris. People had started up in various parts of the restaurant. And one severe old lady was distinctly heard to remark that these schoolboys ought never to be allowed through the gates of the Exhibition.

Not only two waitresses came hurrying up, but the manageress as well. By this time, McClure had sorted himself out. He wasn't hurt much, but he was decorated with several pats of butter, and everybody in the vicinity was sneezing, owing to the breaking of a pepper-pot.

Handforth didn't quite remember how he got out of the place. He paid up, and Church and McClure led him outside. Once in the throng, they felt happier—there were no curious eyes upon them now.

Handforth was looking slightly dazed.

"What's she going to say when I go there next time?" he murmured miserably. "Perhaps they won't even let me in! Oh, my goodness!"

Church and McClure understood all.

The dreadful truth was exposed to them, and it was far worse than they had at first suspected. Edward Oswald wasn't merely going insane. His complaint was much more serious. He was in love!

Everything that had been obscure, now became clear.

His strange behaviour during the last few days—his far away look—his sudden desire to dress natty. All these things had their simple and natural explanation. Then there was his indifferent reference to Irene Manners. Even that was clear. Handforth had always had rather a soft spot for Irene, but she was now apparently nothing in his life. A new love had come along.

Church and McClure wondered why on earth they hadn't seen it before. The final proof was when he had biffed McClure in the chest for passing a comment on the waitress' appearance. That evidence was cast-iron.

And to say that the pair were startled is to put it inadequately. They were nearly

knocked off their seats. Old Handy—in love with a Wembley waitress! No wonder he had been to the Exhibition three or four times these holidays!

Handforth had had rather a fondness for Tommy Watson's sister at one time. He had quite liked Violet. Then he had transferred his affections to Irene. But they were both mild, flimsy affairs compared to the fire of this one. Church and McClure had never seen him so completely "under" before.

And, gradually, their feelings of astonishment gave way to one of indignation. These three never had any secrets from each other—it was like Handy's nerve to keep them in the dark all this time.

"What's her name, old man?" asked Church suddenly.

"Phyllis!" said Handforth dreamily.

"Great stars! Phyllis!" ejaculated McClure.

"What's the matter with it?" asked Church. "Phyllis isn't so bad—rather a nice name, in fact—"

"Eh?" gasped Handforth. "Who—who told you her name was Phyllis? I—I mean— Let's go and have a look at the waxworks!"

"I didn't know there were any waxworks!" said Church. "And it's no good trying to get away from the subject like that. Look here, Handy, are you really in love with that girl?"

"You—you fat-head!" roared Handforth. "I'll jolly well smash you—"

"I say, chuck it!" interrupted Church.

"Everybody's looking at us. Don't get touchy—we know all about it. You can confide in us, surely? She's a jolly ripping girl. Pretty as a picture, too! I thought her brown eyes were simply topping!"

"They're not brown!" said Handforth softly. "They're a lovely violet! They're big, swimming pools of glorious radiance—"

"Help!" gurgled McClure. "He's absolutely on his last legs!"

Handforth came to himself. He was getting into the habit of going off into these

absent-minded moods every minute or two. It was one of the worst possible signs.

"That's enough!" he exclaimed frigidly. "I'm not going to have you talk about that girl! She's—she's— Well, never mind! And, look here!" he added darkly. "If you breathe a word to the other fellows, I'll never speak to you again! I'll tell you something you won't like to hear!"

"How can you do that if you'll never speak to us again?" asked McClure. "And don't start biffing here—we shall be arrested, or something."

Handforth turned on his heel, raised his nose in the air, and marched off. He was evidently on his high horse, and he was mortally afraid of talking about his charming Phyllis.

Church and McClure followed at a distance, worried and troubled.

PORTRAIT GALLERY AND WHO'S WHO. Fourth Series—Sixth Form.

NOTE.—The average age of Sixth Form boys is 18.



No. 6.—Simon Kenmore.

Arthur Morrow's opposite in almost every respect. The most unpopular senior in the school. A genuine rotter—ill-natured, cunning, and cruel. He is resentful and malicious, and takes keen delight in torturing the juniors.

CHAPTER IX.

UPS AND DOWNS.

THE leader of Study D, denied the society of his lady-love, sought to find distraction in the gay world of the amusement park. Almost without knowing it, he wandered on to the giant switchback.

Church and McClure watched him, but didn't follow.

"Well, we know he's safe there," said McClure, as Handforth took his place in the waiting car. "He can't give us the slip—we've only got to wait until he comes off."

"I should have thought he was giddy enough without going on there," remarked

Church disdainfully. "What a good thing we dragged him out of that restaurant. He'd have stayed in there all the morning, eating until he was inflated. Isn't it marvellous what a chap'll do when he's in love?"

Church and McClure could think of no way out of the quandary. The whole thing, of course, was ridiculous. Handforth himself would probably realise this after the first full flood of his admiration had worn off. But unless something drastic was done, he would only go and make a hopeless ass of himself.

Handforth, in spite of his aggressive ways, and his straight-to-the-point bluntness, was peculiarly susceptible to feminine charms. He was the last fellow in the world one would have suspected of gentler moments. Yet he was the first to fall victim to a pair of liquid eyes, or a head of fluffy hair. Church and McClure, being quite cold-blooded as regards femininity, were frankly non-plussed.

And the situation was delicate, too.

Handforth was difficult enough to deal with on any ordinary matter, but when he was in love—particularly passionately in love like this—it was positively dangerous to address him. He seemed to imagine that one was committing sacrilege by mentioning the girl's name.

The switchback car started, and Church and McClure waited about until it was due to return. Their whole day's enjoyment was being spoilt. And they had been looking forward to this Whit Monday, too.

They couldn't go off without Handforth—they daren't leave him to himself—and with him there was no chance of any fun. The outlook was bleak and dreary.

"Well, there's one thing," growled McClure. "If we do happen to miss him, we shall know where to go. He's bound to dodge back to that restaurant as soon as he can get the chance."

"Why not find some of the chaps, and tell 'em?"

"Better not," said McClure, shaking his head. "We want to keep a thing like this secret. In a way it's a disgrace to the study. We don't want to wash our dirty linen in public. Let's keep it dark, and see if we can't think of some cure."

But Church and McClure were not expert in this sort of diplomacy. It required a more strategic touch than theirs—and, by all appearances, the problem was going to get one.

Handforth didn't know it at the moment, and he probably wouldn't know it for a long time. But Fate was now taking quite a big hand in the game. Handforth, sitting in the switchback, was totally oblivious of his surroundings. He was sitting in that restaurant again, picturing the apple of his eye.

And then the switchback took the first giddy, nerve-destroying dip.

Handforth hadn't even troubled to take hold of the bar. The car dropped like a stone into the depths, and Edward Oswald nearly left his seat, and he gave one wild, frantic yell.

"What the— Great pip!" he bellowed hoarsely.

He grabbed at the bar, and clung there as the car rushed headlong up the opposite slope. He remembered where he was now, and wondered why on earth he had ever come on the thing. And before he could answer this question he went plunging down

the next depth, which was about twice as bad as the first.

"You've got a fine nerve—I don't think," said a voice in his ear. "Fancy yelling like that on a switchback! Why, it was lovely!"

Handforth gave a jerk. It was ridiculous, of course, but it seemed to him that his minor was talking into his ear. Perhaps it was conscience. After all, he had been an ass to yell like that—

"Ripping, isn't it?" asked the voice.

"Eh?" ejaculated Handforth, turning his head.

There, in the seat immediately behind him, with his face so close that he could feel his hot breath, was Willy. Handforth recoiled as though he were face to face with a dragon.

"My hat!" ejaculated Handforth, aghast. "You young rotter!"

"What's up with you?" asked Willy.

"Get off this car!" roared Handforth.

"If it's all the same to you, I'll wait till we get down the next dip," said Willy politely. "The pater objects to my taking these high jumps. But I'll tell you what—if you jump off the car—I'll go after you!"

Handforth took a deep breath. He needed it, too, for the car fairly leapt down the next descent, gave a giddy lurch as it went over a kind of hump—a last attempt to reduce the passengers to unconsciousness—and then swept into a curve, where complete darkness reigned.

"This is fine!" said Willy. "I think we'll stay on here two or three times, Ted. And as you're here, you can pay. I wouldn't deprive you of that pleasure for worlds."

"When we get to the end of this ride, I'm going to chuck you into the lake!" said Handforth. "Ever since I came to the Exhibition I've had nothing but worry and trouble. And on the top of it I find you behind me!"

"Life's full of consolations!" said Willy sweetly.

CHAPTER X.

WILLY'S WINNING WAY.



"YES," repeated Handforth darkly. "I come on this water-chute for a little enjoyment, and I find you behind me!"

"I like that!" said Willy. "I was calmly sitting in this seat, without thinking of anything, and suddenly you come and blot out the whole view. And then you say that I came and sat behind you! Besides, it's the first time I knew this was a water-chute."

"Well, roundabout!" snorted Handforth.

"Have it your own way," said Willy. "I'm blessed if I know what's up with you to-day, Ted. You've gone all squiffy. I believe it started last Friday, when you came home looking mooney—"

"Looking what?"

"Well, you know—kind of soppy!" said Willy calmly. "I know you can't help it to a certain extent, but there's a limit. And this week-end I've been getting quite concerned."

"Well, you can jolly well mind your own business, and go and eat coke!" said Handforth, as the car slowed up and he prepared to alight. "And don't follow me, or I'll call a policeman!"

He stepped off the car, and landed with a beautiful crash on his back on the platform—having neglected to observe that it wasn't quite stopped.

"That's a silly thing to do," said Willy, with a sniff. "It doesn't do your white bags any good!"

Handforth picked himself up, speechless.

"Don't let it out here!" warned Willy. "I don't know, Ted, I don't think I shall bring you out again. You're always such a beastly bother! I don't wonder managers refusing to allow children in theatres!"

Willy's safety lay in the fact that there were such big crowds, and everything was hustling and bustling so much that Handforth had no opportunity of committing assault and battery. He took the only course open to him, and fled, pushing through the crowd, and doing everything in his power to give Willy the slip.

"Thank goodness!" he breathed, at length, pausing and mopping his brow. "The beastly young ass! I've dished him now, though!"

He scanned everybody anxiously, and there was no sign of Willy among all those crowds of holiday makers. He turned, happy for the moment, and trod on somebody's foot.

"Clumsy!" said Willy severely.

Handforth gulped. His minor had appeared as though from a stage trap-door. As a matter of fact, he had been behind Handforth all the time the latter was looking in the opposite direction.

"Great guns!" murmured Handforth, in a weak voice.

"Cheese it, Ted!" said Willy. "I can't leave you alone, you know. You're not yourself to-day. There's a kind of bleary look in your eyes, and you're all funny. You're so absent-minded, too. What's the name of the girl?"

"Phyllis!" said Handforth, caught un-awares.

He stood there, dreamily picturing the waitress in the restaurant. Willy looked at his major with a calm, peaceful eye.

"Phyllis, eh?" he repeated. "What a beautiful name!"

"Lovely!" agreed Handforth.

"I'll bet she's the prettiest girl in the world!" said Willy, his voice becoming soft and caressing. "A girl with a name like Phyllis couldn't be anything else!"

"She's too gorgeous for words!"

"Why don't you go to her?" asked Willy. "She must miss you!"

"She's on duty just now," said Handforth absently. "I believe they're hard on her in that beastly restaurant! It's a shame for a girl like that to be a waitress!"

"They ought to be put in jail!" said Willy indignantly. "Why don't you go to that restaurant, and take her away, and elope?"

"By George!" breathed Handforth. "I don't know about eloping—but I've a good mind to speak to her! Why not? She's seen me three or four times——"

"Go ahead!" said Willy promptly. "If she can be friendly with you after seeing you four times, you're sure safe."

"Eh?" said Handforth, with a start.

At the first remark of Willy's in which he didn't agree with Handforth's views, Handforth came to himself. Practically all the other conversation had been uttered in sheer absent-mindedness.

Willy knew exactly how to deal with his major. He always went soft like that when he was in love—and you only had to agree with everything he said, and in two minutes you had all the details. And the best of it was, Handforth didn't know anything about it.

"What did you say?" demanded Edward Oswald.

"I was just saying that you're safe," replied Willy innocently. "We've just come off that switchback——"

"Oh, yes, rather," said Handforth, relieved. "Well, can't stop now—got to meet somebody."

He sauntered off, and Willy looked after him, grinning.

"Give her my love!" said Handforth's minor, in a soft undertone.

CHAPTER XI.

HAUNTING HANDFORTH.



AS Handforth made his way from the Amusement Park, and his feet instinctively took him back in the direction of the restaurant, he had an uneasy feeling that something had gone wrong.

It was absurd, of course, but he had an idea that he had been talking to Willy about Phyllis. Queer how these false impressions hit a chap! It must have been because Willy was standing there. Handforth pondered over the matter, and then dismissed it.

The idea that he should talk about Phyllis to his minor was simply out of the question, and it wasn't worth a moment's consideration. So he went on his way, happy in the knowledge that he was now alone.

He was quite unaware of the fact that Willy was close behind him—and that Church and McClure were in view, too. He

kept a careful watch, and saw no familiar faces.

This was bad, considering that Handforth prided himself on his detective work. But perhaps his eyes were somewhat blurred this morning. A certain vision kept creeping up between them and their natural objective.

With a last look round outside the restaurant, he saw that the coast was clear, and he walked boldly in. The place was a little fuller now, but there was room at one of the tables where Phyllis usually served.

Handforth made a bee-line for a chair, and sat down.

"Thank goodness!" he breathed. "Now I shan't be bothered with those rotters again! Like a lot of giddy leeches! Just because I want to be private, too."

He picked up the menu, and studied it carefully, although he didn't read a single line.

"It wouldn't be so funny if they suspected something, and knew what I was up to," Handforth decided. "There's one thing about having a secret—you've got to be so jolly careful. I'll bet nobody finds out mine!"

It was more than possible that the girl herself hadn't found it out, for Handforth was a very backward wooer. So far, his love-making had consisted of sitting at one of the tables, and ordering rolls and butter.

He had done it for days.

He didn't mind gorging himself if he knew that her fair hands had served him. But if he was unlucky enough to get waited upon by another girl, the rolls nearly choked in his throat. This tragic miscarriage had happened two or three times, and Handforth was naturally anxious.

He suddenly realised that it might look conspicuous to study the menu so long. He put it down, stared at the person sitting opposite to him, and then almost expired in his seat.

"What's the order, old man?" asked Willy calmly.

Handforth felt that he could scream. After taking the most elaborate precautions to come here unobserved, he put his menu down, to find Willy on the other side of the table. Handforth could never remember having spent such a ghastly morning.

He was being haunted—positively haunted. First by Church and McClure, and now by Willy. His own chums were bad enough. But Willy aroused all the ire that was within him. He glared across at his minor, and opened his mouth to speak. But Willy held up a warning finger.

"Go easy!" he murmured. "Mustn't talk too loudly in this room. There's somebody tremendously important in here!"

"Eh?"

"A famous personage!" whispered Willy cautiously. "If you start making a noise, or biffing me about, he'll be jolly annoyed."

Handforth, disarmed, held himself in

check. Fortunately, he was unaware that Willy had been referring to himself.

"Where's he sitting?" asked Edward Oswald.

"Right close to you!" breathed Willy. "If I were you, I'd order some salad. It has a cooling effect—especially in this kind of hot weather. Besides, green always suits you. It's your colour. Might as well have it inside as well as outside."

Handforth was taking no notice of his minor's vapourings. He was looking anxiously for "his" waitress. But he had made the initial mistake of sitting on the wrong side of the table. Willy, therefore, had the best view. In order to see down the room, Handforth had to crane round. It was rather awkward, because he was practically looking over the shoulder of a lady who was sitting back to back with him. After giving him three severe glances, she shifted her position.

"What's the idea, old man?" asked Willy. "What are you staring round there for?"

"Oh, nothing!" said Handforth carelessly. A waitress came up, and Willy ordered two cups of coffee. She went away again, and Willy uttered a snort.

"Call her pretty?" he asked. "She's got a snub nose, and—"

"That isn't Phyllis, you fathead!" interrupted Handforth contemptuously. "She doesn't seem to be here—I—I mean—"

He paused, confused, and Willy gazed steadfastly over the room, as though he hadn't heard anything. And his major, greatly relieved, continued his search for the missing maiden.

CHAPTER XII

THE SEARCH.



THE coffee arrived three or four minutes later, and Willy made himself

very affable with the waitress. Handforth sat on his side of the table listening uninterestedly. A dull ache was beginning to pull at his heart.

"Have a good time here, eh?" asked Willy cheerfully.

"A good time—I don't think!" said the waitress. "We're at it from morning till night!"

"Hard lines!" said Willy, nodding with sympathy. "But don't you ever get a rest? I suppose you have an hour off now and again?"

"Oh, yes," said the girl. "I've only just come on to these tables."

"The other girl's having her lunch?"

"No, this is her off spell," replied the girl. "I think she's gone out for a walk somewhere, to get a breath of fresh air. It's very stuffy in here."

The waitress went off, and Willy was highly delighted. He had worked it beautifully—all for his major's benefit, too. As plainly as possible, the girl had told them that Phyllis was out for an hour. And what could Ted want more than that?

Willy looked across at his major, and frowned.

All his efforts had been for nothing. Handforth was in dreamland. He hadn't heard a word of what had been spoken, and the expression of disgust on Willy's features was acute.

"Wake up, Ted!" he said irritably. "Why can't you listen?"

"Listen to what—your voice?" asked Handforth. "I got tired of that years ago!"

"That waitress was just telling us a few facts," explained Willy. "She says the other girl is off duty—"

"The other girl?"

"Phyllis."

"Off duty!" said Handforth, starting up. "How do you know?"

"My goodness!" sighed Willy. "After I've told you about ten times, I expect you'll know. Here am I, wasting my entire morning on your behalf, and you won't take any notice of me. I tell you the ordinary waitress who serves here has gone out for a walk."

Willy was getting bolder now. Handforth was so far gone that the subject could be discussed almost openly. At all events, he didn't seem to resent his minor's words. He rather liked them.

"Gone out for a walk, eh?" he ejaculated. "Good! You stay here and pay the bill. I'll go out and find her!"

Willy paid the bill, and got outside just in time to see Handforth starting on his search. It wasn't a very difficult one. He only had to find one waitress among about two hundred thousand people. To a fellow like Handforth, it was as easy as A.B.C.

At least, so Handforth told himself.

When he sallied out of the restaurant, he had an idea that it was only necessary to glance up and down, and he would spot her at once. He must have been picturing the Wembley Exhibition as a village green, on fair day.

After wandering for about twenty minutes, and visiting India and Canada, and going over Old London Bridge, he came to the conclusion that the search might be harder than he had at first anticipated.

It wouldn't have been so bad on an ordinary day. But, being gloriously fine, and Bank Holiday, Wembley was packed to suffocation. To make any speed at all was an impossibility.

Handforth got hot, thirsty, and footsore. For one brief second he began to wonder if it was worth all the trouble. But he cast this thought aside as soon as he pictured those violet eyes again.

And why on earth should he worry?

He knew he could always find her in the restaurant. And after she had come back from her walk, he could go and order another roll and butter. Phyllis would soon know Handforth so well that she wouldn't need any orders. She would see him come in, and bring a roll and butter as a matter of course.

The lake lured Handforth towards it. It looked cooler than everywhere else, even if it wasn't. And he wandered on to one of the picturesque bridges, and stood leaning over the parapet.

He took up an attitude there, his elbows on the bridge, and his chin resting in his palms.

Willy couldn't resist the opportunity. The hero of the Third had, of course, been following Handforth all the time. It was a fearful fag, but Willy had an idea that he would get his reward later on.

He went to the edge of the lake, and from this position he could look up towards his brother. Not that Handforth saw his minor. He was gazing down into the water with a steadfast eye.

Willy produced a little pocket Kodak, snapped it open, and took a beautiful exposure. Then he closed his camera again and grinned.

"The chaps will give quids for that!" he told himself. "Buy a camera and make money! Earn a guinea a week in your spare time!"

He was suddenly interested by a swift movement on Handforth's part. Edward Oswald had become alert and excited. He was staring down into one of the electrically-driven boats which continuously glided beneath the bridge.

And Handforth's heart gave a great leap. For there, enjoying her freedom with keen pleasure, and sitting in the stern of the boat, was Phyllis, the waitress!

CHAPTER XIII.

COOLING OFF.



HANDFORTH didn't know what to do.

The bridge was crowded, the boat was gliding underneath it, and one glance at the walks showed him that it would be impossible to reach the landing-stage by the time the boat arrived.

It was a most galling situation.

Here she was—he had found her—and yet he couldn't follow up his success. It was all very well ordering rolls and butter in

ANSWERS
EVERY MONDAY—PRICE 2:

the restaurant, but it would be a thousand times better to meet her in the open. She was bound to stop if he raised his cap. Just a few words, and——"

Handforth even pictured her accepting his invitation to come on the lake with him. But what was the use? She was nearly out of sight already.

He leaned far over the parapet until he was in a somewhat precarious position, trying to gain the last glimpse.

"Steady, old man!" murmured Willy. "You won't last long—— Whoa! My goodness! I knew it was coming!"

Several people on the bridge, proceeding about their business, were startled to find a pair of legs jutting out. Somebody bumped against them, Handforth gave a wild gasp, and before he could recover his balance, all was over. He was over, too.

He plunged down like a stone, and fell with a loud splash into the very centre of the ornamental lake.

"Poor stuff!" commented Willy disparagingly. "I've seen a duck dive better than that!"

Crowds of people paused and watched. There was no particular alarm, for there were so many boats about that the reckless bather could be in no possible danger.

It can hardly be said that luck was with Handforth, but he was certainly fortunate in the fact that friends were near at hand. For the very first boat that came along, loaded with holiday-makers, contained Reggie Pitt & Co., Tregellis-West, Watson, and a few other members of the Fourth. In fact, the boat contained hardly anybody else.

There was nothing of a coincidence about it. It was quite natural that the juniors should be on the lake.

"Hallo!" said Pitt. "Man overboard! Ease up, skipper!" he added to the man at the tiller. "Where's your boat-hook?"

"Ye gods and little fishes!" ejaculated Grey. "It's old Handy!"

"What!"

"Handforth!"

"Of course," said Pitt. "Who else but Handy would fall in the lake? We shall have to take charge of him, and see what can be done." By this time Handforth was bobbing about on the surface, and he was soon hauled on board, wet and cool, and completely bewildered. He had an idea that Willy had come behind him and pushed him over.

But Willy was fed-up. He saw his major taken charge of by the Fourth, and he decided that he would wash his hands of the whole affair. If the Fourth was going to butt in like this, what was the good?

Besides, Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon had just arrived—breathless and excited. Having collected such celebrities as Dicky Jones and Tommy Hobbs and Owen minor, the fags had bemoaned the loss of their



"That's a silly thing to do," said Willy, with a sniff. "It doesn't do your white bags any good!"

leader. And at the sight of him there was joy.

Willy gave one last look at Handforth, and allowed himself to be carried off by his fag army. He was going to make a thorough inspection of the British Empire Exhibition at last. He led the way straight to the Amusement Park.

In the meantime, Handforth was in good hands.

Once in the boat, he was surrounded by Fourth-Formers, who demanded to know the truth.

"How do I know?" growled Handforth. "I was standing up on that bridge, and I just happened to lean over, and somebody pushed me. That's all! And now I'm wet through! My fannels are ruined! I shall look an awful sight!"

"Never mind—people won't see much difference," said Pitt soothingly. "The great problem is, how are we going to dry your clothes? We can't take you all the way home like this—you'll catch an awful cold. The sun's hot, but there's a cool breeze."

"Can't we take him to a quiet corner and put his clothes in the sun to dry?" suggested Watson brilliantly.

"Find the quiet corner, and we'll do it!" grinned Nipper. "My dear old ass, there isn't a single inch here that isn't occupied by crowds. We shall have to think of something better than that."

"Leave it to me," said Reggie. "I've just got an idea."

And as soon as the boat reached the landing-place, Handforth was hustled ashore in a crowd of juniors, and nobody noticed his soaked and bedraggled condition. He was well surrounded.

Church and McClure joined the throng now, for they had been following Handforth's movements—with no little difficulty—and just managed to get there in time. They had seen his spectacular dive in all its glory.

"What are you going to do, Handy?" asked Church, pushing forward. "You can't go about wet through like that—"

"We're dealing with him," interrupted Pitt. "Follow us, you chaps, and you'll see what it means to have a brain."

And almost before Handforth realised it, he was being hurried at full speed into one of the Oriental Palaces.

CHAPTER XIV.

HANDFORTH THE MANDARIN.



FAIRLY inside, Handforth forced his captors to halt.

"What's the giddy idea?" he demanded warmly.

"What have you brought me into this mouldy place for?"

What do you think it is—a Chinese laundry?"

"I don't know about being a laundry, but it seems Chinese all right," said Pitt. "We can't have you catching cold, Handy. We've got to look after you. It's a funny thing, but all great men are very careless about their health."

"Oh, well!" began Handforth, appeased.

"I know it's hot to-day, but that was no excuse for having a bathe with all your clothes on," continued Pitt severely. "And you're one of us, so we've got to rally round. Mind he doesn't escape, you fellows. I'll go and make the arrangements."

"What arrangements?" demanded Handforth nervously.

Pitt went off, and the others didn't explain. Nipper had an idea what Pitt was up to, but he kept his own counsel. And Handforth looked round him, conscious that all sorts of people were staring at him.

It was hardly to be wondered at.

His smart, dressy appearance had gone. His hair was matted over his face, his clothes were clinging to him like the coat of a dog after it comes out of the river, and he looked altogether disreputable. Certainly no fit person to be in a dignified building of this kind.

"All serene!" said Pitt briskly, as he came back.

"Eh?" said Edward Oswald. "Look here—"

"This way, my lord!" interrupted Pitt. "Thy Oriental slaves await thee! Make way for the King of the Lake!"

"I say, what rot!" growled Handforth, allowing himself to be reluctantly dragged forward. "I'm not going to undress in here—"

"Far better to undress here than to let those wet things dry on you!" interrupted Church. "We can't have you laid up, old man! How do you think we're going to enjoy the rest of the holiday if you're in bed?"

"Unthinkable!" said McClure in horror.

"Oh, all right!" said Handforth, brightening up. "I suppose it's best. I wouldn't like to mess up your hols."

He was escorted through into an inner apartment. To his great relief there were no slaves, as Pitt had indicated. Handforth always took everything literally, and he had half-expected to see a few Nubians knocking about. At least, he had once seen a lot of Nubians in an Oriental film. And they didn't look at all nice to him.

"I thought you said there were some slaves?" he asked suspiciously.

"Seven or eight of us," said Pitt promptly. "Great Scott! Don't you know your retinue? We're here to do your bidding."

"Then get out of here, and let me—"

"Don't take any notice of him!" went on Pitt calmly. "Two each side, and drag his things off. I've got another suit all ready for him. There's a flat roof to this place, and we can spread all his clothes out to dry in the sun."

Handforth was forcibly undressed.

And, after all, it was a necessary operation. He would certainly have caught a bad cold if he had kept those soaking things on. He had a horror, however, that some customers might walk in unawares.

"Be careful with that clobber!" he said anxiously, as he stood draped in a big towel.

"That's all right," said Church. "Pitt's arranged with the manager, or whoever it is. We're going to put these on the roof, and spread 'em out to dry."

"But the roof may be all over soot."

"A bit of soot won't matter," said Church lightly.

"And be careful they don't blow away!" went on Handforth. "It would be a fine thing if my bags dropped down and wrapped themselves round somebody's neck."

"Don't you think we've got any sense?" asked Church sarcastically. "There are some bricks up there, and we're going to pin the things down."

Handforth was not appeased. He couldn't possibly agree that his clothes would be improved by putting them on a dirty roof, and holding them there with bricks. An

ordinary suit wouldn't matter so much, but these were white flannels.

However, the matter was out of his hands, and he was forced to submit. Then he was dissatisfied about the towel. It was rather short, and there was a decided draught around his calves.

"How long will those things take to dry?" he asked anxiously.

"About an hour."

"And have I got to stand here in this rotten towel for an hour?" demanded Handforth wrathfully. "I wouldn't mind if it was a proper bath-towel, but it's only as big as a postage-stamp!"

"Wait!" said Pitt. "What a chap you are to hustle anybody! Don't you know that you're the Mandarin?"

"The mangling?" said Handforth, staring. "Are you talking about my clothes—?"

"No, fathead—I said the Mandarin!" exclaimed Pitt. "One of those Chinese potentates. This suit of clothes is doing nothing here, so you might just as well dive into it. I believe there's a back door, but we'll push you in somehow."

Pitt had got hold of a gorgeous-looking silken costume. It was a flowing Chinese affair, the colours of which consisted of red and yellow, with sundry dragons designed in the making.

Handforth protested strongly, but he might just as well have tried to stem the tide. He was pushed into the costume, a weird-looking hat was thrust upon his head, and the effect was impressive.

CHAPTER XV. PHYLLIS AGAIN.



CHURCH looked at Handforth keenly.

"I'm blessed if I thought you could ever look so important!" he remarked, with delightful candour. "It's wonderful

what clothes will do. That costume even makes your face look nearly human!"

"It's not so bad, but it's too red!" said Pitt. "Chinamen don't go about with red faces like that!"

Handforth stalked up and down, and the rustling silk soothed him. He was gradually changing his views. After all, he had always fancied himself in Oriental costume. There was something rich about it. He was able to show himself off at his best.

"It's a pity we've got to keep you bottled up in here," remarked Nipper. "Why not come out for a stroll in the grounds? Just think of the impression you'd make."

"Not me!" retorted Handforth. "I'm going to stick here until my clothes are ready. I suppose you chaps will wait? You're not going to desert me now?"

"You needn't worry yourself—we'll be here," said Pitt. "But I've got to go along and square these people. We're using one of their special rooms, and there may be something to pay on that costume."

Upon the whole, Handforth hadn't much to grumble at. His companions had looked after him well. He was dry, he was saved from getting a cold, and his clothes would be ready in an hour.

There was only one fly in the ointment.

He wouldn't be able to see Phyllis again. Handforth was very sad about this, and he walked absently to the window, and stood looking out upon the throng. He meant to be in that restaurant for lunch, for tea, and for supper—with occasional visits for odd rolls and butter in the meantime.

But the thought of appearing before Phyllis in his flannel suit after it came off the roof made him shudder. He would have to leave it until to-morrow.

As he stood there, he figured up how much it would cost him to come to Wembley every day in the week. It would be rather awkward when he got back to St. Frank's—although, of course, he might come up for occasional week-ends.

And while he was toying with these thoughts, he suddenly gave a violent start. Amazingly enough, Phyllis herself had come into view! Actually the girl herself! It was like one of those things you read about in a book!

Handforth stared, his eyes goggling.

There she was, in a perfectly ripping silk dress, all flimsy and light. He thought he had never seen anybody so fairy-like in all his life. But then, Handforth was gazing with eyes of love. And such eyes are always liable to be out of focus.

She was walking along the path near by, and it was impossible for her to move swiftly, owing to the crowd. Now was his chance! If only he could speak to her here, the rest would be easy! Why, in the afternoon, he would probably be taking her for a go on the switchback, or riding her round the grounds on one of the electric 'buses.

Handforth turned, his face flushed, his eyes gleaming. He rushed out of the room before any of the Fourth-Formers could gain any idea of his intention. Then he went through the main building, and out into the open.

He was so thrilled and overjoyed at the sight of Phyllis that he completely overlooked his extraordinary costume. It never occurred to him—he didn't give it a thought. He would have gone out just the same if he had been wearing the towel. But a kindly fate had saved him from this catastrophe. He was, at least, presentable.

The crowd in the immediate vicinity quite enjoyed it.

There was a brilliant flash of colour in the sun, a whisk of silk, and Handforth stood in the middle of the path, with people

standing well aside with all deference. Handforth couldn't quite make it out. He hadn't been able to move so freely before.

And there, gazing at him with all the other people, was Phyllis! He came to a halt, and his heart leapt. Now that he had reached the point, he didn't know what on earth to say, or how the dickens to approach her.

But just then chance helped Handforth in no uncertain way.

A small boy, rushing up to see this new marvel of the Exhibition, pushed past Phyllis in the rude manner that small boys will. Her little bag was jerked out of her hand and went flying. It all happened in less than a second.

"My bag!" she exclaimed.

"My hat!" ejaculated Handforth, in the same breath.

He made a dive for the little bead bag, recovered it, and handed it with reverent fingers to its fair owner. The smile she gave him was like a ray of golden sunshine. It fairly dazzled him with its brilliance. It bereft him of speech. As a matter of fact, it was one of the most commonplace smiles imaginable.

"Oh, thank you so much!" said Phyllis sweetly. "For the moment I didn't recognise you. Do come to my table again sometimes, won't you?"

She tripped away, and Handforth stood there, dazed with happiness. He had often heard about the seventh heaven of delight, but he had never known what it was until now!

CHAPTER XVI.

THE LOVE LETTER.



WITH a start, Handforth came out of his trance, and found that he was surrounded by Pitt & Co. He looked at them blankly. And then, turning pale, the full horror of the situation dawned upon him.

"Have—have I been seen in public like this?" he asked, in a dazed voice.

"Have you been seen in public?" breathed Church. "Why, you fatheaded ass, half Wembley's looking at you!"

"Great pip!"

"They've stopped the switchback, and all the roundabouts have refused to work!" said Pitt. "There'll be a sensation about this in the papers to-morrow. They'll want you to go into the Stadium at two hundred pounds a week!"

Handforth gazed down at his attire and breathed hard.

"But—but people can see me!" he muttered dully. "I look awful! I'm a sight!"

"Tell us something new!" snorted McClure. "But I must say you're looking a bit better

than usual in that costume. Come on, you chaps—let's rush him inside. They'll take him for a burglar! Fancy walking off with that Mandarin's outfit!"

Handforth didn't fully recover his normal senses until he was back again in his own clothing. Even then he wasn't satisfied. He had never seen anything so horrible as his rough-dried flannel trousers. They were creased, grubby, and they were shrunken. He was positively afraid to leave the premises.

But it had to be braved at last. Pitt and the others had gone off on their own pleasures, and only Church and McClure remained.

"There's only one thing for it—we're going home!" said Handforth. "I can't walk about in this state——"

"We're not going home!" interrupted Church. "Why, you fathead, it's Whit Monday, and we've hardly had any fun yet."

They had emerged from the Oriental Palace, and were mixing with the throng. Handforth's assumption that everybody was staring at him was quite unfounded.

"You're coming home with me!" he said grimly.

"We're not!" they declared.

"What's this—mutiny?" thundered Edward Oswald.

"Yes, that's what it is—mutiny!" said Church. "You can jolly well go and eat coke! You spoilt our morning, but you're not going to spoil our afternoon! Don't forget to give my love to Phyllis when you see her again!"

"And give her an extra kiss for me!" added McClure.

They turned, mingled with the crowd, and in two minutes Handforth had lost them. For once they were safe—and they knew it.

Handforth pondered, after his rage had gone down, and he made his way to the Exhibition station. He would go straight home! It was obviously impossible to appear before Phyllis in his present state. And an idea had occurred to him—an idea that thrilled him through and through. He was so eager to get home now that he took a taxi as soon as he arrived at Marylebone.

All the way home he had been re-enacting that little scene on the walk. She had smiled at him—she had asked him to come to her table again! That was the bit that Handforth gloated over.

It was so glorious that he kept feeling dizzy.

She had asked him to come to her table! That meant, as plain as anything could mean, that she wanted to see him. At first he had thought about dashing home, changing his clothes, and going back.

But there were all sorts of disadvantages. In that restaurant he couldn't get a word with her at all. All he could do was to order rolls and butter and coffee. And he

had particularly noticed that the eye of the manageress was generally turned over in his direction. She had already begun to see that love was taking its true course! He didn't seem to realise that the manageress was naturally curious about this strange customer—a schoolboy who had come in day after day for food which he frequently left untouched.

No, there was a better scheme altogether.

He would write to her. He thrilled through and through at the daring thought. What he couldn't say to her in words he would be able to put in writing. And it would be heaps better, because the next time he went there she would know everything. The whole situation would be eased.

Handforth was simply stunned by the greatness of the scheme. He had never known that such wonderful ideas were possible. It was, without doubt, his masterpiece.

He arrived home buoyed up and gay.

It was now mid-afternoon, and the big house was quiet and still in the summer heat. Handforth thought for a moment. Pen and paper! Where? His pater's study. He barged in, went to the desk, sat down, and picked up Sir Edward's best fountain-pen. Then he sat there dreamily thinking of the first words.

It was somewhat unlucky, perhaps, that he had neglected to observe the sleeping form of his father on the lounge, with a silken handkerchief over his face.

CHAPTER XVII.

SIR EDWARD APPROVES.



FOR the tenth time Handforth started his letter. The first nine attempts were all very well, but they didn't seem to touch the high-water mark. But at his tenth attempt he had had sufficient practice to begin brilliantly.

He had got about half-way through his letter, and was pausing every now and again to read it over, when a sound came from his rear. At first he thought it was the breeze blowing the curtains. But when a voice spoke to him, he knew that such could not be the case.

"Edward, what are you doing at my desk?"

Handforth gasped, and spun round in the swivel chair so swiftly that he went completely round twice, unable to stop himself.

"Pater!" he ejaculated. "I—I didn't know you were there!"

"I should think not, indeed!" exclaimed

Sir Edward Handforth, sitting up on the lounge. "Confound you, Edward, you've disturbed my afternoon's nap! What do you mean by it?"

"I—I didn't know——"

"That's no answer!" roared Handforth senior. "Here I am, fast asleep, and I'm awakened by your noises! First you kick the floor, then you whistle, and then—What's that you've got there? How dare you come into my study to write your letters!"

Handforth's heart gave a wild leap, and he clutched at the letter in desperation. He had been so astonished to find his father in the room that he had forgotten that fatal document until this moment. He stuffed it into his pocket, with such obvious alarm that his father's attention was instantly attracted towards it.

"Give me that letter!" said Sir Edward sternly. "It seems to me, young man, that you've been doing something you shouldn't do! There's guilt on every line of your face!"

Handforth went pale, and trembled.

"I'm sorry, pater, but I can't give you this letter!" he said firmly. "It's—it's to a friend——"

"If it's addressed to a friend, there is no reason why I should not read it—unless, of course, your friend is disreputable!" added Sir Edward suspiciously.

"Disreputable?" gasped Handforth. "She's as good as gold——"

"What!" roared his father. "She!"

Handforth gulped hard, and made a dash for the door. But his father was after him, and grabbed him just in time. In one moment Sir Edward had wrenched the letter out of his hopeful son's pocket. And Handforth, a set look coming to his jaw, waited for the storm to burst. Sir Edward adjusted his glasses, and unfolded the half-finished letter.

"H'm! Your handwriting is improving, Edward," he observed. "What's this? 'My darling Phyllis——' Good heavens! What on earth——"

He continued reading, and then looked at his son sternly. There was obviously something wrong with Edward. His present attire did not help his appearance much, for Handforth had forgotten all about changing.

"Indeed!" said Sir Edward grimly. "Indeed! And so, young man, you come into my study and write love-letters. Upon my word! Love-letters! Who—who is this person?"

"She isn't a person!" exclaimed Handforth defiantly.

"Oh! That's very interesting!" snapped

his father. "If she isn't a person, what is she—a creature? I demand to know what you have been doing, Edward. Tell me everything!"

Handforth set his teeth.

"All right!" he said with fresh defiance. "I don't mind. I'm not ashamed of it. She's a waitress in one of the restaurants at Wembley."

"Good gad!" ejaculated his father.

"It's a shame that she should be a waitress," went on Handforth, reckless to the point of disaster.

"I've seen her three or four times, and she's the most ripping girl in the world!"

"Has this girl responded to your advances?"

"No, sir," replied Handforth. "She doesn't know anything yet. I'm going to write her this letter to tell her everything. And you won't stop me. She's the finest girl in the world—"

Handforth was amazed at his own daring—but he was far more amazed by his father's attitude. He had expected a fearful, unholy outburst.

"Oh!" said Sir Edward, a note of irony creeping into his voice. "So she's the finest girl in the world? Upon my soul, Edward! So you have fallen in love with a Wembley waitress?"

"I can't help it, pater!"

"Of course not—of course not!" said his father soothingly.

"These things will happen, won't they, Edward? No doubt

you intend to bring this girl to my house, and introduce her as your future wife?"

Handforth gulped.

"Yes, pater!" he replied firmly.

"Splendid!" said Sir Edward. "My boy, I'm proud of you! Go ahead and win. A Wembley waitress! Well, well! I had hoped better for my son, but I dare say the girl is honourable and clever."

Handforth wondered if he was in the middle of a dream.

"Don't—don't you mind, dad?" he asked huskily.

"Mind?" repeated his father. "Why on earth should I mind? My dear boy, write your letter and send it off. Do just as you please. But for heaven's sake do your writing somewhere else!"

He waved Edward Oswald out of the room, and Handforth went in a state of dizzy joy. This was a thousand times better than he had hoped for. His father not only approved, but would even let him bring Phyllis to the house. Handforth hadn't noticed any of the sarcasm with which his father's voice had been charged.

But as soon as he went out of the library, Sir Edward returned to the couch, sat down, and laughed heartily.

CHAPTER XVIII.

TRUE LOVE NEVER RUNS SMOOTH.

DELIRIUM was upon Edward Oswald. It was the delirium of joy. He went about the house smiling at everything, and feeling as bold as brass. With his father's consent, what else mattered? He had written his letter, and he had read it through about twenty times.

And now, at the head of the stairs, he was scanning it through again. The more he looked at it the better he liked it. He considered it to be a little masterpiece.

It was evening now, and he had changed and was resplendent once more. A footstep sounded behind him, and his mother swept up.

In a flash Handforth pushed the letter into his pocket. He was rather uncertain about his mother. Perhaps she wouldn't look at things in the same light as Sir Edward.

Happily she hadn't noticed anything, and after exchanging a few words with him, wondering why he was home so early, she went downstairs. And Handforth decided

PORTRAIT GALLERY AND WHO'S WHO. Fourth Series—Sixth Form.

NOTE.—The average age of Sixth Form boys is 18.



No. 7.—Harold Carlile.

An ordinary sort of senior—neither brilliant nor dull. But he is inclined to be easily swayed, and can be readily talked into doing things which his real nature rebels against. Usually he is thoroughly decent.

that it would be far safer to post the letter at once, and get rid of it.

He waited a minute or two and then slipped downstairs. Putting on his straw hat, he opened the front door and passed out. Then he came to a halt. A black frown gathered upon his brow.

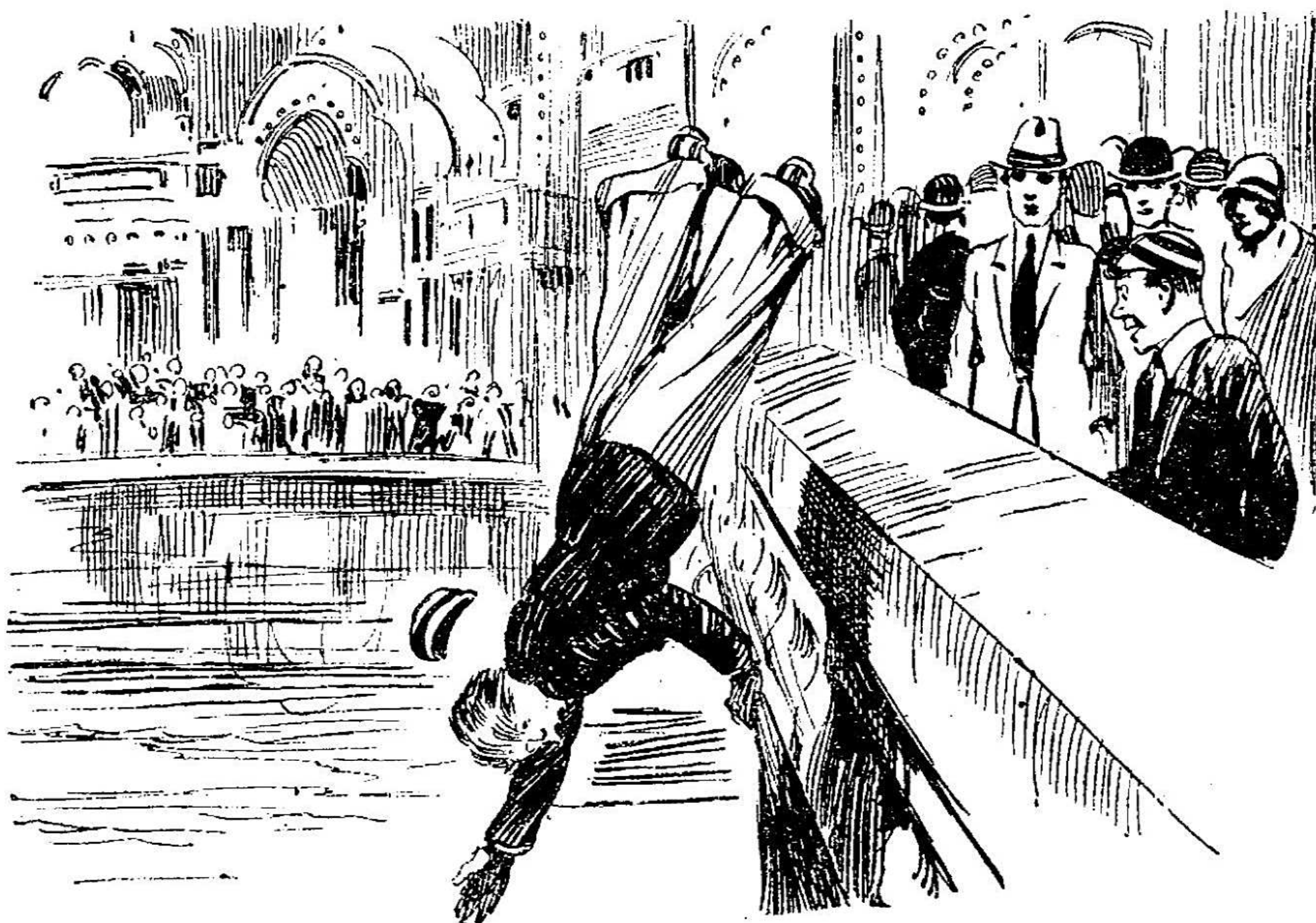
There at the gate was Willy. And not merely Willy, but Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon and the entire gang. Handforth had plenty of pluck, but he couldn't brave that crowd. The knowledge of his errand was one reason for his reluctance.

Willy & Co. had just arrived back from

Handforth went indoors and considered.

He remembered it was Bank Holiday. He wasn't sure, but he believed that all the pillar-boxes were cleared early. The prospect of missing the post startled him. Something would certainly have to be done. He could go out the back way, but the servants would think it funny, and he had a haunting fear that Willy would spot him—and that would make things worse than ever.

And just then Ellen appeared. She was coming downstairs, and Ellen was wearing her outdoor attire. Handforth saw the



Handforth gave a wild gasp, and before he could recover his balance, all was over. He was over, too.

Wembley, and it seemed that a Form meeting was taking place at the gate. It wouldn't have mattered so much if Willy had come in like a decent human being, and allowed the gate to be free.

But this wasn't Willy's way.

He was swinging on the gate, clutching the top bars with his elbows, and Chubby Heath was doing the same thing from the other side. Apparently they were trying to pull the post up by the roots.

And the other fags were waiting there to watch the effect.

At all events, there was no sign of farewells, and Willy was talking about cricket, and sundry other things.

solution to his problem in a flash. He could always trust Ellen. She was his pal.

"I say, Ellen, going out?" he asked quickly.

"Yes, Master Edward."

"Well, look here, do me a favour!" said Handforth, glancing hurriedly in the direction of the drawing-room. "Here's a couple of bob. Just slip this letter in the pillar-box as you go by, and don't say a word to the mater! My hat! Take it—quick!"

Ellen took it, and smuggled it away. For Lady Handforth had appeared, and gave them a severe look. She didn't quite approve of her son being so familiar with the domestics.

Handforth walked unconcernedly away, unconscious of the fact that in his haste he had passed the letter to Ellen without even glancing at it. And the flap was still open. He hadn't stuck it down. The omission was quite understandable. He had been looking at the letter, and twice his mother had forced him to deal swiftly with it. And now it was in Ellen's possession.

Quite possibly she would have taken a peep at the contents had she known about that flap. But she didn't. And when, a few minutes later, she went out, she took the letter from her pocket as she was about to cross the road—where there was a pillar-box.

"Don't be late home, Ellen!" said Willy cheerily. "You'll find the policeman at the corner!"

The maidservant smiled at him, and then glanced at the letter. The first thing she saw was the open flap. She paused, and knew at once that Handforth had forgotten.

"Anything wrong?" asked Willy, strolling up.

"Master Edward gave me this letter to post, and he hasn't stuck it down," said the girl. "He must have forgotten it."

"That's nothing!" said Willy. "He'll forget millions of things before he's gone through this life. That's all right, Ellen—I'll take charge of it—don't you worry. You hurry off to your appointment—it isn't good form to keep him waiting!"

"You are a one, Master Willy!" said Ellen severely.

She walked off, and Willy gazed at the letter with undiluted joy.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE BILLET-DOUX.



"**W**HAT'S that you've got?" asked Chubby Heath, as Willy came back to the gate.

"Nothing much—only a letter," said Willy, tucking it into his pocket. "Well, you chaps, it's time you were buzzing!"

And, dismissing his supporters in this careless way, he turned towards the house. But he paused after a moment, and looked back.

"Wait a minute," he said. "You'd better come in, Chubby. You, too, Juicy. All the rest of you can bunk. It's high time you were indoors, anyhow—you'll get smacked if you're out late!"

A roar of indignation went up from the little group of Third-Formers, but they went off in a lively crowd. All their parents lived in London, and most of them in the West End, near by.

"What do you want us for?" asked Juicy Lemon, with a yawn. "My hat, Wembley makes a chap jolly tired, you know! I hope you're not going to keep us long, Willy."

"I'll keep you just as long as I want you, and then you can clear!" replied Willy calmly. "Come on in—there's nobody in the breakfast-room."

They crossed the hall on tiptoe. For Willy had an idea that his mater might eject his friends unceremoniously if she discovered them. It was all very well for them to call for their leader, but to make free use of the house was a different matter. Willy always felt that his position in the establishment was much too insignificant.

He had glanced at the superscription on Handforth's letter, and it was enough for him. He wondered why on earth his major had been home all the afternoon and evening. Now, of course, the explanation was simple.

"Willy took the letter out of his pocket, and grinned.

"Behold!" he said. "Ye billet-doux!"

"What?"

"Which?"

"Ted's first love-letter!" grinned Willy. "Now then—don't make that cackle! You'll get kicked out unless you keep quiet. Ted gave this to Ellen to post—but the fathead forgot to stick it down. Can you imagine it? Can you picture any sane human being sending a love-letter—a love-letter, mark you—out to post without the flap being stuck down?"

Willy didn't know the circumstances, so perhaps he was a trifle hard on his major. Under ordinary conditions, even Handforth would never have been half so careless. But the letter had been smuggled into Ellen's hands so quickly that there had been no time to think.

"Let's read it!" said Chubby eagerly.

"Don't you be so eager!" warned Willy. "I'm not altogether sure that we ought to take the letter out—but as the flap's open, it's an invitation, isn't it? Besides, I don't look upon this as spying. I'd rather bite myself than play a dirty trick like that. But we've got to save old Ted from himself. He'll get tied up into knots if we don't help him."

"You mean about that waitress?" asked Chubby, who had heard all.

"Exactly!" replied Willy. "The fathead's written her a letter—so you can see that it's simply a case of insanity. We can't let the Handforth family be disgraced by our tame lunatic. We've got to read this, consider things, and take strong action."

Willy turned the letter over, and read the superscription. He grinned. It was certainly original: "To Miss Phyllis, Waitress No. 42, Jacobean Restaurant, Wembley Exhibition."

"It's a wonder he knew her number," mused Willy. "But he's seen her so many times that he couldn't help getting it off by heart. Now, let's have a look at the letter itself."

He withdrew it, unfolded the notepaper, and gazed upon this masterly effusion:

"My Darling Phyllis,—Please forgive me for calling you that. But I must. I

love you. I have loved you ever since I ordered my first supply of rolls and butter last week. I'm never happy unless I'm sitting at your table. I'll be there to-morrow, and if you will just give me one smile when you take my order, I shall know that everything is all right.

"Yours faithfully,
"EDWARD O. HANDFORTH."

The fags read the letter, and looked at one another dazedly.

"Poor old Ted!" said Willy, in sympathetic tones. "I'm sorry for him in two ways. I'm sorry because he's such a frightful ass, and I'm sorry for his powers of composition. If I couldn't write a better love-letter than this, I'd be a bachelor all my life!"

"Your major's mad!" said Juicy Lemon.

"Mad as a hatter!" agreed Willy. "That's why we've got to look after him. Of course, if this letter goes, he won't get any reply—and when he goes to the restaurant to-morrow he'll be biffed out on his neck. Poor old chap! We can't see him suffer like that."

"But what can we do?"

"In the morning," said Willy, "he'll get a letter from Phyllis. At least, he'll think it's from Phyllis. I'll concoct it, and get Ellen to write it—"

"But, you fathead, he'll smell a rat at once!" put in Chubby. "He'll know jolly well he couldn't get a reply by the morning. You'll have to think of something better than that!"

Willy smiled pityingly.

"My dear cuckoo, when a chap's in love, he doesn't think of those details!" he replied. "When Ted gets that letter he'll be so pleased to get it that he won't think anything about time and space. He'll simply make one dash to Wembley—and that's where we come in. To-morrow, my cheery lads, there's going to be some fun!"

CHAPTER XX.

THE PLOT.



"LETTER for you downstairs."

Willy Handforth looked into his brother's bed-room next morning, and made this announcement casually. Handforth

was just getting up, and he glanced round as he was in the act of fitting his best cuff-links into a clean shirt.

"Letter for me?" he repeated. "All right—don't you touch it, or I'll skin you!"

"Who's thinking of touching it?" asked Willy, with a sniff. "I took one look at it, and nearly fainted. The giddy thing's smothered with scent! Ted, have you been up to something?"

Handforth started violently.

"Scent!" he ejaculated, a wild light leaping into his eyes.

"I'll bet it's from Irene!" said Willy. "Shall I bring it up?"

"No, you won't!" roared Handforth. "I'll go and fetch it!"

He made a dash for the door, but Willy stopped him.

"You can't go down like that, you ass! You haven't got any trousers on!" he shouted. "My hat, what next?"

"Oh, my goodness!" gasped Handforth, recollecting himself.

He repaired the omission in about ten seconds, and then flew downstairs, grabbed the letter, and flew up again, without anybody seeing him. His one fear had been that Willy would look at the letter, and then ask all sorts of awkward questions about it.

He closed the door, locked it, and with trembling fingers he unfastened the flap. Willy, outside in the corridor, was pacing up and down, with his hands behind his back, a happy smile on his face.

One glance at the signature at the bottom of the letter made Handforth's heart jump. There it was—"Phyllis." It was from Her. Exactly as Willy anticipated, Edward Oswald never gave a thought to the impossibility of getting a reply so soon.

Willy had taken a chance, and it had worked.

"What lovely handwriting!" murmured Handforth ecstatically. "The most glorious fist I've ever seen."

There was no question that Ellen, the housemaid, wrote in an excellent round hand. Willy had not made the blunder of faking the letter himself. Handforth was an ass, but he wasn't absolutely brainless.

And so the letter was genuinely written by a girl, and there wasn't the slightest indication that it was a neat example of Willy's composition. It was short, but very much to the point:

"My Own Sweet Edward,—Thank you, sweetheart, for your beautiful letter. How I long for you to come to-morrow! I have told my father, and he is overjoyed. He wants to meet you, and will be outside India to-morrow at half-past ten. He will wear a red carnation. Meet him, darling, and our happiness will then be complete."

"Your loving
"PHYLLIS."

Handforth read the letter again and again, allowing every word of it to sink indelibly into his mind. He had thought his own letter wonderful, but this was beyond all expression.

"My only hat!" he breathed, as he paced up and down his bed-room, with one sock on and one sock off, and his braces dangling. "She's told her pater! And I've told my pater! Everything's lovely! I can fix it all up, and—and—"

His mind simply refused to conjure up the vista which lay ahead.

Of course, he would have to wait a few years—but that wouldn't matter. She was

the kind of girl who wouldn't mind waiting—if it came to that, she had been trained to it.

Handforth wondered a little at the curious way in which he was to meet her father. It might have been better to receive a proper introduction in the ordinary way. But, on second thoughts, this carnation-business had a touch of romance—something ripping, like you read about in stories.

It was here that Willy had displayed rare cunning. He knew his major's weakness for mysterious happenings. And he had imagined Edward Oswald leaping at the chance of meeting somebody with a red carnation in his button-hole. Needless to say, there would be an appreciative audience when that interesting meeting took place.

For Willy had everything cut and dried to the last detail.

CHAPTER XXI.

WEMBLEY AGAIN.



TEN-THIRTY was revealed on several clocks when Edward Oswald Handforth appeared in front of the India Pavilion at Wembley Exhibition.

He proceeded to scan the throng.

He was dressed with even more care than ever, and it worried him slightly because the day was a bit dull. He was afraid there was going to be some rain—and it would be a pity to have such a great day as this marred.

Some idea of his task now confronted him.

The crowd was tremendous, even at this early hour. And to pick out a man wearing a red carnation struck Handforth as being a bit of a job. As far as he could see, there wasn't a soul there wearing a flower of any kind. Just in the offing three figures were lurking—like conspirators in ambush.

"There he is!" said Juicy Lemon eagerly.

"Think I haven't got eyes?" said Willy Handforth. "I spotted him long ago. I thought he was going straight past at first, and I was half afraid that he was going to the restaurant. That would have messed things up. Now for the first customer!"

Willy extracted a beautiful carnation from inside his packet, where several others reposed. On second thoughts, he pulled out the whole bunch—it would look better.

He regarded them proudly.

"They cost sixpence each, and I'm going to sell 'em at a penny!" he remarked. There oughtn't to be any difficulty about getting rid of 'em."

"Fancy paying five bob——"

"That's all right—I wangled an extra five bob out of the pater this morning, so they didn't cost me anything," said Willy calmly.

"Isn't it worth it? Isn't it worth five

bob to see old Ted paying for the folly of falling in love?"

"Better not let him see those carnations," warned Chubby Heath. "He's only got to catch sight of us, too, and the game's up!"

"Fathead!" said Willy scornfully. "He's blind!"

He looked round carefully, and found a likely looking gentleman. There were numbers of people waiting about in this particular spot, for it seemed to be a kind of meeting-place. Quite a few men, Willy had observed, had been standing about in the same position for five or six minutes. Nothing suited his purpose better.

Keeping a weather eye on his major, and taking care that he had his back to him, he approached a perfect stranger. Willy, by the way, was not wearing a school cap now, and was in no way conspicuous.

"Like a carnation, sir?" he asked sweetly.

"No, thanks," said the gentleman, gazing at them longingly.

"Penny each, sir," urged Willy.

"Oh!" said the gentleman, who was a rather severe-looking old fellow of about sixty. "A penny each, eh? H'm! Oh, well——"

He produced a penny, received a carnation, and Willy vanished into the crowd, hiding the other flowers in his coat again. In a minute he was back with his chums.

"Worked like a charm!" he said cheerfully. "I knew it would. The old bounder wouldn't look at them at first, though."

"He's put that carnation in his button-hole?"

"Of course," grinned Willy. "That's the idea."

The gentleman was now standing in full view, rather proud of his superb carnation—a real hothouse beauty. And a little distance away Handforth had suddenly caught sight of the flower and the man.

It was the sign!

His heart gave a leap, and he edged closer. Yes, there was no doubt about it. There he was—rather a decent-looking old bird, too. But now that it was necessary for him to act, Handforth hesitated.

He didn't know what to say—and, what was more awkward still, he didn't know the name of his future father-in-law. Phyllis had certainly been rather careless not to mention it.

But Handforth was full of confidence, and, after a brief period of hesitancy, he marched forward.

"Good-morning, sir," he said, confronting the stranger.

"Er—good-morning!" said the gentleman, rather surprised.

"Well, I've come!"

The stranger looked at Handforth queerly.

"You've come?" he repeated. "So I see. But I fail to understand what you are driving at, young man. What have you come for?"

It seemed to Handforth that something

was wrong somewhere. Two of the cogs didn't seem to be engaging.

"I—I've come about Phyllis, sir."

"Phyllis!" ejaculated the stranger blankly. "What on earth are you talking about? I'm afraid you are making a mistake, my lad. I didn't expect you. I don't know anything about Phyllis, and I've never seen you before in my life."

They both looked at one another awkwardly. Handforth was feeling particularly nervous. Everything was going wrong. He had expected a perfectly smooth course.

"That's a red carnation in your button-hole, isn't it?" he asked grimly.

"Well, yes, I think so—"

"Then you're Phyllis' father," said Handforth. "I'm awfully pleased to see you, sir. It's all right—you can trust me. I'm Handforth. Phyllis told me that you'd be here."

The stranger was now beginning to look a little scared. There was something about Handforth's manner, and there was a gleam in his eye, which made him uncomfortable. He had often read that lunatics were frequently quite youthful.

And the stranger, tearing the carnation out of his button-hole, moved hurriedly away into the crowd—leaving Handforth staring after him blankly. But a second later his heart leapt. For near by, unconcerned and patient, stood another man with a red carnation!

CHAPTER XXII.

MORE THAN HE BARGAINED FOR.



"H ANDFORTH was quite startled.

By a strange coincidence there were two men with red carnations! And it was just his bad luck that he should have spoken to the wrong one first. It was beyond all possibility that this second man could be the wrong one. Handforth went up to him quickly.

"Sorry I'm late, sir," he said hurriedly. "I'm Edward."

He thought it better to use his Christian name—it sounded less formal. He watched the effect anxiously.

"For a perfect stranger to have somebody come up and say that his name was Edward—well, it was a rather embarrassing position. Nobody would know exactly what to answer under the circumstances."

The second carnation-holder was a thin, small man, with rather shabby clothing. Not that this was against him, decided Handforth. Being the father of a waitress, he was naturally in modest circumstances.

"You're Edward?" repeated the stranger. "That's very interesting. I'm charmed to meet you, Edward."

This was better—this was the real thing!

"I happened to go to somebody else first by mistake, sir," went on Handforth. "But

that doesn't matter now. Where do you think we had better go to have a talk?"

The stranger smiled whimsically.

"I'm not going anywhere—I'm waiting here for the wife," he replied.

"Oh, she's coming, too?"

"Yes," said the man. "Look here, young 'un, what's your exact game? If you're trying any confidence stunts on me, you'll find yourself in the hands of the police. I have had experience—"

"But I've come here about Phyllis!" explained Handforth. "You know—that letter. I met your daughter at the restaurant. She's a waitress there."

"My daughter is a waitress in a restaurant?" ejaculated the man. "Then all I can say is she's started remarkably young."

"Rather, sir!" agreed Handforth. "I don't believe she's a day older than eighteen—"

"I don't believe anything of the sort—I know she's no older than six!" said the stranger. "And her name doesn't happen to be Phyllis, either. It's Ada!"

"Ada!" gasped Handforth. "But—but didn't you arrange to meet me here at half-past ten?"

"Not that I know of."

"Then—then you're not the man I want?"

"Well, there seems to be something the matter somewhere," grinned the stranger. "You'd better be more careful next time, sonny. I'm sorry—you seem a decent sort. If there's anything I can do to help—"

"Great Scott! There he is!" breathed Handforth, his brain reeling. "I've made another bloomer! I wonder how many more people are going about with red carnations?"

He wandered off desperately, for he had just caught sight of another "possibility." This business was getting altogether too thick. He hadn't bargained to find the place fairly littered up with people wearing carnations. His manner reflected his impatience.

"Look here, is your daughter named Phyllis?" he demanded, going up to the third man, and glaring at him.

He wasn't taking any chances this time!

The stranger, a stout individual, with a pompous air, gazed at Handforth in amazement—as well he might.

"What the deuce do you mean, boy?" he retorted. "How dare you insult me in that way? I'm a bachelor! I haven't got any children of any kind—and wouldn't have 'em, either. Go away, or I'll call a policeman!"

Handforth was growing weaker and weaker.

"But—but that carnation—"

"There's no end to your impertinence!" snapped the other. "What has my carnation got to do with you? Can't I buy a carnation without being questioned by every Tom, Dick, and Harry?"

Edward Oswald acted rather rudely. He walked off while the stranger was in the

middle of his discourse. But there was some excuse for Handforth. He had just caught sight of something which startled him in the extreme. There was his minor, standing in front of a gentleman, and the gentleman was just putting a carnation into his button-hole.

It was too significant to be ignored.

There was something exceedingly fishy here. Even Handforth smelt a rat—and he was usually the most gullible of mortals.

"Hi, Willy—cave!" sounded a yell through the crowd.

Willy heard the shout, glanced round, and tried to escape.

But he was too late. Handforth's heavy hand descended upon his shoulder.

"All right, Ted—pax!" said Willy calmly. "You can't touch me—I've got my fingers crossed!"

Handforth goggled.

"What were you doing with that carnation?" he demanded thickly.

"Carnation?"

"Yes."

"What carnation?"

"If you think you can spoof me, you young rotter, I'll show you you can't!" said Edward Oswald fiercely. "My own brother! My own flesh and blood! Calmly standing here and performing the filthiest trick under the giddy sun! Do you know that you've been making a fool of me?"

Willy looked surprised.

"I didn't know it," he replied innocently. "I thought that was one of Nature's little capers!"

at, Ted," said Willy, aggrieved. "I've only been doing you a good turn."

"I'm not grumbling at anything," said Handforth with deadly calmness. "I'm going to leave that to you. Come on! I'm going to drag you behind this building, and I'm going to turn you upside down, and I'm going to jolly well tan you!"

"You silly ass!" said Willy indignantly. "People can hear you!"

"I don't care about that!"

"All right—I'll tell everybody that you're in love!" retorted Willy.

"Why, you—y o u —"

"In love with a giddy waitress!" sneered Willy. "My hat! If you haven't got sense at your age, it's just about hopeless. Don't you realise that I've done all this for your own good?"

"My own good?" repeated Edward Oswald breathlessly. "You've done all what?"

"Well, for one thing, I wrote you that letter."

"What!"

"I didn't actually write it, but Ellen did—"

"Ellen?" howled Handforth.

"Our housemaid," said Willy.

"Do you think I don't know who Ellen is?" hooted Handforth, causing people to stand round and listen with keen enjoyment. "You don't mean to say that that letter I got this morning—"

He broke off, further words failing to shape themselves.

Willy nodded.

"That's right," he said calmly. "My work."

"Your work?"

"I dictated it to Ellen," explained Willy. "Now, Ted, don't get excited—you're going all blue in the face, and you mustn't do it. One of these days you'll have apoplexy. The fact is, I decided to save you from getting into horrible trouble."

Handforth suddenly became icily calm.

"Go on!" he said grimly. "My hat! And so I've been here all this time, talking to perfect strangers, and you've been watching me. You needn't think I'm calm."

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CHAPTER XXIII.

WILLY IS PLEASED TO EXPLAIN.



THE very fact that his minor was on the scene made Handforth suspect the worst. It was easy enough to put two and two together. He had been deliberately selling flowers to perfect strangers so that his major should go up to them and make himself ridiculous!

"I don't see what you've got to grumble

"I'll let you speak, but afterwards I'm going to wash you out of my life!"

"By the time I've finished, you'll take me in your arms and hug me!" said Willy. "You don't know how kind I've been. I've been making some inquiries this morning about Phyllis——"

"Don't you dare to mention her name——"

"And it would be a fine thing if I'd let you carry on with that lovemaking of yours," said Willy severely. "Fancy going to that restaurant, day after day, and making moony eyes at a married woman!"

"Well, go on! I told you I'd wait until you've done."

"That's all—she's married. Isn't that enough?"

"I don't believe it, you beastly young spoofer!" exclaimed Edward Oswald, humiliated that his love affairs should be made public like this. "What inquiries did you make?"

"Well, I didn't actually make any inquiries——"

"Oh!"



"Oh, thank you so much!" said Phyllis sweetly. "For a moment I didn't recognise you."

Why, I'm ashamed of you! It's disgraceful!"

Handforth reeled.

"Married?" he panted. "You're mad! She's not more than eighteen or nineteen——"

"Plenty of girls get married at seventeen!" interrupted Willy. "I looked into this matter, and the best thing you can do is to wipe her out of your life instead of me. This business about the carnations was done just for a bit of sport."

"Sport, eh?" said Handforth thickly.

"But I went in the restaurant and had a roll and butter——"

"Don't talk to me about rolls and butter!" snorted Handforth. "I hate the sight of 'em!"

"That's a good sign," said Willy, nodding. "I'm glad to see it—it shows you're coming round."

"Look here——"

"Wait a minute!" interrupted his minor. "About Phyllis. My dear, dotty chump! Why need I make inquiries, when the girl's a walking advertisement? She's got a wedding-ring on."

"A wedding-ring?" said Handforth, a fearful conviction coming upon him that his minor was telling him the truth. "But—but I never saw one!"

"Of course you didn't," agreed Willy. "You didn't waste time looking at her hands—all you could do was to gaze blearily into her purple eyes. Think what would have happened if you'd sent that letter to her!"

"Letter?" said Handforth, with a start. "But—but it was posted yesterday——"

"That's just where I come in!" interrupted Willy. "I got hold of it, and

from him, it was quite on the cards that she would have communicated with his pater. That would have meant a whole bag of trouble.

Slowly, therefore, Handforth's feelings towards his minor began to change. He overlooked the unhappy incident of the carnations. There was something more important on hand. He decided, in fact, to go and have another look at Phyllis for himself.

"Come with me!" he said gruffly. "If you're right about this, my lad, I won't

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didn't post it. In fact, I've saved you from getting yourself into an awful fix. And if you're not grateful, you ought to be!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

SEEING IS BELIEVING.



THERE was a ring of conviction in everything that Willy said.

And now that Handforth was coming to his senses, he could see it all.

If Phyllis was really married, and she had received that letter

give you that tanning, and I'll overlook all the rest of it. But if you're wrong——"

He left the sentence unfinished and stalked away.

As he made his way to the Jacobean Restaurant he pondered deeply. In some subtle way, Phyllis' charms seemed less attractive now. The knowledge that she was married made all the difference in the world. Of course, she was a ripping girl, but—— Well!

He arrived at the restaurant, and was about to walk in when Phyllis herself came round from somewhere in the rear. She was all dressed, and was apparently going. At the first sight of her, Handforth's heart

gave a leap. The old soft light crept into his eyes. All his animosity against Willy surged up. The young ass! Fancy saying that this sweet young thing was married!

Why, it would be an insult to look at her hand at all! Besides, he couldn't, because she was wearing gloves.

Just then a young man came up, wheeling a perambulator. He was quite a smart young fellow, and in the perambulator there was a smart young baby. Phyllis gave the newcomer her sweet smile as he arrived—and Handforth shot him a look of deadly hatred. At the same time, his heart was beginning to thump a little more rapidly.

Phyllis bent over the pram, fondled the baby, and lifted it in her arms. And the Wembley crowds went to and fro without taking any notice. Handforth stood there, flabbergasted. Any further evidence than this was quite unnecessary.

"Well?" asked Willy, touching his arm.

"Come on!" growled Handforth. "We don't want to stick here—she might see us. Let's clear off, and go on the water chute. I'll forgive you everything, my son," he added kindly.

"Are you convinced now?"

"Of course I'm convinced!" replied Handforth. "My dear young fathead, what do you take me for? Do you think I didn't know it all the time?"

"What?" gasped Willy.

"As for being in love with her, you must be dotty!" sniffed Handforth. "Why, she's not even pretty! Just because I went in a

restaurant once or twice to have something to eat, you jump to all sorts of conclusions, and make a fuss over nothing."

"My giddy aunt!" ejaculated Willy. "If you don't take the biscuit! Ted, old son, you'll get on in this world—you've got enough nerve for twenty!"

"We don't want to discuss the matter any more!" said his major. "Girls are all the same—they're all deceitful! There's not a single exception among the whole giddy crowd!"

Willy grinned.

"What about Irene?" he asked.

"Irene?" said Handforth with a start. "Oh, well, she stands alone! Now, Irene's a girl that any chap could admire. Glorious blue eyes, lovely fair hair, and——"

"Help!" panted Willy. "Don't start that all over again, for goodness' sake! Let's go on that water chute!"

And from that moment not another word was ever spoken concerning the charming Phyllis. Later on that day Church and McClure attempted to bring up the subject, but Handforth squashed it. And there was such a light of battle in his eyes that his chums never brought it up again. They didn't know what had happened, but it was perfectly clear that Phyllis no longer held first place in Edward Oswald's affections.

For many days afterwards the very sight of rolls and butter caused him to shy like a frightened stag. And although he thought the Wembley Exhibition was jolly good, he decided that he had seen quite enough to satisfy him over Whitsuntide!

THE END.

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No. 1. HANDFORTH'S GREAT IDEA.

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

CHAPTER I.

THE RACE TO SURF ISLAND.

"**C**OME on the Tigers—let 'em have it!"

Edward Oswald Handforth, the leader of the Tiger Patrol, gave a roar of encouragement as he plied his oar. Unfortunately, he plied it rather too vigorously, and he scooped up about a pailful of sea-water, and deposited it in the steersman's lap.

"Look out, you ass!" howled Church.

"Don't make a fuss over nothing!" snapped Handforth, as he carried on. "Those Wolves are getting ahead of us—and don't forget we challenged them. If we don't win this race, I'll never speak to any of you again!"

"Let's lose it!" said Church, promptly appealing to the others.

"It wouldn't be a bad idea," grinned Owen major, "but we've got the honour of the Patrol to think of. We're not going to let those silly Modern House chaps beat us in a race like this!"

"Not likely!" panted McClure. "Put your backs into it!"

The boat contained six juniors of the Fourth Form at St. Frank's. They were the Tiger Patrol, of the 1st St. Frank's Boy Scout Troop. And near by, almost on a level, sped another boatload of six—the Wolf Patrol, of the 2nd St. Frank's Boy Scout Troop.

It was merely an informal race, decided upon on the spur of the moment, but it was none the less interesting on that account. The rival scouts were keen upon showing their prowess in a rowing boat at sea, and there can be no doubt that the weather conditions were ideal for the project.

It was a glorious summer's afternoon, and Shingle Bay, just round the Sussex coast from Caistowe, was glistening and gleaming with the warm sunlight. The sea was calm and tranquil, the sky blue and cloudless. And near by the great column of the Shingle Rock Lighthouse rose majestically above all.

The picture was a charming one, but the

twelve scouts had no eyes for scenic beauty at the moment. They were putting all their efforts into the rowing, and as yet the two boats were on a dead level. So far it was anybody's race.

The St. Frank's scout troops—three of them altogether—were encamped on the downs, just above Shingle Bay. It was a half holiday, and the scouts were enjoying themselves in their own strenuous fashion. For this was no holiday camp—but part and parcel of the summer term.

St. Frank's was undergoing drastic alterations, and there was only room for the seniors in the old school. The juniors, rather than allow themselves to be distributed in sixes and sevens throughout other schools, had elected to become boy scouts, and go into camp. And lessons had been going on in much the usual way.

The fellows were thoroughly enjoying the mixture of school and camp life. And on this particular afternoon there had been a little argument on the beach. Handforth had airily declared that he and his Tigers could beat any other patrol in a rowing race to Surf Island.

And Boots, the leader of the Wolves, had accepted the challenge. Swift preparations had been made. Nipper, and Pitt, and a good many others had rowed out to Surf Island in advance—so that the finish of the race could be officially recorded.

Other scouts had remained behind, and were following at leisure. They had started the racers off, and the contest was now in progress. John Busterfield Boots and his Wolves were grimly determined to win the honour for their own Troop.

The two boats were just ordinary rowing craft, and not especially made for racing. This merely added to the interest of the proceedings. The "course" was roughly two miles. Surf Island lying at the entrance of a neighbouring bay, where the tiny fishing village of Langdon nestled under the brow of the cliffs.

"Go it, Oxford!" grinned Buster Boots, from the rival boat.

"You'd better keep your breath, old man—you'll want it all later on!" roared Handforth, as he pulled his oar. "It's a fat-headed idea, shouting across to us, and wasting your energy!"

"Souise me!" chuckled Tom Burton. "What are you doing, messmate?"

"Eh? By George!" said Handforth, with a start. "Yes, we'd better put our backs into the rowing, hadn't we? It seems to me the steersmen have got the best job in this race!"

"Don't jaw so much, Handy!" said Church severely. "They're beating us!"

This was a slight exaggeration. The Wolves were certainly forging slowly ahead, but it was a matter which could soon be remedied. Tom Burton was a member of the Tiger Patrol—and the Bo'sun could be relied upon to do wonders in an emergency. He was fairly in his element now.

"Good!" sang out Church. "We're round the headland! Now for the long, straight sweep home! Go it, you chaps!"

But the Wolves were "going it," too, and now they were off with a vengeance. Handforth gave a startled exclamation as he saw that he and his men were being left in the rear.

"Buck up!" he gasped. "They're whacking us——"

"Steady on, shipmate!" interrupted Burton. "Let 'em tire themselves out. Plenty of time yet—we'll get into harbour first."

"You fathead! They're nearly a length ahead!" snorted Handforth.

He drove his blade into the water with such energy that he scooped up another pailful for Church's benefit, and with the next stroke he caught a crab with such neatness and exhibition that he crashed over backwards into the well of the boat with a startled roar.

Confusion reigned, for all the other oarsmen were put off their stroke.

"Oh you hopeless ass!" yelled Church. "That's done it! We've lost the race now—and I'm soaked to the skin!"

Handforth scrambled up and grabbed his oar just as it was disappearing.

"What—what happened?" he gasped. "Who did that?"

"You did, of course!" snapped McClure. "Of all the clumsy cuckoos! Fancy catching a crab in the middle of a race! Look at the Wolves now—they're miles ahead!"

Handforth looked round dazedly.

"I can't see any crab!" he said indignantly. "I didn't catch anything, you idiot! Something went wrong with my oar!"

Handforth always took everybody literally, and he was too excited to realise the actual truth of the expression. For Buster Boots and his men were now a considerable distance ahead, and well on the way to victory.

CHAPTER II.

THE ISLAND PARADISE.

TOM BURTON had given one glance at the distances, and now he was settling down to his rowing with a grim expression on his usually sunny countenance.

"The race isn't lost yet!" he declared. "Come on, Handy—let's have some real rowing—and no more crabs! We'll beat the Wolves yet!"

"By George, rather!" panted Handforth fiercely.

He was just beginning to realise that he was the cause of all the delay, and he was consequently rather subdued. He put every ounce of his power and strength into his rowing—and the others were equally energetic. The Wolves, on the other hand, were now taking things comparatively easily.

They felt that the race was theirs. They adopted the fatal policy—employed by many professional football teams—of slackening down when they had a useful lead. And before they were aware of it their opponents had taken them by surprise.

On the last lap, and with Tom Burton now bringing his reserve power into use, the Tiger's boat fairly hissed over the green, smooth water. They were overtaking the Wolves at a great pace.

The winning post was now close at hand. And both steersmen were concentrating their efforts on guiding the boats accurately. Immediately ahead lay a narrow, sandy bay—and there were two boats at the entrance, one on either side. One was occupied by Nipper and Watson and the other Lions—while the second boat contained Reggie Pitt and his Hawks. It was for them to announce the winner.

The first competing boat over the invisible line would gain the honours.

"Come on, Tigers!" yelled Reggie Pitt encouragingly. "You'll do it!"

"Hurrah!"

Buster Boots realised, at the last moment, that victory was liable to be snatched out of his grasp. He gave a panting warning to his Patrol, and they all used their last burst of speed.

But the Tigers were now sweeping on in magnificent style, and no amount of effort on the part of their rivals could deprive them of the victory. They swept through the gap between the judges' boats, the winners by a bare half-length. The Wolves had been beaten at the post.

"Jolly good!" shouted Pitt. "Tigers win!"

"What?" gurgled Buster Boots. "Rats! We got through first——"

"We didn't, old man," gasped Percy Bray. "They just about pipped us, the beggars! Our own fault, too—for slacking down. Still, it was a jolly good race, so we can't grumble."

But Buster Boots grumbled considerably—particularly at himself for having taken victory for granted. Their boat grounded on the soft sand, they leapt ashore, and flung themselves down.

The Tigers had done the same, but after a brief rest, they had recovered their breath and were themselves again. By this time the other boats had drawn in, and the little beach was crowded.

"A jolly good race!" said Dick Hamilton, the leader of the Lions—otherwise known as Nipper. "Of course, we knew that you Modern House chaps would be whacked——"

"Oh, did you?" interrupted Buster, frowning. "It was only by a piece of luck that Handforth and his crowd stole a march on us. But we don't want to hold an inquest over the giddy race. Who says a bathe?"

"Haven't got any costumes," objected Church.

"Costumes?" grinned Reggie Pitt. "Who wants costumes on Surf Island? We're a mile from the nearest mainland, and this island is uninhabited. All the doctors say that if you bathe without a costume you get more benefit!"

The others grinned, and a kind of undressing contest took place. It was indeed glorious to be perfectly free—to know that they could not be overlooked in any circumstances. What Reggie Pitt said was perfectly true. Surf Island was absolutely deserted.

Yet, strictly speaking it didn't deserve to be.

In its own way, it was a veritable summer paradise. In the winter it was a bleak, wind-swept scrap of land, well nigh unapproachable. But in midsummer the tiny isle was a glorious spot.

It belonged to Sir James Woodbridge, and was really a part of his estate—which consisted of Langdon, and all the neighbouring hamlets. Sir James was a big landowner in the district.

Roughly, Surf Island was about half a mile long by a quarter of a mile wide, and it lay in the middle of the entrance of Langdon Bay. Thus, in wintertime it bore the full brunt of every storm that blew.

On the seaward side the shore was unapproachable—being nothing but high cliffs and treacherous rocks. These cliffs continued almost entirely round the island—the only available landing place being the little bay in which the juniors were now gaily disporting themselves. It had no actual name, but the St. Frank's fellows had christened it Sandy Cove. On no other part of the island could a boating party effect a landing.

Not that the place was a mere mass of rock. A hill sloped upwards from the bay, and down it trickled a glistening stream of pure spring water. There were ferns galore, bushes, weeds, and in one or two hollows

considerable sized trees grew. There were one or two spinneys. And there were rabbits, squirrels, and birds in abundance.

As a bathing place, Sandy Cove would require some beating. The water was clear, warm, and underfoot there was nothing but a stretch of the smoothest sand. There wasn't a single pebble to stub anybody's toe. And the privacy of the place added to its charm.

"Well, I suppose we shall have to be getting back," remarked Nipper, after they had all dressed. "It's getting on for tea-time, and it'll take us half an hour or more to do the trip. What's up, Handy? You're looking as solemn as a boiled owl!"

Handforth was standing quite still, gazing at the island with an expression of dreamy, abstracted contentment on his rugged face.

"Why not?" he murmured, as though to himself. "There's no reason why it shouldn't be done. Crusoes, by George! Finding our own grub, building our own shelters, and things like that! Why not?"

What wonderful flash of inspiration has passed through Handy's brain? Is it just one of his many wild-cat schemes, or has he this time stumbled upon something, as he occasionally does, with a touch of genius in it? From the few disjointed utterances of Handy's thoughts given at the end of the above chapter, it is apparent that this amazing junior has hit upon quite a brilliant idea.

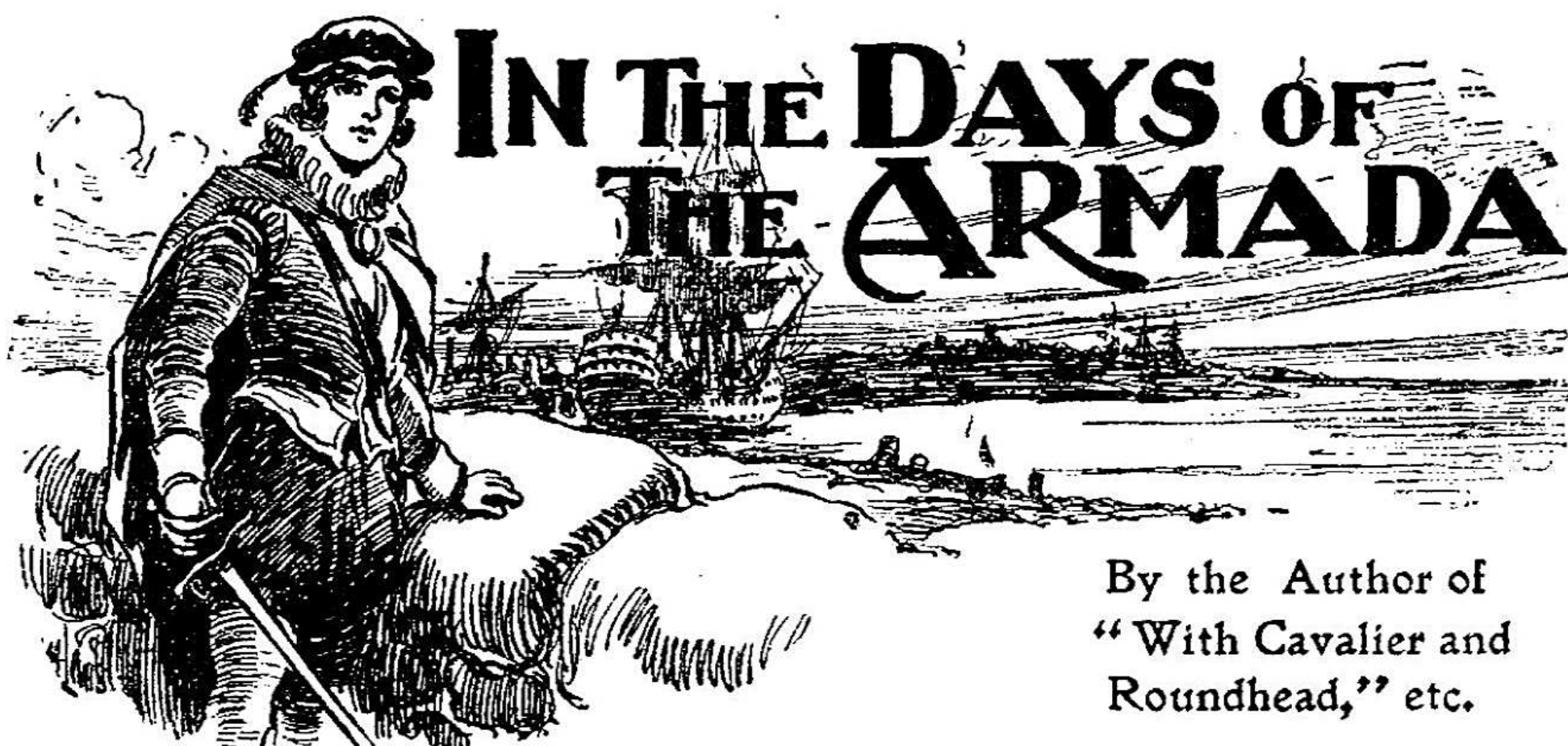
The island may not be a mere dot in the Pacific Ocean, ornamented with graceful coconut palms, nor yet covered in rich virgin sub-tropical vegetation. All that is quite unnecessary for Handy's purpose.

Here is an island, close at hand, and a number of boy scouts thirsting for adventure. All they have to do is to land on the island and imagine they have been shipwrecked and marooned on this island for a week. They are without food and shelter and must live as best they can, the only implement allowed each boy being a jack-knife.

What would you do in the circumstances? If you are a boy scout, there is no need to ask, for you will know how to hunt for food, how to light a fire without matches, and how to build yourself a shelter with the simplest of materials.

Such, briefly, is Handforth's scheme. How it develops and materialises is described in the remaining chapters of "THE CRUSOE SCOUTS!" appearing in this week's number of "The Boys' Realm." It is the opening story of a rattling new series of St. Frank's stories, which Mr. Brooks is writing specially for "The Boys' Realm." You can get a copy to-day, for "The Boys' Realm" comes out the same day as THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY.

**A STIRRING TALE OF A BRITISH BOY'S EXPLOITS WHEN SIR FRANCIS DRAKE
SAILED THE HIGH SEAS.**



By the Author of
"With Cavalier and
Roundhead," etc.

FOR NEW READERS.—The story begins in 1587, when Giles Montford, the sixteen-year-old master of Templeton, decides to take up arms under Drake against the Spaniards, in defiance of his uncle, Don Ferdinand Gonzales, who has invited him to go over to Spain. Giles is sent to London on an important mission, and returns with a dispatch from the queen to Admiral Drake. He has barely arrived back at Templeton when the house is rushed by five Spanish soldiers, and Giles is overpowered and carried off to some unknown destination.

(Now read on.)

AFTER a furious ride of at least two hours the lad's surmise proved to be correct, and his last hope of freedom vanished when the party halted and dismounted within earshot of the hoarse pounding of the surf. The horses, which had doubtless been stolen from some of the moor-farms, were turned free.

A climb down a steep and rocky cliff came next; then a hurried embarkation in two boats, and a perilous dash through waves and surf. Giles sat on a stern sheet between two of his captors, listening to the quick rattle of the oars, and the boom of the breakers on the rapidly receding coast of dear old England.

Suddenly there was a loud and peremptory hail from the left, and as the Spaniards stopped rowing for an instant, with muttered words of alarm, the dip and splash of other oars were plainly heard. Instantly a volley of pistol-shots was fired from the strange craft, and the balls

whistled overhead. Above the sounds of confusion and alarm, De Rica's voice shouted a fierce command to pull hard.

Giles was trembling from head to foot, and his heart was beating with the excitement of sudden hope. He knew that friends were near, and that he stood a chance of being rescued. By a hard effort of his tongue, he spat the gag from his mouth, and uttered a shrill cry for help.

Instantly there was a savage order from De Rica, an oath from one of the Spaniards next the lad, and then Giles felt a stunning blow on the head from a blunt instrument. His head seemed to be splitting, and consciousness left him as he fell forward in the bottom of the boat.

When memory and life ebbed back to our young hero, he was lying, with a sadly aching head, on a soft couch. The couch was part of the furniture of a tiny cabin, the general appearance of which savoured of taste and refinement. A swinging lamp was burning with a smoky glare, in spite of the fact that daylight was peeping through a small casement close to the ceiling.

It needed no words to tell the lad he was on board a vessel. He could feel a constant quiver and shake, and overhead he could hear the tramp of feet on deck and the whistle of the sea-breeze through cordage and sails.

Giles tenderly felt a heavy bruise on the back of his head. Then he rose, and staggered across the floor to the door. He found it locked, and as he was too ill and weak to force it open, he crawled back to the couch and sat down to think.

The more he pondered the less he liked

the situation. The locked door showed clearly that he was a captive. So then, after he had been brutally stunned for shouting to his friends, the Spaniards must have given their pursuers the slip, and safely reached the waiting vessel. By now the English coast was doubtless many leagues behind, and the ship was driving under full stress for Spain.

What with worry for the mysterious fate his captors intended for him, and anxiety concerning Stephen Trent and the Queen's dispatches, Giles was soon in a turmoil of anger and indignation. He could not sit still, and as he paced restlessly up and down the narrow limits of the cabin he heard quick steps descending from the deck.

CHAPTER XI.

III WHICH GILES AND DON FERDINAND MEET EACH OTHER.

AN instant later the door opened, and a superbly tall and graceful man entered the cabin. From head to feet he was garbed in lace and velvet, and the blade dangling at his side showed a jewelled hilt. Rarely proud and handsome was his face, with its tawny skin, its dark lustrous eyes, and its twisted beard and moustache. But the countenance was marred by the imprint of an evil and dissipated life—a life of unbridled indulgence wine-bibbing cruelty and hatred.

The stranger might have seen fifty birthdays, and as Giles shot a glance at him, there flashed across his memory the portrait of his mother that hung in the hall at Templeton. He knew the man instantly, and his face blazed with sudden passion.

Don Ferdinand, on the contrary, seemed dazed and stupefied. He looked at the lad with dark, suspicion and doubt.

"A pest on the blundering fools!" he muttered, in Spanish. "There has been a mistake. They have carried off the wrong one!"

"I wish they had!" exclaimed Giles, coming closer. "I know you, Don Ferdinand Gonzales, and I promise you shall suffer dearly for this!"

"Ah, you do not lack the family temper, at least," said the Don in a sardonic tone. "For the rest, you are nine parts English. It seems that nature may not always be trusted. And so you are indeed my nephew—the son of Francis Montford?"

"Ay, and the son of your sister, Ina Gonzales," Giles burst out; "of her whom you persecuted and hated, whom you sought to drag back to your vile land!"

The Don frowned, and then shrugged his shoulders carelessly.

"I must make a reckoning for the way you have been brought up," he said. "We will mend all that in the future. The ties

of blood are stronger than those of country, my dear nephew——"

"Each is equally strong with me," interrupted Giles. "The memory of my mother's wrongs makes you hateful to me. Let us be done with kinship and affection. You have basely stolen me from home. What is your purpose?"

"I gave you an opportunity to come of your own free-will," replied Don Ferdinand, as he seated himself, "but you chose to treat my letter and envoy with insult. Nay, more than that, you took a part in the happily successful attempts to frustrate the leading object of my visit to England. It may please you to know that a dozen refugees are now safe on board, and that the vessel is safely under way for Spain. You are over-young, my nephew, to have a finger in the affairs of State."

"My hand and sword will ever be ready to do service for England against the bigoted Spaniards!" exclaimed Giles.

"Provided you have a chance to use them," said the Don quickly, "and that you do not alter your mind shortly. But now for your question. I am unmarried, and my immediate relatives are dead. Blood is thicker than water, and I longed for one to whom I could give affection and trust—who would cheer the loneliness of my stately mansion in the city of Seville, and the ancestral castle on the banks of the Guadalquivir. Who so fitting for this as my English-born nephew? I pictured him sustaining the glory and renown of our family, doing service for Church and State, fighting for Spain's supremacy on land and sea——"

"I pray you rid yourself of that belief at once, Don Ferdinand," Giles interrupted. "You may hold me captive, but you will never weaken by one jot my loyalty to England or my hatred of Spain. I will be torn to pieces before I lift my hand or sword against my countrymen. I have been steeped from childhood in these beliefs. Indeed, I marvel at times that I had a Spanish mother."

The Don looked at the lad with a frown of anger, and with something of doubt and wonderment still in his eyes. Nor could he quite conceal a trace of reluctant admiration.

"We English are blunt-spoken," Giles went on, in a calmer tone, "and we have a habit of breaking the shell of a flowery speech and picking out the kernel that it sometimes contains. It sounds very well for you to prate of affection and kinship, but what does the fortune that I happen to be master of? Does that play no part in this knavish trick?"

Don Ferdinand laughed curtly.

"You doubtless think you have unmasked me," he said, with a sneer. "But not so. I was on the point of mentioning the

matter myself. And who, indeed, hath a fairer right? The quarrel that split our family asunder was of my father's choosing. Because I held fast to home and country, was he justified in robbing me of my inheritance? The wealth that passed to my sister and then to you clearly belonged to me. I admit that a part of it will be welcome. For a Spanish gentleman of high estate, I am sadly impoverished. My house and castle are as bare as one of your English moors."

"They need be so no longer!" cried Giles. "Put me safe back on the coast of England, and you shall have what you ask—even to the whole of my fortune."

"Which is not in your power to bestow," replied the Don. "Think you your guardian would consent? Would he yield up such wealth to enrich the coffers of a nobleman of Spain? Not so. I shall take good care of you, my fiery young nephew, until England's pride is laid low by this coming invasion of such a fleet as the world never saw before. Then, for the asking, you may have your fortune thrown into your hands. We will make good use of it together."

"You boast of what can never happen," cried Giles mockingly and angrily. "Your fleet—or what be left of it—will sail away from England faster than it ever came. There is not a man in Devonshire but can hold his own against three Spaniards. You know something of this from late affairs, and you know, too, what we have done in Holland."

Don Ferdinand was stirred at last to serious passion. His eyes flashed and his breath came faster.

"Curb your babbling tongue!" he muttered, with a fiery imprecation. "It is true that you have shed Spanish blood, and to save you from the sword my influence has barely availed. A rash speech overheard will be your undoing. We understand each other now, and no more need be said."

"You are a true Gonzales," he added, "and in your present mind threats and fair words would be alike useless. You shall have time for reflection. Under my house in Seville is a dungeon that has broken many a more stubborn spirit than yours. A year or two in that foul hole, and I shall be able to bend you like a reed."

With this the Don strode from the cabin, closing and securing the door behind him. Giles was left alone with his misery, and for an hour he fought hard against a crushing weight of utter hopelessness. Chance of escape there was none; to expect Don Ferdinand to relent was equally vain.

The certain prospect of a long and indefinite captivity in Spain had to be faced, and though the lad bitterly realised that he was done with his fair English home, and with his bright dreams of a soldier's life, his youthful and plucky heart kept him from utterly breaking down.

He was able to do fair justice to the breakfast that a Spanish sailor brought him, as also to dinner and supper. But without any occupation the time passed drearily, and that first day on his prison-ship was precisely like those that followed. He saw no more of his uncle, though he would have welcomed a passage of sharp words as a relief. The same sailor brought all his meals to him, but he was a surly fellow, and could not be tempted to talk or answer any questions.

The cabin was evidently in a remote part of the vessel, and the conversation of crew and passengers reached the lad's ears only as an indistinct jumble. On the third day out from England his hopes were raised high, and then suddenly and cruelly shattered. The Spanish ship had a brush with a hostile craft, and for a time there was a lively cannonade from a quarter opposite to that on which the casement opened.

Giles could see nothing, and in an hour all sounds of pursuit died away, and quiet reigned overhead again. After that followed nearly a week of stormy and perilous weather, and then more than a week of calm, when the cabin floor was level as a table, and the ship sped safely and swiftly over the blue Atlantic.

It was the middle of April, as well as Giles could calculate, when he heard the anchors dropped during the night, and felt the vessel straining at its hawsers. He was too sleepy to pay much attention, but when he rose in the morning, and climbed on a chair to look out of the casement, he saw a strange and beautiful sight.

The foreground of his view was a tranquil harbour, crowded with vessels of all sorts and sizes—galleys, transports, storeships, and numerous smaller craft. Through the maze of the shipping could be seen a vast walled town of snow-white houses, and cathedral spires, with grim-looking batteries in front.

From its appearance Giles had little doubt that this was the ancient and wealthy Spanish port of Cadiz, which was settled by the Phoenicians three hundred years before the founding of Rome. But before he could get more than a hasty glimpse the Spanish sailor entered the cabin, made him climb down from his perch, and then posted himself on guard at the casement.

At intervals, all through the day, people seemed to be leaving and coming aboard the vessel. It was long after dark when Giles was taken on deck, muffled in a cloak, and lowered into a row-boat in company with Don Ferdinand, De Rica, and four sailors.

After nearly an hour of intricate steering through the crowded shipping the party landed, and entered the town by one of the gates. Here they split in two, the sailors hastening off towards the cheerful lights of an inn, while De Rica and the Don led their captive through a couple of quiet and lonely streets to a stone house standing amid trees and shrubbery.

From the demeanour of the servants who opened the door and waited upon the arrivals, Giles judged that De Rica was the master of the dwelling. He had little time to note the interior, for his captors led him quickly to the second floor, and locked him in a small apartment containing a bed, a table, and two chairs.

Here the lad spent four lonely days. The one window opened on a blank wall a few feet away, and he could see nothing. Neither De Rica nor the Don came near him, and his meals were brought to him by a sour-faced and close-mouthed old woman.

Giles was beginning to think that his present quarters were to continue indefinitely when he went to bed on the fifth night. Towards morning he was suddenly awakened by a confused and distinct noise. As he sat up, listening to the shouts and running feet, Don Ferdinand and De Rica entered the room.

"Prepare yourself for a journey, and be quick about it!" said the Don, handing the lad a cloak and hat.

CHAPTER XII.

IN WHICH GILES IS STRANGELY SAVED FROM THE DUNGEON IN SEVILLE.

WITH a sinking heart Giles obeyed the summons. Unpleasant as were his present quarters, he much preferred them to the dungeon under the house in Seville. Moreover, the chances of escape from an inland town would be far less than from a seaport.

But it was useless to remonstrate or plead, and the lad passively submitted to be led out of the house, and thence to a stable in the rear of the grounds. Though he did not know the hour nor the date, it was early dawn of the morning of the 19th of April.

Three spirited horses were waiting behind the stable, and the party hurriedly mounted. They passed through a gate in the garden wall, which was opened for them by a servant, and rode at a trot along a street that was lined mostly with blank walls. From all sides, but at a distance, could be heard a hoarse turmoil and din.

Giles rode between his captors, and each kept a hand on the bridle of the lad's horse. As they advanced the commotion grew louder and louder, and hurrying people frequently stopped the way. At last, with an angry exclamation, Don Ferdinand checked his steed on the edge of a cross-street that was for the moment completely blocked. He carried on a brief conversation in whispers with De Rica as to the expediency of turning back in search of another and less obstructed route, but it ended in their deciding to wait.

The shifting scenes now in front of Giles were full of strange and thrilling interest to him. The thoroughfare stretching right and left was one of the principal streets

of the town, and at this dark and chilly hour of the morning it was ablaze with torches and noisy with jostling crowds.

In one direction hurried cannon on rude trucks, carts of powder and ball, mounted officers, and companies of Spanish soldiers; in the other, groups of people were passing, both on horse and foot, their arms encumbered with household property. There was such a roar of voices that nothing could be heard to tell what the confusion meant; and, to add to the panic and alarm, one of the deep-toned cathedral bells suddenly began to clang.

At first Giles thought that the Armada—the great fleet being prepared by the Spanish king—was on the point of starting to invade England. But this would not account for the evident alarm and flight of the town-people.

"What has happened?" he finally ventured to inquire of his uncle. "Why are the soldiers going one way and the people another?"

Don Ferdinand turned on the lad with a curse.

"Silence!" he muttered. "These things concern you not. And see that you keep your face well muffled in your cloak. Even I should not be able to help you if the crowd discover that you are English."

Giles took this advice in good part, for he was inclined to prefer a dungeon in Seville to death at the hands of an infuriated mob. He hurriedly pulled his hat lower on his forehead, but the same movement loosened his cloak, and let it slip back on his shoulders. As he drew the garment forward, and buttoned it across his throat, he caught sight of a lad staring fixedly at him from a distance of a dozen feet.

The young stranger was about the age of Giles, and was evidently a Spaniard. Seen in the glare of a street-lamp his face was handsome and olive-coloured, and his eyes and hair were jet black. He wore a feathered bonnet on his head, and a velvet cloak was clasped about his neck. When he saw that Giles had detected his scrutiny he instantly vanished in the crowd.

Neither De Rica nor the Don observed the incident. They had eyes only for the moving procession in the centre of the street. A moment later Giles saw the lad again, and now he was standing over by the angle of a house, talking earnestly to a swarthy, shaven-faced Spaniard, who was dressed in a similar fashion.

That the consultation meant discovery and peril to himself Giles did not doubt, and he felt inclined to call the Don's attention to the matter. But before he could make up his mind the strangers disappeared, and he looked for them in vain.

Five minutes later there was a gap in the obstructing procession, and Don Ferdinand and De Rica took instant advantage of it to spur across the street with their prisoner. They made the passage without attracting observation, and rode safely into a narrow

and gloomy thoroughfare, where lamps were few and far between, and pedestrians seemed equally scarce.

They rode straight on at a canter for nearly a quarter of a mile, and Giles, who still felt a little alarmed, kept a sharp watch on both sides. Suddenly he fancied he saw a movement at the mouth of a dark alley on the right, and he had barely time for a warning tug at the Don's arm when two figures darted swiftly and silently into the middle of the roadway.

The Don quickly drew his weapon, and crossed steel with his antagonist. The latter's companion hastened up from behind before more than three or four blows could be exchanged, and with the butt-end of a pistol he knocked the Don out of the saddle and into the roadway, where he lay stunned and groaning.

It was all over in such a brief time that Giles was fairly dazed. He recognised the assailants as the identical man and lad who had occasioned him such alarm a short time



"Down with you!" he exclaimed, in a husky voice, as he pulled him forcibly from the saddle. "There is no time to lose if we would save you from recapture and ourselves from a worse fate."

The attack was so sudden and unexpected that little chance was given of defence, and none of flight. With a sharp cry, De Rica dropped the bridle of the lad's horse, and sought to draw his sword. But before he could accomplish it one of the assailants slipped around him, and dealt his horse a furious slash across the flank. The maddened animal instantly dashed up the street at a gallop, with De Rica still clinging to the saddle, and shouting at the top of his voice.

Meantime, the second stranger had caught Don Ferdinand's steed in one hand, while with the other he whipped out his sword.

before, and he was at a loss to understand why they had directed their attack at his companions instead of at him. At all events, here was a chance of escape, and he determined to make the best of it.

But before he could jerk his horse round, the young Spaniard seized the bridle, and his companion, divining the situation, hurried forward and caught hold of Giles' arm.

"Down with you!" he exclaimed, in a husky voice, as he pulled him forcibly from the saddle. "There is no time to lose if we would save you from recapture, and ourselves from a worse fate. We must get clear of the town before daylight."

Giles felt his heart throbbing with a fierce joy, and he was sorely puzzled as well. The man had spoken in perfect English, and though he had a bad cold in his throat there was something strangely familiar in his tone and accent.

But it was no time now for questioning. Don Ferdinand was groaning loudly, and up the street, in the direction taken by De Rica, a tumult of voices and running feet could be heard. From the opposite direction there was also an outcry, while the immediate neighbourhood bade fair to be speedily aroused. Casements were being thrown open, and here and there a dark figure was peering from the footway, afraid to venture closer to see what the scuffle meant.

"Take the lead, lad, the elder Spaniard directed his companion. "In this Spanish town I'm worse off than a West-countryman in London. Have you got the proper bearings?"

"Ay, perfectly," was the reply. "We are no great distance from the south gate—the one by which we entered."

As he spoke, a soldier ran out from the footway on the left, uttering a noisy shout, and brandishing a pike.

"Off with you, lads!" cried the elder Spaniard. "I'll attend to this knave while you get a fair start. I'll join you in a moment, never fear."

The Spanish lad nodded, and taking Giles by the arm, he dragged him hurriedly into the dark alley on the right. As they ran swiftly on, they heard a pistol-shot behind them, and then a shrill cry. The elder Spaniard soon overtook them, and by twisting and turning from one dark street to another they speedily got beyond earshot of the pursuit and turmoil.

Next they came to a quarter of the town that was full of people and soldiers hastening in all directions, but by reason of this very fact, and by their daring boldness, the fugitives attracted no attention. All three were dressed like Spaniards, and Giles took good care to keep his cloak over his face.

The youth led the way with speedy and unerring skill, and finally brought his companions safe to one of the town gates. They slipped through in company with a score of others, unchallenged by the sentries, and found themselves on a road bordered by villas and gardens.

It was still quite dark, but by the time they had gone a mile, the east began to glow with colour. Few persons were visible now, and the villas and gardens had given place to lonely olive-groves and vineyards. The approach of dawn quickened their steps, and at last they turned aside into a strip of shrubbery and trees.

Another quarter of a mile, and they emerged on a sandy beach. Here they stopped a moment to gain breath, and by the grey light of early morning Giles beheld a beautiful sight.

To the left stretched the level shore, its monotony relieved by jutting rocks and

clumps of foliage. To the right, a mile along the coast, lay the shining walls and roofs of Cadiz, completely hiding the harbour, which was situated beyond. In front of the fugitives the blue Atlantic was lost in the horizon, and half a dozen vessels, anchored widely apart, were tossing with the waves.

The pause was a short one, and the elder Spaniard hastily led the way to a cove between the rocks, where a small boat was swinging in the gentle surf.

"In with you!" he said. "We are not out of danger yet. I had hoped the darkness would last till we were clear of yonder vessels. However, that outermost ship may be standing by to give us aid."

As he spoke, he pointed to a good-sized vessel that was beating to and fro at a distance of a mile off the coast. Then, his companions being by this time seated in the stern, he took the oars and drove the boat rapidly beyond the surf. In a short time the beach was several yards to the rear.

Giles could scarcely credit his good fortune as he gazed around him and felt the crisp sea-air blowing on his cheeks. He looked keenly and curiously at his companions, and the conviction grew upon him that the man at the oars was neither a Spaniard nor a stranger.

"You have saved me from a bitter fate, good sirs," he said, "and I truly know not with what words to sufficiently thank you. I pray you tell me who you are, and how you chanced to come to my rescue so timely."

The elder of the supposed Spaniards chuckled as he let the oars rest. Then he dipped both hands in the water and rubbed them vigorously over his face.

"Do you know me now, Master Giles?" he cried, exposing a countenance that was streaked with brown over its ruddy skin.

Giles gave one keen look, and then he was so stupefied that he could only stare in open-mouthed wonder and delight.

"You!" he gasped, and even as the word fell from his lips there was a clatter of hoofs on the shore, followed by hoarse cries and a couple of pistol-shots.

At the same instant a dull cannonade opened from the harbour beyond the distant town.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN WHICH THE FUGITIVES ARE SAVED BY THE GUNS OF THE DAME MARY.

EVEN the sight of a group of a half-dozen horsemen, who had urged their steeds to the edge of the surf, could not cause Giles either alarm or excitement at the present moment. He thought of nothing but his wonderful and joyous discovery. The man at the oars was none other than trusty Stephen Trent.

But Trent and his companion, having been in the secret all the time, gave instant attention to the threatening danger. Giles was

very speedily roused to a like mind by the shrill whistle of a ball close overhead.

"There are six of the scurvy knaves," cried the strange lad, turning partly round in his seat. "I can make out the one whose horse galloped up the street with him."

"Yes, it is De Rica," exclaimed Giles, "and those with him are soldiers. I don't see anything of Don Ferdinand."

"Ay, and little wonder," muttered Trent. "I doubt if he plants his legs under him for a week to come. Steady now, and I'll soon spin this craft out of reach of their powder-spitting."

With lusty strokes he bent to the oars, and at every sweep of his long, muscular arms the boat made a perceptible spurt over the waves.

"Down with you, lads," he added. "It's naught but folly to offer so fair a mark to the Spanish villains."

Accordingly, Giles and his seat-mate crouched low in the bottom of the boat, and from this safe shelter they listened to the straggling fire that was still being sent after them.

Trent pulled calmly away, shrugging his shoulders at every shot. Finally, when a bullet grazed the very top of his head, he lost patience and temper. He dropped the oars, whipped a cumbrous pistol from his belt, and pulled trigger with a quick aim.

The deafening report was followed by a hoarse cry. Trent laughed grimly as he restored the weapon to its place, and took hold of the oars again. The lads ventured to lift their heads and look shoreward. They saw a still form lying on the sand and a riderless horse tearing madly up the beach.

There was a lull in the firing now, and Trent took advantage of it to pull with all his might. Presently the shooting began again, but on finding the balls were falling short, the baffled Spaniards put up their weapons.

As there was nothing more to fear from that source, Giles and his companion crawled back to the stern seat. It was now fully daylight, and the boat was drawing near the only two ships from which trouble might be apprehended. They were anchored about half a mile apart, and Trent was aiming to pass between them.

With every few strokes he turned to look at them, taking keen note of the moving figures on the deck of each; nor did he fail to glance frequently at the shore, or back towards the vessel in the offing, which was still beating to and fro in an aimless manner.

Trent's young and mysterious companion seemed to share his apparent anxiety and watchfulness. Giles, on the contrary, was far less concerned with the possible danger at hand than with the puzzling events that were taking place at a distance—in the spacious harbour that was concealed by the walls and roofs of Cadiz.

From that direction he could hear the constant thunder and boom of cannon, mingled with the occasional spluttering of small arms: from that direction he could see clouds of powder-smoke drifting slowly up towards the blue April sky. A sudden solution of the mystery flashed across his mind, and he felt the hot blood surge to his cheeks.

"My good Stephen," he cried, "you are trying my patience sorely. What does all this mean? How did you get here, and what fighting is taking place yonder in the harbour?"

"Zounds! Master Giles, is this a time for prattling?" muttered Trent. "Let us get clear of these Spanish barks, and I'll reel you off the whole story. But this much you may know now: the growling of cannon yonder means that Sir Francis Drake's fleet is popping at the Spanish shipping in Cadiz Harbour."

"Sir Francis Drake's fleet!" echoed Giles, jumping half up with excitement and delight. "Is it really here, then? And you came with it? But the Queen's letter, Stephen—you surely delivered it?"

"Her Majesty's letter lies at the bottom of Plymouth Sound," Trent replied, "where my own hands sent it. And Sir Francis Drake never saw so much as the seal of it. As to how that blunder happened, why —"

He paused abruptly in the middle of the sentence, and his face, which was turned towards shore, showed sudden and sharp alarm. Both lads glanced in the same direction, and they saw the Spanish horsemen still grouped on the beach. They were waving cloaks and hats to the breeze, and it was plain that these actions were meant for signals.

"They hang on to their prey like otter-hounds," growled Trent, as he began pulling hard at the oars. "It's not hard to fathom what devilry they're up to, but I'm hoping they won't succeed."

The boat was now opposite and equidistant from the two anchored vessels, the exact nature of which it was impossible to tell. They had a full complement of men on board, and the fact that the crews were gathered forward or along the bulwarks showed that they were interested in the situation, whether they understood it or not.

As the fugitives kept a sharp watch on both sides, knowing that the crucial point had been reached, they beheld their worst fears realised. The meaning of the signals from the beach was suddenly interpreted by those for whom they were intended.

The vessel on the left quickly lowered a boat, and half a dozen sailors dropped into it; a moment later the vessel on the right did the same. With a rapid and steady dip of oars the two boats came skimming over the waves to head off the fugitives.

(Another Instalment of this Stirring Narrative Next Week.)

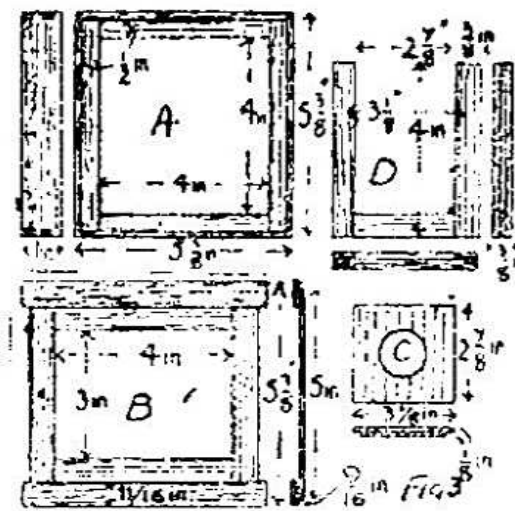
HOW TO MAKE A Quarter-Plate Stand Camera

By DICK GOODWIN

FOR anything in the way of serious photographic work, a stand camera is almost essential. They are somewhat expensive to buy, but the one shown at Fig. 1 can be made in mahogany by using prepared fretwood, obtainable in the required thicknesses ready for use. The milled screws, bushes, hinges, fittings for tripod should be purchased. The dark slides can be bought made in wood or metal, but a wooden one is shown at Fig. 2.

MAKING THE BACK.

The back is shown at A, Fig. 3, and consists of four $5\frac{3}{8}$ in. by 1 in. by $\frac{1}{8}$ in. pieces, joined together with an inner frame made of four 5 in. by $\frac{1}{2}$ in. by $\frac{1}{8}$ in. pieces, lapped halved together, is fitted in $\frac{1}{8}$ in. inside. Glue and screw these parts. The reversing back, B, is made with two pieces, 5 in. by $\frac{1}{2}$ in., and two 4 in. by 1 in., all $\frac{1}{8}$ in. thick. Place on the bench to form an inner opening, 4 in. by 3 in. Cut out two $5\frac{3}{8}$ in. by $\frac{1}{8}$ in. and two $5\frac{3}{8}$ in. by $\frac{1}{8}$ in., all $\frac{1}{8}$ in., and glue in pairs, first before gluing to the frame to form the rebates for the screen and slides.



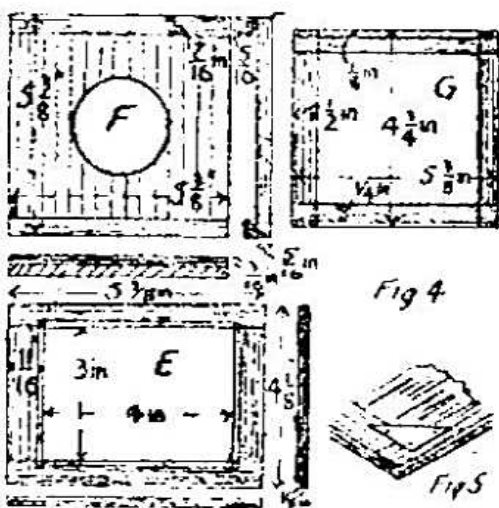
MAKING THE FRONT.

The front, C, is made of two pieces, $\frac{1}{8}$ in. thick, one $3\frac{1}{2}$ in. by $2\frac{7}{8}$ in., the other $2\frac{7}{8}$ in. square, glued

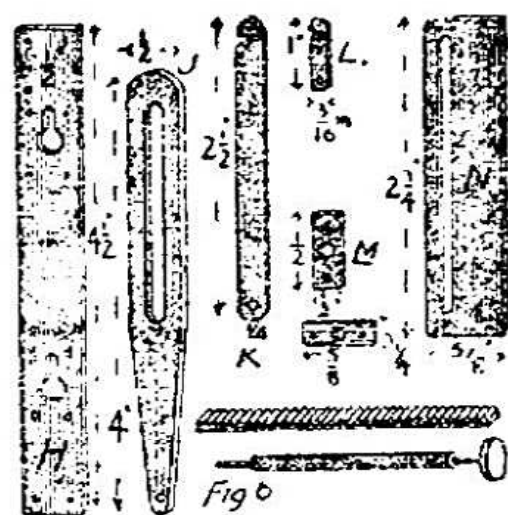
and screwed together with the grain crossed, a hole is cut to fit the lens, which should be bought. The frame, D, is also made of $\frac{1}{8}$ in. wood, four uprights are 4 in. by $\frac{3}{8}$ in., two inner ones, $3\frac{1}{2}$ in. by $\frac{1}{4}$ in., all glued together with two bottom rails, $2\frac{7}{8}$ in. by $\frac{1}{2}$ in., and one between $3\frac{1}{2}$ in. by $\frac{1}{2}$ in.

THE FOCUSING SCREEN.

The focusing screen, E, Fig. 4, frame of $\frac{1}{8}$ in. wood is made with two $4\frac{1}{2}$ in. by $\frac{1}{8}$ in., one 4 in. by $\frac{3}{8}$ in., and one 4 in. by $\frac{1}{2}$ in., on top glue two $5\frac{3}{8}$ in.

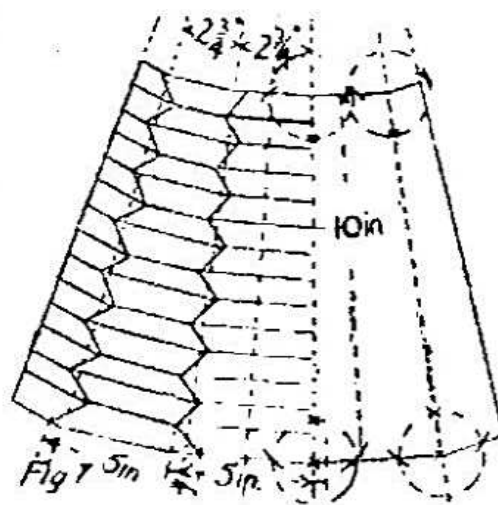


by $\frac{1}{2}$ in., and two 3 in. by $\frac{1}{8}$ in. The rebate for the glass should be made to register with the plate in the dark slide, and held in place with buttons or corner clips, as at Fig. 5. The base board, F, has one piece, $5\frac{3}{8}$ in. sq. by $\frac{1}{8}$ in., four $5\frac{3}{8}$ in. by $\frac{1}{8}$ in., two of them $\frac{1}{8}$ in. and two $\frac{1}{8}$ in. wide, all glued and screwed together. The centre hole should be large enough to allow the lens to pass. The extension frame, G, of $\frac{1}{8}$ in. wood has two pieces, $4\frac{1}{2}$ in. by $\frac{3}{8}$ in., and two $4\frac{1}{2}$ in. by $\frac{1}{2}$ in. glued to two $5\frac{3}{8}$ in. by $\frac{1}{4}$ in. and two 4 in. by $\frac{1}{2}$ in.



THE BRASS FITTINGS.

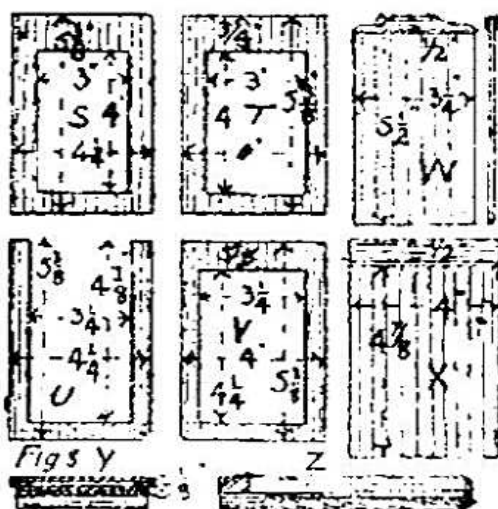
For the fittings use $\frac{1}{2}$ in. hard rolled brass. H at Fig. 6 shows the keyhole plate for fixing the front to the base board for easy removal. J the side strut for back, and K for front, L catches for closing camera, M screwed plate, and N slotted plate, for rising front, O plate for pinion P and rack R is required, but not essential.



The method of marking out the leather cloth bellows is shown at Fig. 7. This should be made in brown paper first to avoid mistakes. The centres of circles for obtaining correct angles are marked X.

THE DARK SLIDE.

The dark slide is formed with five pieces of $\frac{1}{8}$ in. wood, S, T, U, V, and W marked out to the sizes shown, S is $5\frac{3}{8}$ in. by $4\frac{1}{2}$ in., with 4 in. by 3 in. opening, T is $5\frac{3}{8}$ in. by 4 in., with 4 in. by 3 in. opening, U is $5\frac{3}{8}$ in. by $4\frac{1}{2}$ in., with $4\frac{1}{2}$ in. by $3\frac{1}{2}$ in. opening, V is $5\frac{3}{8}$ in. by 4 in., with $4\frac{1}{2}$ in. by $3\frac{1}{2}$ in. opening. W is the slide with one piece 5 in. by $3\frac{1}{2}$ in., and a shaped top $3\frac{1}{2}$ in. by $\frac{1}{2}$ in., glued together. The back, X, is $4\frac{1}{2}$ in. by 4 in., with a top 4 in. by $\frac{1}{2}$ in., both pieces are $\frac{1}{8}$ in. thick and are hinged together. Pieces S and U are glued first, then V and T. A spring is attached to the inside of X to keep the plate in position. The views at Y and Z show the end and side respectively.



FINISHING.

The woodwork should be carefully glass-papered and coated on the outside with brush polish and the inside coated with dead black. The brass-work is polished with fine pumice powder and coated with transparent lacquer applied while the metal is warm with a camel-hair brush.

BETWEEN OURSELVES**The Author Chats to his Readers****We publish below a few replies held over from last week.—Ed.**

There's one phrase in your letter, Olive, that I'm going to criticise. You hope I won't think you've got an awful cheek for writing to me. Where does the cheek come in? I want you to write—as often as possible, and as lengthily as you like. Other readers have sometimes commenced by remarking that they have at last plucked up their courage. Now, please let me make this quite clear. It doesn't need any courage whatever, and it's not cheeky to write to me. Every letter I get is welcome. It doesn't matter what you've got to say, or how you say it—I value your opinions and suggestions. So your father, Olive, told you the other day that Our Paper is a treat, always witty, clean, and British. Please thank your father for his nice comments. Needless to say, I agree with you that he is a brick.

Yes, John C. White, I can answer your question. Did a forger named James Sutcliffe, commonly known as "Jim the Penman," ever really live? No. Douglas James Sutcliffe was one of my own creations, but in the first story concerning him (NELSON LEE LIBRARY No. 39.—"The Lightning Clue") he made this remark: "As my name happens to be Jim, and as I seem to remember something about a fellow named Jim the Penman, I don't see why I shouldn't adopt the pseudonym myself." And in that same story Nelson Lee says: "There was a famous character named Jim the Penman, but here we have Jim No. 2." That's just the truth of it. The original of Jim the Penman actually lived, and his name was James Townsend Saward. He had an extraordinary career. A barrister by profession, he went to the bad, and became associated with a huge criminal organisation. He committed forgeries in England, France, Spain, and other countries, and evaded the authorities until 1857. Finally, he died in prison, after being sentenced to penal servitude for life. And in the course of his criminal career his forgeries netted him over a hundred thousand pounds.

Yes, J. Cooke, by all means start having the Old Paper as well as the NELSON LEE LIBRARY. This'll be easy, for they are one and the same. Didn't you know it? "The Old Paper" is merely an affectionate way of referring to the NELSON LEE LIBRARY. But in case other readers in addition to yourself think it is a separate publication, I am now always referring to our little journal as "Our Paper." So I hope there won't be any more confusion.

Here's the information you want, L. Stanley. Lord Dorrmore first appeared in No. 105 of Our Paper, and the title was "The Ivory Seekers."

You miss an interesting point, Kenneth M. Douglas. In your opinion, the dramatic element in the recent cricketing series was unnecessary. You would have liked the stories better without any interest beyond the main theme. You think the humour would have given enough relief. Now, I wonder if the majority of readers think the same? I'd very much like to know this, and I shall plan my future stories according to your verdict. And while I'm on the subject, I'll deal with it at length.

Which do you prefer—a school story, pure and simple, or a school story with some mystery in the background, and possibly some criminals? Kenneth M. Douglas is of the opinion that an author's craft is to make the commonplace seem interesting. In future, shall I confine myself to the school interest—thereby developing and featuring many of the minor characters—or shall I introduce a strong dramatic interest in addition, as in former stories?

By keeping to the latter course, I must necessarily neglect many of the school characters I would like to develop—for there isn't room for everything. I am wondering which you like the best—school interest, with humour, or school interest with drama. If I bring the humour greatly to the fore, the drama must suffer—and vice versa. Which is it to be?

It's quite a good suggestion of yours, G. Blackett, for Willy to obtain a parrot as a pet. One of these days he'll have one. You see!

This week we have a holiday story, and next week the Fourth Form goes under canvas.



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