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ARCHIE'S LANCASHIRE LASS !

A side-splitting long complete yarn of schoolboy fun and adventure featuring the cheery chums of St. Frank's.

New Series No. 164.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY

June 22nd, 1929.



The squall struck the girl as she was crossing the road, and the suddenness of it caused her to upset the contents of her basket into the wet roadway. "Oh, I say!" ejaculated Archie Glenthorne, and dashed to the rescue—and that was the beginning of Archie's latest love affair!

Nipper & Co. are in Preston and Blackpool this Week, Chums !

ARCHIE'S LANCASHIRE LASS !



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

Normally Archie Glenthorpe is funny enough, but when he's in love—well, Archie's a perfect scream ! This time he gets smitten extra badly—and the amusing adventures of the lovesick Archie will keep all readers in fits of laughter !

CHAPTER I.

Archie Makes Himself Useful !

“WHAT-HO ! Kindly sound the order to retreat, laddies,” said Archie Glenthorpe, of the St. Frank's Remove. “Or, at least, call a dashed halt !”

“Oh, my hat !” said Reggie Pitt. “He's spotted a tailor's !”

There was a number of St. Frank's Removites in the little group, and they were passing along the busy thoroughfare of Fishergate, in Preston. The famous St. Frank's School Train, in fact, was in Lancashire.

It was evening, and the fellows were taking advantage of an hour or two of liberty to have a look round “Proud Preston.” Although they had found nothing extraordinarily beautiful in Preston, they were nevertheless interested. Some of them had already been out to Moor Park, by tram, others had been round Preston Grammar School, and had basked in the sunshine in Avenham Park, too.

Now they were in Preston's busy centre, having a final stroll round before they made their way back to the railway. As usual, the School Train was not “parked” actually in Preston itself, but some little way out, where the line was not busy. A quiet siding was generally chosen.

The train had only recently come down from Scotland, and on the way the school had spent a very interesting and instructive week-end in the Lake District. But it must be confessed that they were looking forward with much more enjoyment to the prospect of sampling the joys of Blackpool.

Schoolboys, as a rule, are not very keen on scenic splendour, and beautiful as the Lake District undoubtedly is, it failed to appeal to the majority as Blackpool probably would.

This stop at Preston was merely incidental. On the morrow, the train would move on. “Come along, Archie—no time to look at these summer suits now,” said Harry Gresham, as he seized the aristocratic arm of Archibald Winston Derek Glenthorpe. “We

might be late for calling over, and that will mean us getting into trouble with old Pycraft——"

"Absolutely not," interrupted Archie. "Kindly remove the good old brake. Some of these dashed suits strike me as being top-hole. This one, of course, is absolutely awful. Gives me a pain in the eyesight. But look at this creation, laddie! Good gad! I think I'll dash in and buy it!"

"What's all this stoppage about?" asked Nipper, the cheery Remove captain, as he retraced his steps. "I thought we had all agreed to keep together?"

"It's Archie," explained Reggie Pitt. "He insists upon looking into this tailor's window."

"Oh, does he?" interrupted Edward Oswald Handforth. "Don't take any notice of him. Just grab him and yank him along."

"I have the most rooted objections to being yanked, dash you!" said Archie coldly. "If you start yanking me, you blighters, I'll absolutely resist. Odds scandals and protests! It's a bit thick if a chappie can't pause to gaze into a shop window without——"

"Oh, leave him alone," said Church. "If he wants to stay behind and look at these tailor's dummies, let him!"

"A sort of fellow feeling, I suppose," said Handforth tartly.

The juniors were not inclined to waste their time on a tailor's window—artistic as this display was. But Archie Glenthorne had a mania for new clothes, and any such display always attracted him as surely as a moth is attracted to a flame.

"Let's leave him behind," suggested McClure.

"A dashed good idea," agreed Archie. "Kindly vanish, dear old things! I have a desire to linger awhile and feast the good old optics upon this wealth of summer suiting. Absolutely!"

And before Archie had half finished his inspection, the rest of the fellows were already in Friargate.

PRESTON was not architecturally beautiful. Some of the fellows, knowing in advance that Preston is really one of the oldest towns in the country, had expected to find some interesting buildings of ancient date. But they were disappointed. For although Preston is certainly old—the Charters of Incorporation go back to the times of Henry II, in 1179—there is very little in the appearance of the town itself to suggest its age.

Such famous thoroughfares as Stoneygate, Fishergate and Friargate remain almost precisely as they were in olden times. The names of these streets, in themselves, speak of "the good old days." But progress has wiped out the old buildings, and now there are shops and warehouses, factories and schools, and all sorts of business premises.

Preston has seen plenty of hard fighting in its days. There is the famous battle on Ribblesdale Moor, when Oliver Cromwell,

marching from Stonyhurst with an inferior force, fell upon the unprepared Royalists. It was this battle which was the death-knell of the Stuart cause, in August, 1648.

Industrialism has converted Preston into a hive of modern activity, and the St. Frank's fellows, as they went round inspecting all the interesting points, were impressed by the town's up-to-dateness.

Archie Glenthorne was particularly impressed by the general attire of the populace. He had always had an impression that Lancashire folk went about in heavy clogs, and that all the girls wore shawls. It needed a visit to Lancashire to convince Archie that the inhabitants of such towns as Preston and Blackburn and Burnley and Nelson were as smart and as up-to-date in their attire as the inhabitants of any other part of the country.

He lingered outside that tailor's window, completely "lost" in the various models. He quite overlooked the fact that it was necessary to get back to the School Train for calling-over. He was so engrossed that he even failed to notice that an ominously heavy cloud was mounting towards the zenith.

There had been one or two showers earlier in the day, but the afternoon had been quite fine, and there was no thought of rain in Archie's mind.

So he was surprised and startled when, without warning, a sudden downpour commenced. It wasn't merely a shower, but an absolute squall. The rain pelted down with tremendous effect, drenching the stone setts of the street in less than half a minute.

"Good gad!" ejaculated Archie, spinning round. "I mean to say—— The good old waterworks must have blown up, or something! S.O.S.! Which is the nearest way to shelter?"

He looked round wildly, and it was at this crucial moment that he saw the Lancashire lass. Of course, he had been seeing Lancashire lasses all the evening, but there was something very special about this particular one.

IN the first place, she was in distress. And a Lancashire lass in distress was bound to attract Archie's immediate attention.

Any kind of damsel in distress, in fact, aroused his most chivalrous emotions. His one desire, in such cases, was to dash to the rescue.

This girl in Fishergate was in no actual peril, but she was certainly unfortunate. The squall caught her as she was crossing the street. She was carrying a large basket and an umbrella, and in attempting to open the umbrella it blew round, causing her basket to be upset. The umbrella itself was jerked from her hands, and went careering across the road.

"Oh, I say!" ejaculated Archie, dashing up.

It must be plainly stated that up to this point Archie had not even seen the girl's face; he did not know whether she was

pretty or otherwise. Proof positive that his chivalrous instincts were gilt-edged.

In the pouring rain, the girl was trying to recover the fallen articles—which appeared to be a miscellaneous assortment of groceries. A packet of tea was lying on the tram-lines, butter was slithering away towards the gutter; rice had distributed itself liberally over the road.

As Archie rushed to the rescue, a passing van was inconsiderate enough to run completely over the umbrella, reducing it to hopeless wreckage. Perhaps the driver knew nothing about this; at all events, he did not stop. To make matters worse, the rain poured down with greater violence than ever.

"I mean, what about it?" asked Archie, grabbing a packet as it went sailing down the gutter. "I say, old girl! Kindly allow me to dash about and do a bit of helping."

"Thanks awfully, but you mustn't bother," said the girl, who was looking bewildered and startled. "I don't know how it happened. Eh, but it came so suddenly that I wasn't prepared."

Archie wasn't prepared, either. He experienced a sudden shock, too. For as the girl spoke, she glanced at him. Archie went absolutely dithery at the knees. But her glance was a grateful one, and there was an expression in her eyes which reduced Archie to helplessness.

Besides, her voice! Sort of silvery, like one of those dashed rippling brooks that the poet chappies babble about. Not particularly Lancashire, but just sufficiently so to make it priceless. A sort of slight brogue, and simply topping in its general sort of tone.

"Absolutely!" said Archie stoutly.

"I—I beg your pardon?"

"Oh, rather!" went on Archie. "I mean, can I do anything? That is to say, what about it? Or, to be exact, just say the good old word, and I'll dash about and——"

"I really think that most of the things are spoilt," interrupted the girl. "It's very kind of you to help me like this. It was my umbrella's fault, I'm afraid. The catch has been faulty for weeks——"

"Umbrella, what?" interrupted Archie. "Good gad! How absolutely frightful! It's raining! I hadn't noticed it before!"

"No?" she said, looking at him in wonder.

It was now raining so hard that both of them were drenched to the skin. Perhaps Archie felt that he was acting strangely—perhaps the girl's look gave him a hint—for he suddenly sprang into activity and picked up the rest of the fallen goods with lightning speed. The fact that most of them were muddy made no difference. He clasped them all in his arms, regardless of the consequences.

"Now, old thing—that is to say, dear old lass—what about it!" he said brightly.

"Home, what? Which is the good old way?"

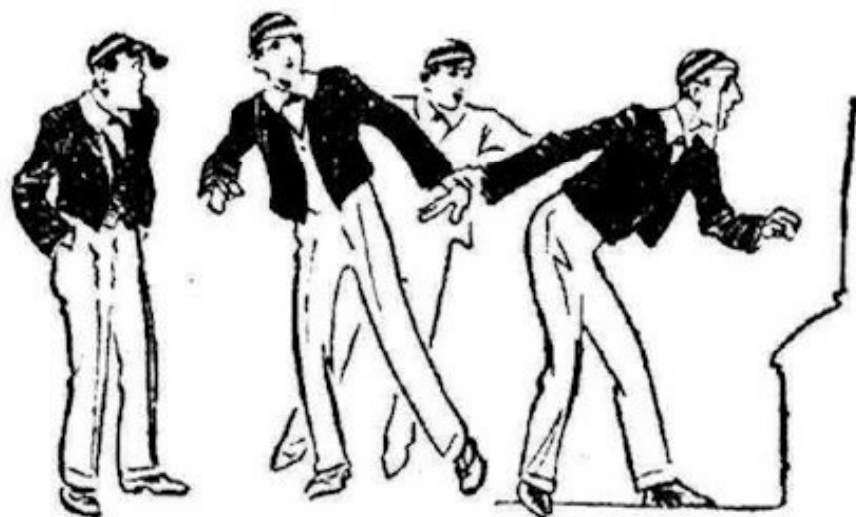
"Oh, but you mustn't," said the girl.

"Thank you for picking up my things. I

can get along nicely now—especially if you put them into this basket."

"What-ho! The good old wickerworks," said Archie.

She held out the basket, but she happened to glance into Archie's eyes again at the same moment. He nearly dropped the whole collection. Now that he came to look at her at such close quarters, he could see that she was an absolutely priceless peach. As pretty as the dickens—absolutely! Her hair was sort of fair and fluffy, and her eyes were gloriously blue. She was smartly dressed, too—silk stockings and



crêpe-de-something frock—to say nothing of a perfectly gorgeous hat.

"That's better," she said, in that topping voice of hers.

"Oh, rather!" agreed Archie. "Here, I say! None of this, you know! Kindly allow Archie to carry the good old burden. I mean, I'm going to carry it all the way home."

"I wouldn't think of bothering you," she said earnestly. "Thank you very much, but——"

"Bother?" interrupted Archie. "Nothing like it, old dear. I shall regard it as a priceless privilege. And you really must allow me to buy you a new umbrella."

"No! Certainly not!"

"But it wasn't your fault that the other one was reduced to wreckage," protested Archie. "Dash it, it's only doing the right thing! By the way, I'm Archie Glenthorne," he added, as a thought struck him. "Odds, omissions and blunders! Fancy forgetting the good old formalities! Archie Glenthorne, you know—of St. Frank's."

"Oh!" said his fair companion, looking at him with fresh interest. "You're one of the boys from the famous School Train, then?"

"Absolutely!"

"I'm pleased to meet you," said the girl. "I've heard so much about the School Train that I'm interested. My name's Margaret Bradbury."

"Oh, I say, really? What a priceless name," beamed Archie. "Reminds one of the good old currency, what? Absolutely sterling! And Margaret! I mean to say, just the sort of name——"

"But everybody always calls me Peggy Ann," she murmured.

"That's better still," said Archie delightedly. "How absolutely priceless. You really must let me carry this basket home for you."

CHAPTER 2.

A Rash Invitation!

WITHOUT question, Archie Glen-thorne was "smitten."

He was always more or less susceptible. Being a reserved sort of fellow, however, he seldom came into actual contact with the fair sex. It was only when such an incident as this occurred that he really got into his stride. Chance had provided an opening, and Archie was doing the rest.

Miss Peggy Ann Bradbury really had no intention of dragging Archie home with her just so that he should carry the basket, but when Archie insisted, it was very difficult to refuse. Besides, the girl was amused and rather charmed by his quaint manner.

It was not surprising, therefore, that her protests soon dwindled away, and she allowed Archie to "do the honours." And when he suddenly seized her arm, whirled her into a shop, and bought her an umbrella, it was all over before she could get her breath again. Her eyes had opened very wide when Archie had cheerfully whacked out thirty shillings for that umbrella. She had never owned such a splendid "gamp" before. The one that was destroyed was only a cheap seven-and-sixpenny touch.

"I—I don't know what to say!" she exclaimed, as they came out of the shop. "You shouldn't have brought this umbrella. It's not raining now, anyhow."

"Good gad, no!" said Archie, glancing at the sunshine. "Well, I'm dashed! Isn't the weather always frightfully tricky?"

"It wasn't raining when we went in, either," she reminded him. "I can't accept this umbrella, really. I'm not sure, but I believe it means bad luck—"

"Absolutely not!" broke in Archie firmly. "Kindly take no notice of those dashed superstitions. If you don't accept it, I shall be most dreadfully cut up. In fact, I'll throw the dashed thing away."

"Eh, but that would be wasteful," she protested.

"Then, old girl, if you don't want to make me wasteful, kindly accept the good old gift," beamed Archie. "Now, what about it? Which way do we go?"

He was totally oblivious of the fact that his collar was wet and crumpled, that his necktie was a ghost of its former self, and that his whole appearance was marred by the recent soaking. At any other time Archie would have been horrified, but now he was so preoccupied with his companion that his own affairs entirely escaped him.

"Come on, then," said Peggy Ann.

They set off briskly, and Archie's heart settled down to a more normal beat. He

had been fearing, from the first, that she would dismiss him. He strode along, carrying the basket with joy.

"I say, Archie! What the— Great Scott!"

The voice came from the other side of the road, and it was Handforth's voice. In fact, it was a voice which could not possibly be ignored. Strangely enough, however, Archie not only ignored it, but he actually failed to hear it. He hadn't the slightest idea that Handforth & Co., and Nipper and a few other juniors were watching him. They had been sheltering from the rain, and had now strolled back to look for the missing member of the party.

"Who's that girl?" asked Handforth suspiciously.

"Goodness only knows," grinned Nipper. "But at a random guess, I should say that Archie did a bit of knight-errant stuff during the shower. You know what a fellow he is for dashing to the assistance of distressed damsels."

"Rather a nice-looking girl," said Travers critically.

"Just what I was thinking," nodded Reggie Pitt. "Archie's taste is as sound as ever."

"What rot!" frowned Handforth. "I'm surprised at him! The best thing we can do is to grab him, and—"

But at that moment Church and McClure grabbed Handforth.

"No, you don't," said McClure firmly. "Leave Archie alone, you ass! What's the girl going to think if we butt in and drag him away like that? It's such a novelty to see him carry anything that we'd better let him get on with it."

"Lemme go!" snorted Handforth. "Take your hand off my arm, Mac! You—you fat-headed Scot! Lemme go!"

McClure grinned.

"No fear!" he replied calmly. "What do you say, Churchy?"

"Never," agreed Church. "Handy, we're surprised at you! Let Archie get on with his chivalry stuff. If he likes to carry the girl's parcels, why shouldn't he? Don't be jealous."

Handforth fumed. Since the School Train had been to Scotland, he had noticed a marked difference in the attitude of his faithful, long-suffering chums. Previous to that visit they had always been content to obey his commands; they had always "knuckled under" to him.

But now it was changed.

That trip to Scotland had established the fact, beyond dispute, that Arnold McClure was a hundred-per-cent Scottish. Mac had been instrumental in healing an old quarrel which had disrupted his family for fifteen or sixteen years. He had brought his parents and his grand-parents together—and the Remove had helped. Now, as a consequence, Mac was subtly changed.

The fact that he was a genuine Scot seemed to strengthen his character. He was

getting into the habit of resisting Handforth, instead of submitting to Handy's autocratic dictates. And Church, not unnaturally, followed Mac's example. Thus Handforth was beginning to notice a difference.

SO Archie Glenthorne was not disturbed. The other Removites wandered off, deciding to get straight back to the School Train. Archie would undoubtedly be late, but that would be entirely his own fault. It wasn't their job, in any case, to look after him. Quite apart from this, he seemed to be able to look after himself—and fair strangers, too.

"It isn't far," said Peggy Ann, after a while. "I hope you won't be late, or anything, because of this. I believe somebody was calling you a few minutes ago. I saw some boys on the other side of the road——"

"Boys," repeated Archie, glancing round. "Good gad! Where?"

"They've gone now."

"Then everything's all serene," went on Archie, with relief. "Probably some of the good old lads. I'd like to introduce you to the gang. Miss Margaret. I say, doesn't that sound frightfully formal? I think we'll make it Miss Peggy Ann—what?"

"This way," said Peggy Ann, smiling.

They turned into a quiet road, and almost before Archie had time to inspect it, they halted outside the gate of a modest little house. The girl hesitated with her hand on the gate.

"Thank you so much," she said gratefully.

"Oh, rot! I mean——"

Archie experienced a sense of disappointment. Perhaps he had expected that the girl lived on the other side of Preston, and that the walk would go on for an hour or two. At all events, the knowledge that she had arrived home came to him as an unpleasant shock.

"Peggy Ann! Where have you been all this time?"

A rather youngish, but motherly, woman was standing in the open doorway of the house. Peggy Ann turned, and quickly explained what had happened. Archie stood by, surging with protests.

"Oh, I say! Nothing of the kind!" he managed to say. "I mean, it was nothing. As for the good old gamp, I really insist—No chappie could do anything else, if you understand what I mean. A lady in distress, and all that sort of thing."

Mrs. Bradbury was looking at Archie keenly, and she sized him up very accurately. She could tell that Archie's actions had been wholly prompted by generosity.

"Come in, lad," she said kindly. "You're still wet from the rain, and a cup of tea might——"

"What-ho!" said Archie dreamily. "Tea, by gad! Absolutely, fair lady! A spot of the good old brew, what? Kindly lead me to it!"

FIVE minutes later Archie was in ecstacy. He was sitting in an easy chair in the comfortable living-room, and a cup of steaming hot tea was before him. He had already sampled the tea, and had found it to be "the goods." He wasn't so sure, but it struck him that it was even better than Phipps' tea. And all the world knew that his valet's tea was the most priceless stuff under the sun.

"About the umbrella——" began Mrs. Bradbury.

"Oh, really!" begged Archie. "Kindly close the good old subject, old dear! I—I mean Mrs. Bradbury! I want your daughter to regard it as a little present. I don't suppose the pater will cut up rusty, will he?"

"Father is dead," said Peggy Ann quietly.

"Oh, I say! How frightfully clumsy of me!" exclaimed Archie, in distress. "What a dashed faux pas! Forgive me, Miss Peggy Ann——"

"There's nowt to worry about, lad," put in Mrs. Bradbury shortly. "He's been dead these ten years, and my lass scarcely remembers him."

"Oh, but all the same——"

Archie was at a loss for words, and he was comforted by his companions' cheeriness. He gathered that Mrs. Bradbury and her daughters lived quite comfortably in this modest house. It appeared that there were two younger sisters. Peggy Ann herself worked in a mill. She

wasn't more than sixteen—if that.

"But I'm having my holiday at present," went on Peggy Ann, as she attempted to sort out the groceries. "Oh, mother, I'm so sorry about these things. It was clumsy of me."

"Sithee here, lass, accidents will always happen," interrupted her mother. "There's nowt for thee to upset thyself about."

"Holidays, what?" put in Archie, hoping to turn the conversation. "How priceless! The good old seaside, what?"

"Blackpool," smiled Peggy Ann.

"Really? Good gad! How absolutely topping!" said Archie, so delighted that he nearly upset his tea. "I mean, Blackpool!"

"Blackpool's champion," said Peggy Ann, with shining eyes. "I went there last year for the first time. We're starting to-morrow."

"We?" repeated Archie. "I mean——"



"I'm going with lots of other girls," explained Peggy Ann. "Mother doesn't mind, and it's really better. We're going by quite an early train, so that we can have the whole day. Blackpool isn't far, you know."

"But you're going to stop longer than the day, aren't you?" asked Archie.

"Oh, yes! We shall be there for a week."

"It's dashed funny how these things happen," beamed Archie. "I mean, I'm going to Blackpool to-morrow, too."

Mother and daughter looked at him inquiringly.

"Absolutely," went on Archie brightly. "It's all fixed. The good old School Train dashes to Blackpool before breakfast. As a rule, the train dashes hither and thither during the night; but Blackpool is so near that we're not starting until seven o'clock this time."

"And our train leaves at eight," laughed Peggy Ann.

"Odds ideas and brainwaves!" said Archie, jamming his monocle into his eye, and looking at the girl eagerly. "Eight o'clock, what? I say, how about coming on the good old School Train?"

"Oh, but——"

"Absolutely!" Archie went on firmly. "It's a priceless sort of train, I can assure you. Everything absolutely top-hole. And you'll get there a bit sooner—and you'll all save your fares, too. I mean, we're going, so why not take advantage of the good old opportunity?"

Peggy Ann glanced at her mother.

"The lad means well, but I doubt if he has the authority," said Mrs. Bradbury, shaking her head. "Wouldn't your masters object?" she added, looking at Archie.

"Masters?" said Archie, with a start. "Oh, I see what you mean? The masters, what? Absolutely not! Good gad! I mean, why should they object? Take it from me, dear lady, that your daughter will be welcome on the good old train—and her friends, too."

Archie was so enthusiastic that he made this rash statement without giving it a moment's thought. Indeed, in his opinion, it was pricelessly idiotic to give such a matter any thought whatsoever. Wasn't it perfectly obvious that the masters would raise no objections?

But, then, Archie was scarcely himself just now!

CHAPTER 3.

Rather Awkward!

PEGGY ANN saw no reason to question the validity of Archie Glenthorne's invitation. Her mother was a little doubtful at first, perhaps, but she soon got over this.

Archie was so emphatic—so confident—that both mother and daughter came to the conclusion that there had been some precedent. No doubt strangers were carried on the School Train quite frequently.

"If you're sure it's all right——" began Peggy Ann.

"Oh, rather!" interrupted Archie. "I mean to say, we shall be most frightfully honoured if you and your pals trickle along at seven o'clock in the morning. You're going to Blackpool, and we're going to Blackpool, so there you are! I mean to say, why not?"

He beamed upon Peggy Ann, and she smiled.

"Well, it's very kind of you," she said gratefully. "Of course, we shall be awfully pleased to travel on the School Train. It'll be so—so novel."

"Oh, rather!" said Archie, nodding. "The School Train is positively the last word in luxury. Class-rooms and dormitories and lounges and studies and dining-cars, and all that sort of stuff. I mean, you've got to see it to believe it."

"You're very lucky, to be going about the country like this," said Mrs. Bradbury. "There was nowt of that sort when I was a girl."

"Oh, well, you know, there's not much of it nowadays," said Archie. "I mean, old Dorrie is the cause of it. Lord Dorrimore, don't you know. A frightfully decent chappie—one of the best. A millionaire, and so forth. It was he who bought the School Train, and gave it to St. Frank's. A really priceless cove, old Dorrie."

He continued chatting, and he gave all sorts of details about the School Train—details which made Peggy Ann all the more curious to see the train with her own eyes.

Archie had forgotten all about calling-over, and the possible consequences of being late. He only took his departure from Peggy Ann's home when Mrs. Bradbury plainly hinted that it was time for him to be going.

And as Archie wandered aimlessly through Preston he kept seeing a vision of fair, fluffy hair and blue eyes. The thought that he would see Peggy Ann again in the morning filled him with serene contentment.

"Hallo! What are you doing here?"

It was a sharp voice, and Archie felt a hand on his shoulder. He turned round, and found himself looking at Wilson, of the Sixth.

"Oh, hallo!" said Archie. "Cheerio, and all that!"

"Have you got special leave, Glenthorne?" asked the prefect.

"Special leave?" repeated Archie. "Oh, I see what you mean! Special leave?"

"Yes."

"Absolutely!" said Archie. "That is to say, absolutely not!"

"Which *do* you mean, you young ass?"

"Well, as a matter of fact, I don't quite gather the trend," confessed Archie. "Special leave, what? I don't seem to remember——"

"You'd better cut off back to the School Train—and be as quick as you can," said Wilson. "Report yourself at once to Mr. Pycraft. Don't you know that it's past the



"You have no authority whatever for bringing these girls here, and they certainly cannot come aboard the School Train!" said Mr. Pycraft acidly. Archie Glenthorne turned red and then pale. He had rashly invited Peggy Ann and her friends to travel on the train to Blackpool, and now Mr. Pycraft was putting his foot down heavily. The position was decidedly awkward!

hour of calling-over? You're confoundedly late, my lad!"

Archie did not seem to mind. He had a dreamy look about him—and was apparently unaware of the fact that his collar was crumpled, his suit creased and muddy, and his whole appearance marred.

The prospect of getting into hot water did not seem to worry him in the least. In fact, he was more leisurely than ever as he wended his way towards the railway siding where the School Train was "parked."

"**A**H! So you have condescended to return, Glenthorne!" said Mr. Horace Pycraft acidly.

Archie had got aboard the School Train to find calling-over a mere memory; it was well past the hour of locking-up. Everybody was on the train for the night. Mr. Pycraft, apparently, had been on the look-out for the truant.

"Eh?" said Archie, looking at Mr. Pycraft and starting. "Oh, rather! Here I am, old thing!"

"What did you say, Glenthorne?"

"I mean to say, here I am, sir," said Archie hastily.

"So I see!" snapped the Form-master. "I take it that you had a special pass, Glenthorne?"

"Well, not exactly, sir——"

"If you had no pass why are you so late?"

"Well, the fact is, I met a priceless—— I mean, there was a bit of a delay, sir," said Archie hastily. "The rain and so forth, don't you know."

It was really impossible for Archie to give any adequate explanation. He steadfastly kept Peggy Ann's name out of his excuses, and Mr. Pycraft was gratified when he found that Archie had no excuse. He thereupon inflicted an imposition of two hundred lines, and went on his way, a happier man.

Archie, forgetting the impot. the moment Mr. Pycraft had gone, wandered absent-mindedly to the Junior Class-room coach—which, out of lesson time, was used as a Common-room. There were many fellows present when he went in, and all eyes were turned upon him.

"Well, well!" said Vivian Travers mildly. "What have we here, dear old fellows? Our own immaculate fashion-plate—but looking slightly the worse for wear."

"And we know why, too!" put in Handforth. "By George! Don't you remember that girl he was with in Fishergate—or Friargate, or whatever the place was called? My only hat! This needs looking into, my sons!"

It was quite obvious that Archie was hardly himself. Otherwise he would certainly have visited the dormitory and the bath-room before showing himself in the Common-room. As a general rule, he was extraordinarily particular about his personal appearance.

Handforth strode over and clapped him on the back.

"What's her name, Archie?" he asked briskly.

"Peggy Ann," replied Archie dreamily.

"Crumbs!" said Handforth. "Peggy Ann? I don't think much of it."

"Why, you frightful fright!" said Archie, glaring. "A priceless name! I mean to say—Peggy Ann! Absolutely topping! Of all the girls I've ever met, Peggy Ann's the best, you bet. Good gad! Poetry!"

The juniors gathered round Archie in a grinning throng.

"Great Scott!" said Handforth pityingly. "The poor fathead is in love!"

"You needn't talk," said Church. "You're just as liable to falling in love as Archie is!"

"Why, you—you——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Love!" said Archie, with a start. "Odds rot and rubbish! Absolutely not, old cherubs!"

"If you're not in love, Archie, what's the meaning of this disgraceful appearance?" asked Nipper severely.

"Eh? I mean, what?"

"Look at yourself!" went on Nipper. "Look at your collar! Look at your necktie—and your suit—and your shoes—and your hair! You're positively scarecrowish!"

Archie gazed down at himself in horror.

"Good gad!" he ejaculated, aghast. "I mean, I didn't know! At least, I'd forgotten—— Odds horrors and frights! And do you mean to say, laddies, that I came through the streets like this?"

"You did!" said Nipper. "You'd better go and change, Archie. And you needn't tell us that you're not in love! Peggy Ann has captured your heart, my son! By what we saw of her, I'm not surprised. She seems to be a jolly nice girl!"

"An absolute ripper!" said Archie happily. "I'll introduce you to her in the morning, old things."

"My poor ass, you've apparently forgotten that we're going to Blackpool in the morning," said Handforth witheringly. "The School Train leaves at seven o'clock."

"Absolutely!" nodded Archie.

"Then how are we going to see Peggy Ann in the morning?" asked Edward Oswald.

"She'll be here, old dear."

"Here!"

"Absolutely on the good old spot!"

"At seven o'clock to-morrow morning?"

"Slightly before, I trust," said Archie, beaming. "She and her pals are coming, don't you know. All of them."

"Coming?" repeated Nipper interestedly. "To see us off, do you mean?"

"They're coming with us, laddie," replied Archie. "I invited them."

"Wh-a-a-at!"

"Good gad! Kindly refrain from discharging the dynamite so violently," said Archie, with a start.

"But—but—— You silly ass! You don't mean to say that you've invited this girl to come with us to Blackpool?"

"You see, old things, Peggy Ann is starting her holiday to-morrow," explained Archie. "She was going to Blackpool by the eight o'clock train—the ordinary train, I mean. Well, dash it, as we were starting at seven, I thought it a pretty ripe and juicy

scheme to ask her to come with us. Not so dusty, what?"

"Help!" said Nipper. "And all Peggy Ann's friends as well?"

"Absolutely!"

"You're dotty!" put in Reggie Pitt. "Did you have any authority for issuing this invitation, Archie? I mean, what about the masters?"

"I should trust, dear old cheese, that none of the masters will raise any objections to the scheme," said Archie sternly.

"You can trust all you like, but if I know anything about the masters, they'll cut up pretty rusty," said Reggie, shaking his head. "They won't allow girls to come aboard the train—as passengers. It may be all right from your point of view, Archie, but Mr. Lee will probably have a totally different idea."

"Just what I was thinking," said Nipper. "Archie, old man, you've put your foot in it. There'll be some trouble over this."

Archie looked distressed.

"Not really?" he said. "I mean, you don't absolutely think that the good old masters will regard the scheme with disfavour?"

"They'll not merely regard it with disfavour, but they'll put the veto on it," said Nipper. "How many of these girls are there? I mean, what about Peggy Ann's friends?"

"Yes," said Archie, taking a deep breath.

"What do you mean—'yes'?" put in Handforth. "Are there six girls—or ten—or twelve—or what?"

"Well, the fact is, I don't exactly know," confessed Archie, with a startled expression.

"You don't know!" yelled Handforth. "Why, you silly chump! There might be a hundred!"

"Oh, I say! I mean, what rot!"

"Probably two hundred!" went on Handforth relentlessly. "You know what these Lancashire girls are! They go to Blackpool in big parties for their holidays. And if you've handed out a general invitation for Peggy Ann and her friends to travel on the School Train, there's no telling what the result will be. My poor, pitiful fathead! You're in the soup!"

Handforth's plain speaking had the effect of reducing Archie to a quivering, nervous wreck.

"Good gad!" he moaned, passing a hand over his brow. "This is frightful, dear old dears! I mean, I hadn't thought of it like this!"

"You were so struck with Peggy Ann that you issued the invitation without thinking," said Nipper, nodding. "I know, Archie. In fact, we all understand. Well, there's only one thing you can do. You'll have to buzz back to Peggy Ann's house, and tell her that the whole thing is off."

"Oh, I say! That's imposs.!" protested Archie.

"No, it isn't," said Nipper. "Ask Mr. Lee if the girls can come. He'll say 'no,' and then you can go to the sweet damsel and say

that the whole thing is prohibited. She won't blame you, Archie."

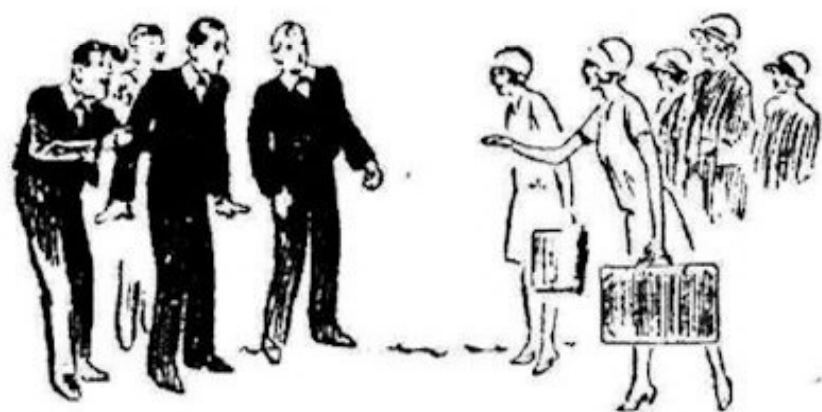
Archie suddenly gave a violent start.

"Odds frights and discoveries!" he ejaculated. "Good gad! I mean to say, I don't know the dear girl's address."

"But you must know!" said Travers. "Didn't you go home with her?"

"Absolutely! But I don't seem to remember the good old street, or—or anything!" said Archie feebly. "Oh, I say, how frightfully frightful!"

Archie was stunned. Now that he had thoroughly come to himself, he realised the truth. He certainly could not remember Peggy Ann's address. He had walked to the house, but for the life of him he couldn't



remember it—or the street, either. He had been so "smitten" with Peggy Ann's charms that he had been utterly oblivious of his surroundings.

"Well, that's done it!" said Nipper, shrugging his shoulders. "Archie can't communicate with the girl, and there'll be no time for anything in the morning. We shall just have to wait and see what happens."

And the juniors, as a whole, were very glad that Archie's memory had failed him. The morning promised to be somewhat entertaining!

CHAPTER 4.

All Aboard for Blackpool!

"**M**ORNING, and all that sort of thing!" said Archie dreamily.

Somebody had just given him a friendly shake, and, turning over in his comfortable bunk, he had seen that the early morning sunshine was streaming through the windows of the School Train.

"Better buck up, Archie," said Reggie Pitt, who was the fellow who had given Archie a shake. "It's half-past six, you know."

"Good gad!" said Archie. "I mean to say, half-past six? What's the dashed idea of waking me up at this dashed hour, dash you?"

"As an example of gratitude, Archie, I don't think much of this exhibition," said Reggie severely. "Have you forgotten your lady-love?"

Archie started violently.

"Eh?" he gasped. "I mean, what? Odds disasters! Six-dashed-thirty, and the dear girl said that she would be here by seven!"

I mean, there's absolutely no time for a chappie to get dressed!"

"I've managed it in three minutes before now," said Reggie.

"Imposs.!" declared Archie, as he leapt out of bed. "I mean, a chappie needs to dress with particular care when visitors are calling. Kindly let me pass, old thing! A good deal of dashing about is indicated."

He hardly paused to wrap his dressing-gown round him before he rushed off to the bath-room. Other juniors were getting up, too—although the rising-bell had not yet sounded, and was not due for some little time. This unusual energy was accounted for by the fact that the juniors were anxious to see what would happen when Archie's invited guests arrived.

Handforth turned out as briskly as any of the others—in fact, he was inclined to be a bit indignant. He had definitely arranged to awaken at half-past six, but apparently something had gone wrong. For it was Church who awakened him at nearly twenty minutes to seven.

Nipper and Tregellis-West and Watson and a few others were dressing, too. By a quarter to seven a fairly big crowd of fellows was standing about outside, all of them sunning themselves and enjoying the invigorating air of the summer's morning.

"I don't suppose the girls will turn up at all," said Handforth. "Or if they do turn up, they'll arrive at about half-past seven—half an hour after we've gone. You know what girls are for keeping appointments. Always late!"

"But not when they have to catch a train, Handy," protested McClure.

"Always!" insisted Handforth. "I don't suppose they can help it, poor things—they're born that way."

"If Archie's sweetheart turns up in good time, you'll have to apologise," grinned Nipper.

"I say! I mean, dash it, go easy, old dear," said Archie Glenthorne, colouring. "Sweetheart, what? Dash it, there's nothing like that, dash you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can't spoof us, Archie," said Handforth. "You're smitten, old man. You're sweet on this Lancashire lass!"

"I absolutely deny it!" said Archie stiffly. "The dear girl has made an impression. I'll admit. She's absolutely topping. She's a ripper. She's a—a—"

"Peach?" suggested Pitt.

"Absolutely not!" said Archie. "No girl, dash you, can be a peach. I object to these American expressions. Peggy Ann is absolutely a corker!"

"By George! And here she is!" ejaculated Handforth, in surprise. "Well, I'm blowed! It's hardly a quarter to seven yet—and the girls are on time!"

Everybody looked in the same direction as Handforth. The School Train, on its siding, was only separated from a road by some railings, and it was possible to see for

quite a distance along this quiet road. There was a hand gate close by, through which the fellows had been in the habit of passing in and out from the railway.

"Odds multitudes and throngs!" murmured Archie, in a faint voice.

There was every reason for his consternation!

HE had told Peggy Ann that she would be welcome on the School Train for the short trip to Blackpool; he had also told her that she could bring her friends with her. But never in his wildest dreams had he imagined that Peggy Ann would bring such a crowd!

A great number of girls had appeared in sight, and they were looking exceptionally smart in the uniform of Girl Guides. There must have been between forty and fifty of them, all marching along briskly, resolutely and very smartly. They made a charming picture in the early morning sunshine as they came along in their blue uniforms.

"Good gad!" breathed Archie feebly.

"Well, old man, you asked for trouble—and, by the look of it, you're going to get some," said Handforth, not without relish. "My only aunt! There's a whole regiment of the girls! What's going to happen, you chaps, when they try to get aboard the train?"

"Goodness only knows!" said Reggie Pitt, shaking his head. "I'm afraid that Archie will have to make his apologies, and call the whole thing off."

Archie started.

"Absolutely not!" he said frantically. "Good gad! That's imposs., old fruit! No chappie can do a thing like that—to a lady! I invited Peggy Ann and her friends on the School Train, and, dash it, they're coming on the School Train! I mean, absolutely! I trust that you fellows will rally round and stand by me in this hour of trial."

"Rely on us, old man," said Nipper, nodding.

Everybody was grinning. Archie's rash invitation had evidently been taken seriously by these Lancashire girls. It must be confessed that Archie experienced a slight pang of disappointment; he had hardly expected Peggy Ann to take such advantage of his invitation. Although he would not admit it to himself, this sort of thing was hardly playing the game.

"Better get ready, Archie," murmured Tommy Watson. "Put your tie straight, and see that your hair is properly brushed—"

"Good gad! Isn't my tie straight already?" asked Archie frantically.

"It doesn't look so bad," said Watson, grinning.

Archie was so worried over the general situation that he had no time to bother about his necktie. He had no definite plan as to what he should do. But he had positively decided that it would be quite im-

possible to make any excuses to the girls. He had invited them to make the trip to Blackpool on the School Train—and on the School Train they should go!

He was looking eagerly for Peggy Ann's trim figure; and he was rather concerned because he could not distinguish her.

"Hallo!" said Handforth, in surprise. "They're going straight past!"

"Of course!" grinned Nipper. "You chump! You surely didn't think that all these Girl Guides were Peggy Ann's friends, did you? Their passing at the moment is only a coincidence."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Most of the juniors had arrived at this conclusion, and they had only kept their faces straight in order to enjoy Archie's consternation. But Handforth, too, was surprised.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" he said, thoroughly disappointed. "What a swindle!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Swindle!" gasped Archie. "I mean—Odds relief and hope! I see what you mean, laddie! These girls aren't the girls at all?"

"They're girls, Archie," said Nipper gravely. "At least, I imagine so. They look like girls to me."

"I'm sure they're girls," said Travers, as he inspected the passing procession.

"Nice-looking girls, too," nodded Nipper. "These Lancashire lasses want a bit of beating, you know."

Archie's mind was so confused with relief that he failed to catch the "good old trend," as he would have called it.

"Hardly, old thing—hardly," he protested. "I mean to say, all girls are more or less liable to kick over the traces now and again—just the same as boys. But I'm surprised at you for suggesting that they require beating. I mean, it's hardly the thing—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I didn't mean that, Archie," said Nipper, grinning. "I simply said that Lancashire girls require a lot of beating—I mean, that you'd have to go a long way to find prettier and daintier and more charming girls—"

"Oh, rather!" agreed Archie brightly. "I see what you mean, laddie! Oh, absolutely! Oh, positively! Every time, old teapot! I've got to confess that these Lancashire girls are not merely stunning, but—"

He broke off, and his monocle dropped from his eye.

"One of them seems to have stunned you all right," said Handforth bluntly. "My only hat! What's the matter now, fat-head?"

"She's coming!" murmured Nipper.

"Absolutely!" said Archie, in a soft voice. "Good gad! Isn't she absolutely a tip-topper, you chappies?"

The other juniors were grinning more widely than ever. Half a dozen girls had now appeared in sight—the Girl Guides



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having vanished. The newcomers were gaily dressed in summer frocks; they were carrying suit-cases, and one or two of them had light macs over their arms. It was quite clear that these six girls were ready to set off on a trip, and it was equally obvious that they were Peggy Ann and her friends.

There was no longer any doubt in Archie Glenthorne's mind. He recognised Peggy Ann on the instant. She was leading the way, and she looked more dainty, more charming, more alluring than ever this morning. Archie's heart was beating at a tremendous rate as he ran forward towards the gate to welcome her.

"I hope we're not late!" said Peggy Ann cheerfully as she came up.

"Rather not!" said Archie, as he took her hand. "How frightfully decent of you to come, old girl. I mean, this is absolutely—er—champion. That's the right word, what?"

PEGGY ANN introduced Archie to her friends—who were all girls of about the same age as herself with the exception of one, who was several years older, and evidently in charge.

By the time the introductions were over Archie had completely forgotten that he had received no official permission to bring the girls on the train. He acted as though he owned the train. He invited them on board, and he almost overlooked the other juniors.

"All aboard for Blackpool, what!" he said happily. "This way, Miss Peggy Ann! We're off within a few minutes——"

"Hold on!" interrupted Handforth. "What about us, my son? Where do we come in? Aren't you going to introduce us?"

"Oh, rather!" said Archie, with a start. "Frightfully sorry, old bean!"

He started introducing the juniors, but Nipper laughed and interposed.

"I'm afraid it'll take you too long,

Archie," he said, with a chuckle. "We'll introduce ourselves!"

Everybody proceeded to do so at once. Nipper and Handforth and the other fellows were compelled to admit that Peggy Ann was indeed a "corker." Her girl friends were corks, too. In fact, it was generally admitted that Archie knew what he was about. Having these girls as passengers for the trip to Blackpool was a decided brain-wave.

Everything was going very swimmingly when Mr. Horace Pycraft arrived on the scene. And Mr. Pycraft, having gazed in astonishment at the girls, then proceeded to make himself unpleasant. Not that this was a difficult task for Mr. Pycraft, since he was unpleasant enough without any extra effort on his own part.

"May I—er— inquire what these young ladies are doing here?" he said acidly. "Surely you boys know that we are on the point of leaving for Blackpool?"

"Absolutely, sir," said Archie, nodding. "Peggy Ann and her friends are coming with us!"

"Indeed!" said Mr. Pycraft sharply. "By whose invitation, Glenthorne?"

"Mine, sir."

"Yours!" said the Form-master. "Oh, I see! Since when, Glenthorne, have you had the power to issue such invitations as this? I am sorry, young ladies, but I cannot possibly countenance your presence on this train."

"Oh!" said Peggy Ann in dismay.

Her companions were looking rather startled, too. In fact, they had told her that she was all wrong—that her boy friend had had no authority to invite them on the train. Now, apparently, their view was to prove correct.

"Oh, I say!" protested Archie, turning as red as a beetroot. "Dash it! I mean, you can't do this! I've asked these sweet young things——"

"Be silent, Glenthorne!" interrupted Mr. Pycraft. "And do not use such ridiculous terms when referring to these young ladies. Good gracious, boy! Surely you must realise how impossible it is for——"

"Absolutely not!" interrupted Archie stoutly. "Imposs.? Good gad, no! Kindly be good enough, sir, to fade away!"

"What!" gasped Mr. Pycraft, with a jump. "What did you say to me, Glenthorne?"

"This," replied Archie sternly, "is my affair! Therefore, sir, I shall take it as a favour, as one gentleman to another, if you stagger out of the picture!"

CHAPTER 5.

All Serene!

MR. PYCRAFT was dumbfounded. Nipper and Handforth and Reggie Pitt and the other juniors were almost equally dumbfounded. Archie's rashness was unheard-of. It could only be

accounted for by the fact that Peggy Ann was present, and that her pretty eyes were upon him.

"Glenthorne!" rapped out Mr. Pycraft, after he had recovered his breath. "How dare you? If you speak to me like that again I shall be compelled to punish you."

The unhappy Archie went redder than ever. So far, Mr. Pycraft had never punished him; mainly owing to the fact that Mr. Pycraft was reluctant to punish any fellow of social standing. Mr. Pycraft, unfortunately, was a snob.

"Really, Glenthorne, I don't know what you are about," he said acidly. "These—these girls must not come on the train."

"But I have invited them on, sir," protested Archie.

"I cannot help that," said the Form-master. "You should not be so rash, Glenthorne. You have no authority whatever for issuing any such invitation."

"Good gad! I mean—— Dash it, I—I—— Really, sir——"

"It's all right, Archie," said Peggy Ann, smiling. "We understand. It would have been champion to go to Blackpool on this train, but we don't want to be where we're not wanted——"

"But, dash it, you *are* wanted!" said Archie.

"Hear, hear!" went up a chorus from the other juniors.

"There's no harm done," said Peggy Ann. "There's plenty of time for us to get back to the station, and our train doesn't go until eight o'clock. We arranged to go by that train, anyhow——"

"Oh, but I say, what rot!" protested Archie. "I mean, I invited you—— And now this blighter comes along and—— I mean——"

"Good-heavens! Are you referring to me, Glenthorne?" ejaculated Mr. Pycraft, with a start.

"Well, dash it, sir, there's no need for you to be so dashed unpleasant!" said Archie, with spirit. "What harm will the girls do on the train—just for the short trip to Blackpool? I mean, it's not as though we were going to Cardiff, or Southampton, or some frightfully distant place like that!"

"The principle is the same," argued Mr. Pycraft coldly. "This train is expressly built for the accommodation of boys. No passengers are allowed."

But just then Mr. Nelson Lee himself emerged from the School Train, and Nipper, edging up to him, quickly put him in possession of the facts.

"Of course, Glenthorne had no right to invite these girls on the train for the trip," said Nelson Lee, when he had heard.

"But Archie only did it in the goodness of his heart, sir," said Nipper. "They're quite nice girls—and it's only a short trip to Blackpool. It's rotten of Mr. Pycraft. I mean, the way he's laying down the law——"

"I will look into this matter myself, Nipper," said Lee.

He considered that Mr. Pycraft should have reported the incident to him—for Mr. Pycraft had no authority to deal with it personally. In fact, it was fortunate for Archie—and for Peggy Ann & Co.—that Mr. Pycraft had so exceeded his authority.

"Good-morning, young ladies," said Lee, as he joined the group. "Is there anything wrong here, Mr. Pycraft?"

The girls noted the difference in Lee's tone at once, and they returned his greeting cheerily. Mr. Pycraft, in some surprise, turned upon the acting Head.

"Glenthorne has invited these girls on the train, sir," he explained. "I knew, of course, that you would not countenance—"

"Oh, I say!" broke in Archie. "Be a sport, sir! Dash it, it never occurred to me that there might be this spot of bother. Let me introduce Miss Peggy Ann Bradbury, sir. These other girls are her friends, don't you know. All going to Blackpool for their holidays. And as we were going this morning, I thought it would be rather priceless if we joined forces, and all that sort of thing. I mean, no harm done, what?"

Nelson Lee smiled.

"There is certainly no harm done, Glenthorne," he agreed. "It was, however, unwise of you to invite your friends for this trip without having previously consulted me."

"Just as I said, sir!" put in Mr. Pycraft triumphantly.

"However, I do not think we need to be very hard and fast, considering that the trip is such a short one," continued Lee smoothly.

"You may bring your friends on the train, Glenthorne—and I hope they will enjoy the short journey to Blackpool."

"Really, sir——" began Mr. Pycraft.

"There is a little point concerning the geography papers that I would like to discuss with you, Mr. Pycraft," said Lee smoothly.

"Will it be troubling you too much if I ask you to come with me now, so that we may look into the matter?"

"Not at all," gasped the Form-master.

"But—but— This boy, sir——"

Nelson Lee linked his arm into Mr. Pycraft's, and they went off together.

"Bravo, sir!"

"Good old Mr. Lee!"

There were many murmurs of approval, and Archie himself was beaming with delight.

"Does this mean that everything is all right?" asked Peggy Ann.

"Absolutely!" replied Archie. "Mr. Lee is a top-notcher, by gad!"

"Hear, hear!"

"He did old Pycraft in the eye nicely!" grinned Handforth.

"Yes, rather!"

The six girls were delighted when they thoroughly understood that everything was "all serene." Mr. Nelson Lee had been so brief, so easy, that they hardly realised the truth.

"He's like that, you know," said Archie cheerfully. "A regular sport. Absolutely a brick! This way, old things! I'm most frightfully keen to show you our class-room, and our studies, and all the rest of the good old works."

"We shall be awfully pleased to have a look round," said one of the girls.

Archie proudly led the girls on to the train, and then he proceeded to show them the class-rooms, and the dining-saloon, and the studies, and, indeed, all the "rest of the works." Needless to say, Peggy Ann and her friends were overwhelmingly interested.

A FEW minutes after seven o'clock an engine was affixed to the School Train, and then the brief journey to Blackpool started.

"It's under twenty miles," remarked Nipper, as the train glided smoothly along. "We shall be in Blackpool in less than half an hour if everything goes all right."

"That's not very quick travelling, is it?" asked Peggy Ann.

"Oh, there's nothing fast about the School Train," smiled Nipper. "You see, it's a special train, and it has to be fitted in as the railway company plans the opportunity. Sometimes we're shunted into sidings and kept waiting for ages. But nobody cares. We always get to our next stopping-place sooner or later."

"It's gradely on this train," said one of the other girls. "We never had owt of this sort while we were at school. It's champion to be going all over the country, and seeing so many different places. Ay, but you're lucky, you boys."

"Oh, absolutely," agreed Archie. "Yet, at the same time, the good old School Train has its drawbacks."

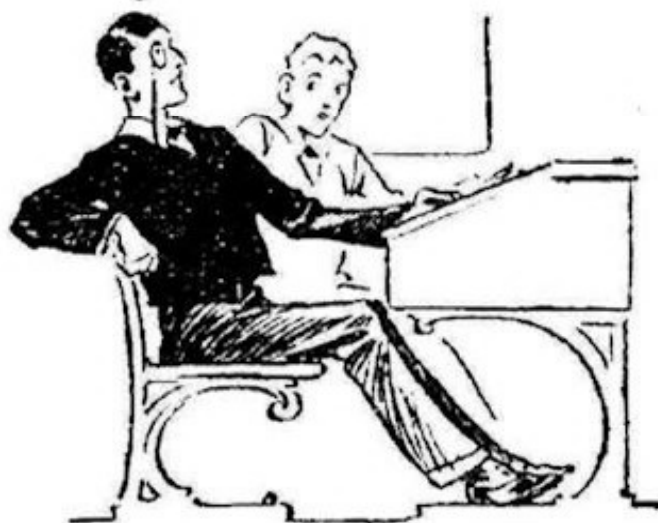
"Yes, we're rather handicapped for cricket practice," nodded Nipper. "We can't always find a handy ground——"

"I wasn't thinking about cricket, dash you," said Archie stiffly. "There's the question of studies; at St. Frank's there's plenty of room——"

"Don't grumble, Archie," said Reggie Pitt. "As these young ladies say, we're jolly lucky to be on the School Train at all."

"Oh, rather! In fact, absolutely," agreed Archie. "At the same time——"

Nobody took any notice of him. And Archie himself, finding that he was next to Peggy Ann, completely forgot what he had been going to say. At close quarters he decided that Peggy Ann was far more charming



than he had ever imagined. She was looking particularly bright and sunny this morning, too. There was a dull ache in Archie's heart when he remembered that this journey to Blackpool was a brief one, and that after that he would probably never see those blue eyes again.

"I gather that you will be staying at some kind of hotel, what?" he ventured at last.

"Mother won't allow me to stay in a hotel," replied Peggy Ann, smiling. "We're going to a boarding house—kept by Mrs. Witherspoon."

"Good gad!"

"She's a dear old soul—a friend of the family, you know," explained Peggy Ann. "Some of the girls have been there three or four years in succession—and I've been once before, too. We're safe enough at Mrs. Witherspoon's."

"Oh, rather!" said Archie. "So I should imagine, dear old thing."

"It's quite near the front, too," continued Peggy Ann. "I wonder if we shall see anything of you in Blackpool?"

"Odds hopes and dreams! I trust so!"

"How long will the School Train be staying?"

"I haven't the faintest dashed idea," replied Archie. "But I gather that we shall be at Blackpool until over the week-end, at least."

"That's splendid!" said the girl. "Will you be free this afternoon—Archie?"

"I mean to say——" Archie felt rather dizzy because she had used his Christian name. "Oh, rather! Free? I see what you mean! Absolutely! If there's any chance of meeting you on the good old pier, or——"

"All right!" smiled the girl. "Just near the Central Pier, let's say."

The appointment was fixed, and Archie was in a dream of happiness. He was quite oblivious of the fact that Nipper and Handforth and Reggie Pitt and many of the others were close by—and that they had overheard everything.

"That's done it!" murmured Nipper, as he drew Handforth and one or two of the others aside. "Archie's arranged to meet Peggy Ann on the front this afternoon. Goodness only knows where this matter will end! He's head over heels in love with the girl."

"I don't blame him," said Reggie Pitt. "She's a tip-topper."

"Oh, I'm not so sure," said Handforth. "Peggy Ann's all right, but there's one of those other girls—the one with the dark eyes and reddish hair——"

"Here, steady!" said Church, in alarm. "Grab him, Mac! It's quite bad enough to have one of our chaps in love!"

Handforth turned red.

"Who's in love?" he bellowed.

"Go easy, for goodness sake!" gasped McClure. "No need to let the whole train know, Handy!"

"You can go and eat coke—you silly Scotchman!" said Handforth tartly. "And

if you say that I'm in love again, I'll dot you on the nose!"

"Oh, will you?" said McClure heatedly. "Try it, you—you English fathead!"

Everybody else grinned. Of late, McClure had gained quite a lot of spirit. The knowledge that he was one hundred per cent Scottish probably added to his confidence. At all events, Handforth was finding that Mac was not nearly so easy to handle as he had been in the old days.

Blackpool was soon reached—not Blackpool itself, but a quiet siding a mile or two outside the town. As it was necessary to pass through Blackpool Station itself in order to reach this siding, however, Peggy Ann and her companions were disembarked during the brief stay.

They went off, laughing and happy—full of high spirits. And Archie Glenthorne watched them go, his eyes gleaming contentedly!

CHAPTER 6.

Trouble in the Form-Room!

MR. HORACE PYCRAFT rapped his desk imperiously.

"Attention!" he said, glaring at the juniors over the tops of his glasses. "Upon my word! How many more times must I tell you to confine yourselves to your work? If I have to warn you again, I shall detain the whole Form for extra lesson."

"Oh, go easy, sir!" protested Handforth. "It's a lovely summer's day, and——"

"The type of day is immaterial, Handforth!" interrupted Mr. Pycraft coldly. "And the fact that we are in Blackpool is equally immaterial. It is necessary for you to remember that we are in the class-room, and that work is required of you."

Handforth grunted, and a number of the other juniors grunted, too. Mr. Pycraft never made exceptions. And surely this was a day of all days for a few concessions?

The School Train had arrived at the seaside. There was the ozone in the very air, and it was tantalising to know that the beach was so near at hand on this hot summer's day. Yet here were the juniors, bottled up in the class-rooms, pegging away at work. It was really "too thick!"

Most of the fellows had already forgotten Peggy Ann and her fair companions. That little affair was looked upon as a mere incident. Even Handforth, in his thoughts of bathing and of the prospect of cricket, had no time to bother about the charms of the Lancashire lass with the dark eyes and the reddish hair. Fortunately, he had not seen enough of her to become really impressed.

As Church whispered to McClure, it was bad enough to have one chap "down" with the disease. And Archie Glenthorne was unquestionably down.

At the present moment he was sitting at his desk, looking dreamily in front of him, oblivious of his surroundings. Mr. Pycraft



Mr. Pycraft brought his hand down with a resounding thwack on the desk, causing Archie to jump about two feet in the air. Which was most unfortunate for the Form-master, for Archie's head crashed into Mr. Pycraft's chin with a nasty click. "Odds concussions and smites!" exclaimed Archie dazedly.

had grown accustomed to Archie's lackadaisical habits by now. And Mr. Pycraft had been rather surprised to find that Archie, in spite of his apparent slackness, was well up in the Form.

This morning, however, Archie was so different that even Mr. Pycraft was compelled to sit up and take notice.

"Glenthorne!" he said abruptly.

Archie made no reply. He continued to loll back in his seat with that happy look on his face. Handforth unkindly called it a "soppy" look.

"Glenthorne!" repeated Mr. Pycraft.

He was at the end of the long coach, at his little raised desk. It was a proper class-room, this coach, only differing from the normal class-room in so far as it was long and somewhat narrow. But there was plenty of accommodation for the joint Form—half Removites and half Fourth-Formers.

Crack!

Mr. Pycraft brought his cane down across the desk with a resounding thwack.

"Glenthorne!" he thundered. "Are you asleep, boy, or are you deliberately ignoring me?"

"Eh? Oh, rather!" gasped Archie, as his next-door neighbour gave him a jab on the shin. "Good gad! Don't be so frightfully violent, you blighter!"

Mr. Pycraft's jaw sagged.

"Have you the—the impertinence, Glenthorne, to call me a—a blighter?" he ejaculated blankly.

A titter went up and down the long class-room coach.

"Silence!" roared Mr. Pycraft. "Glenthorne! Answer me at once!"

Archie, rather bewildered, stood up.

"Frightfully sorry, old thing, but I didn't know you were talking to me," he said confusedly.

He sat down again, and seemed on the point of going off into another daydream.

"You are behaving very strangely, Glenthorne!" said Mr. Pycraft. "For addressing me so rudely I shall inflict a punishment of one hundred lines. Now, sir! I will test whether you are attending to the lesson or not. Tell me the date of Queen Elizabeth's birth. We are dealing with history, and —"

"Absolutely!" said Archie abstractedly. "Peggy Ann is one of the most priceless——"

"Peggy Ann!" repeated Mr. Pycraft sharply.

There was another titter, but Archie Glenthorne did not even hear it. Mr. Pycraft glared round the class, and rapped his desk again.

"What do you mean, Glenthorne?" he demanded. "Are you referring to Anne Boleyn—Queen Elizabeth's mother?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

This time it was a regular chuckle, and Mr. Pycraft failed to see the point.

"If there is any more of this unseemly tittering, I shall take severe measures!" said Mr. Pycraft acidly. "Glenthorne, you ought

to know that Queen Elizabeth was born on September 7th, 1533. What was the date of her accession to the throne?"

"Yes!" said Archie contentedly.

"What do you mean?" demanded the Form-master. "That is no answer! I have been telling you, within the past five minutes, that Queen Elizabeth ascended the throne in 1558. What was her age at that time?"

Archie started.

"Her age, sir?" he repeated, trying to collect his thoughts.

"Yes, Glenthorne—her age."

"About sixteen, I should think, sir."

"Sixteen!" thundered Mr. Pycraft.

"Absolutely!" said Archie. "Of course, she may be a few months younger, but there's no doubt she's a rather priceless sort of girl. One of these Lancashire lasses you read about, and——"

"Glenthorne!" shrieked Mr. Pycraft. "To whom are you referring?"

"Peggy Ann, sir, of course."

"Peggy Ann!" yelled the Form-master. "What do you mean, sir? I am asking you to give me some information about Queen Elizabeth?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was a regular yell of laughter this time, and Archie was fairly awakened.

"Queen Elizabeth?" he gasped. "Good gad! That is to say, odds blunders and misunderstandings! Frightfully sorry, sir! I thought you were talking about Peggy Ann."

"And who, may I ask, is this—this Peggy Ann?" fumed Mr. Pycraft.

Before Archie could answer a gleam came into the Form-master's eyes, and he pursed his lips.

"Oh, I see!" he went on tartly. "Good heavens! Is it possible, Glenthorne, that you are referring to one of those girls who came aboard this train to-day? I am shocked! I am amazed! Here am I, trying to teach you history, and all you can think about is a frivolous mill girl."

"Oh, I say!" protested Archie, jumping up. "What rot! I believe that Peggy Ann is a mill girl, but it's a bit steep when you say that she's frivolous! She's absolutely one of the best——"

"I do not want to hear anything about her!" said Mr. Pycraft, breathing hard. "If you mention her name again, Glenthorne, I shall cane you. Upon my word! What are you boys coming to nowadays? I am beginning to think that it was a grave mistake on the part of the school governors to indulge in the luxury of this School Train. I fear it is having a demoralising effect upon you all."

"Why drag us all in, sir?" asked Handforth indignantly.

"Be good enough to remain silent, Handforth!" rapped out Mr. Pycraft. "Attention! Now then! Let us get on with this lesson!"

AND after that Archie Glenthorne managed to drag his thoughts away from Peggy Ann, and to give some little thought to the work in hand.

Not that this lasted long.

For during the next lesson—which happened to be geography—Archie wandered off as badly as ever. After discoursing at some length upon the geographical characteristics of Italy, Mr. Pycraft instructed the Form to draw their own maps of that country.

The fellows didn't mind in the least; map-drawing was always regarded as more or less an easy job. Mr. Pycraft buried himself in a book which was presumably connected with his work. The fact that this book was heavily enshrouded in brown paper, however, led the juniors to entertain a few suspicions. Mr. Pycraft had a weakness for thrillers, and the attention he bestowed upon that book, and the eager way in which he devoured it, seemed to hint that it was not entirely without grip.

Archie, commencing sincerely enough on his map of Italy, drifted off into other channels. Before very long he found himself drawing outlines of Peggy Ann's head and shoulders.

Peggy Ann herself would probably have received a considerable shock if she could have seen this alleged likeness. Even Archie himself was not quite satisfied. He told himself frankly that the greatest artist in the world could not do justice to such a face as hers. So his own efforts were necessarily inadequate.

However, it was pleasant to sit there, sketching Peggy Ann as he pictured her in his mind's eye. Far better than wasting his time on an uninteresting map of Italy, anyhow.

Archie was still engaged in this delightful task when the lesson came to an end. Not that Archie took any notice. He was lost again. He did not even hear the rapping of Mr. Pycraft's cane; he did not hear the closing of books, or the issuing of orders. His pen still drifted leisurely across his paper.

"I am gratified, Glenthorne, to find that you are working so assiduously," said Mr. Pycraft ominously. "However, you have had ample time to draw your map of Italy, and you must now put your pen away."

Archie, of course, heard nothing of this. In imagination, he was on the Blackpool front, strolling along the promenade with Peggy Ann. The expression of serene contentment upon his aristocratic face was significant.

Nipper and Reggie Pitt and Handforth and Boots and Christine—in fact, most of the fellows—read the signs easily. Archie's susceptible heart had been touched again. Handforth was bad enough when he happened to get "smitten," but Archie generally went one better.

Mr. Pycraft left his desk, and came striding down the class-room. Archie's failure to reply—or to take any notice whatsoever—

had aroused Mr. Pycraft's ire. Generally, he left Archie alone. But to-day Archie had been so inattentive, so "far away," that Mr. Pycraft felt impelled to single him out for special attention.

"Now, young man!" he ejaculated, bringing his hand down with a resounding slap on Archie's desk.

"Good gad!" yelled Archie, jumping about two feet into the air.

Unfortunately, Mr. Pycraft was in the way. Archie's head crashed into Mr. Pycraft's chin as the latter was commencing to bend over the junior. There was a nasty click, and then a fiendish yell. Mr. Pycraft's glasses jerked from his nose, slithered on to the desk, and fell to the floor.

"Odds concussions and smites!" ejaculated Archie, rubbing his head. "I mean to say, good gad! What was that?"

"You—you dangerous young lunatic!" bellowed Mr. Pycraft, dancing round. "My jaw is broken! Good heavens! I believe my teeth are loosened!"

"Eh?" said Archie, looking round. "Oh, hallo! So it was you, what? Dash it all, sir, is there any need to go about biffing chappies on the head? Rather near the edge, what?"

"You—you young idiot!" roared Mr. Pycraft. "It was your own doing entirely! What do you mean by jerking up like that and pushing your head into my jaw? I'm hurt!"

The Form looked on approvingly. Any incident that caused pain to Mr. Horace Pycraft was naturally an incident to chortle over and to remember with glee.

"I say, really!" protested Archie. "I mean, sir, how was I to know? You came dashing up, slapping the good old desk, and —"

"Enough!" panted the Form-master. "In the—er—circumstances, Glenthorne, I will overlook the matter. Let me see your map of Italy."

"My map of—— Good gad!" said Archie blankly.

Mr. Pycraft snatched the papers from Archie's desk, and gazed in dumbfounded surprise at the alleged drawings of Peggy Ann. Archie was fairly strong on swimming, and in running, and in his studies he was by no means backward. But when it came to drawing, the genial ass of the Remove was unquestionably on the weak side.

"What—what are these atrocities?" demanded Mr. Pycraft.

"Atrocities?" repeated Archie. "Oh, I say! Kindly be good enough, old thing, to leave my private documents alone."

"Your private documents!" thundered Mr. Pycraft. "Were you not supposed to be drawing a map of Italy?"

"Now you come to mention it, sir, I believe there was some sort of general scheme——"

"Glenthorne, you have been wasting your time!" snapped the master. "I am amazed that you should sit here, drawing these grotesque impressions of animals."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The whole Form rocked with laughter—not so much at Mr. Pycraft's words, but at the expression on Archie's face.

"Animals!" he gasped, horrified. "Why, dash you, you blighter, these are portraits of Peggy Ann!"

Mr. Pycraft started as though he had been stung.

"Did I understand, Glenthorne, that you called me a—er—blighter?" he asked breathlessly.

"I did, sir—and I apologise," replied Archie, breathing hard. "A mere slip of the tongue—in the heat of the good old



moment. But, dash it, it's enough to make any chappie let his tongue skid when——"

"That will be sufficient!" broke in Mr. Pycraft coldly. "Since you have apologised, Glenthorne, I will not punish you for that gross insult. However, you will write me five hundred lines for inattention during this lesson. As for these—these absurdities, they will go into the waste-paper basket."

He strode back to his desk, tore the sketches up, and consigned them to their fate in the waste-paper basket. And Archie Glenthorne looked on, hot and red with indignation.

CHAPTER 7.

Archie to the Rescue!

"IT'S serious," said Nipper, shaking his head.

Lessons were over for the day, and most of the fellows were hurrying into flannels, or otherwise smartening themselves up, preparatory to stunning Blackpool with an invasion.

Archie Glenthorne, of course, was busily engaged in changing into his most superb suit. And Nipper, as he stood beside the School Train, in the welcome shade, had a look of great gravity on his face.

"What's serious?" asked Handforth, coming up with Church and McClure.

"This affair of Archie—and Peggy Ann," replied Nipper.

Handforth sniffed.

"Bother Archie!" he said. "We're not going to worry ourselves about that ass, are we? He's old enough, and big enough, and ugly enough, to look after himself I should hope."

"That's not the point, Handy," said Nipper. "When a fellow is as badly smitten

as Archie, he needs looking after. We've had to deal pretty drastically with you now and again, but Archie is more helpless——"

"Hold on!" interrupted Handforth ominously. "What's that you were saying about me?"

"My dear chap, don't get excited," said Nipper mildly. "Perhaps your memory is a short one? What about that girl in London? That one you met in a Tube train on Whit Monday? Margaret was her name, wasn't it?"

Handforth coloured.

"Oh, rot!" he blustered. "That girl was in danger, and I went to her rescue. This affair of Archie's is quite different. This Preston girl is only in Blackpool on holiday, and Archie ought to have more sense——"

"The trouble is, a fellow's senses leave him when he falls in love," said Nipper. "Archie's not really in love, of course—he's too young. But he thinks he's in love, and that's really worse. I've got a feeling that we shall have to butt in before long. Anyhow, we'll see how he goes on."

"But the girl has gone now," remarked Tommy Watson. "Archie isn't likely to meet her again."

"My poor innocent!" grinned Nipper. "Archie has arranged to meet her on the front somewhere! I don't suppose she cares much about it—she doesn't seem to be the kind of girl who would hang round a chap because he happens to have plenty of money. No, I think she's too good-hearted to tell Archie to go and eat coke. So we shall probably have to go to her assistance."

"By squashing Archie?" asked Handforth.

"Exactly."

"All right—let's squash him now and get it over," said Edward Oswald, with relish. "There's no time like the present, my sons. Where is he?"

"We'll give him a chance," said Nipper. "It's just possible that he might get over it during the day—and then we shan't need to take any action at all. We don't want to spy on him, either. We can tell by his attitude—to-night—if he's still in the throes or not."

AND so Handforth was disappointed. The fellows went off in various groups to have a good time in Blackpool. Archie went off alone—so absolutely gorgeous that a crowd of fags whom he passed had the greatest difficulty in refraining from rushing up in a body and rolling him in the dust. It seemed a pity to let him wander into Blackpool like that. He was so absurdly neat and tidy that he invited a little rough stuff.

He never knew what a narrow escape he had had. And presently he found a well-appointed tramcar which carried him into the centre of Blackpool—right to Talbot Square. From here it was a simple matter for Archie to get to the front, and to mingle

with the gay and happy throngs of holiday-makers.

"Odds multitudes and throngs!" he murmured. "I thought Blackpool was a pretty lively sort of spot, but, dash it, this is a dashed eye-opener!"

He was rather bewildered by the crowds, and by the general atmosphere of happy-go-lucky gaiety. People who came to Blackpool for their holidays left behind all cares and worries. At Blackpool they were determined wholeheartedly to enjoy themselves. Blackpool is essentially a town where the holiday-makers take their pleasures in the highest spirits.

Archie had no trouble, once he was on the front, in finding the Central Pier. Peggy Ann had told him to look out for the Tower, and Archie found that it was impossible to miss seeing the Tower. For, after all, the Tower is Blackpool's most outstanding landmark. Many of the juniors were to discover that the Tower is one of those places where you can enter in the morning and stay all day—and find plenty of amusement during every minute.

Archie was not interested in the Tower, however. He hovered round the Central Pier, and he began to get the wind up very seriously. He had not expected to find such throngs here. How was it possible for him to locate Peggy Ann amongst all these hundreds of pretty, gaily-dressed girls?

No matter where he looked, there were girls. The vast majority of them were about Peggy Ann's own size and build—dainty and slim and attractive. They were all wearing the latest fashion summer frocks, just like Peggy Ann. And nowadays the fashions are so similar that girls look very much alike. More than a dozen times Archie moved forward eagerly, thinking that he had spotted Peggy Ann, but in every case, with a sensation of dismay, he realised that he was mistaken.

It afforded him some little relief, however, when he suddenly became aware of the fact that he was half an hour early for the appointment. It was hardly likely that Peggy Ann would be here yet.

So Archie wandered off on to the beach, intending to come back to the Central Pier after about twenty minutes.

Considering Blackpool's size, and the countless number of its visitors, it was a remarkable coincidence that Archie should actually spot Peggy Ann soon after he had got down on the sands.

Peggy Ann, to be exact, was bathing.

Being a good swimmer, she was some little distance from her girl friends, and as Archie approached the water's edge, she saw him. And at the same moment he saw her.

"What-ho!" ejaculated Archie gladly. "Oh, I say! How positively priceless! I mean to say, Peggy Ann!"

It wasn't astonishing, perhaps, that Handforth & Co. and a few other St. Frank's juniors should be on the beach close by.

As yet they had not seen Archie—or Peggy Ann, either. The beach was so thronged that even Archie was not particularly noticeable, except to those within a close radius.

PEGGY ANN ceased swimming, and trod water. She waved gaily.

Archie waved in return—and he was so intent upon looking at Peggy Ann that he quite failed to realise that he was walking down the beach towards the sea. Happily he continued to wave; serenely he continued to walk forward—right into the water itself!

But still he went on, oblivious of everything. There, ahead of him, was Peggy Ann, looking absolutely charming as she bobbed about in the blue sea. Archie could see nothing else; he wanted to see nothing else. Still he went walking forward until the water reached up to his knees—

Nipper and Handforth and the other juniors, watching from the beach, looked on in amazement. Peggy Ann herself was dumbfounded. Mechanically she continued to wave—and in that moment Archie's whole attitude changed.

It was an indication of his state of mind—for now he assumed that Peggy Ann was in difficulties. She was waving for help! She was out of her depth, and about to sink! These were the thoughts that chased themselves frantically through Archie's mind.

"Good gad!" he panted hoarsely.

Archie was not the kind of fellow to hesitate, and he did not hesitate now. He plunged forward into the sea, swimming strongly. His straw hat was lifted off by a gentle wave.

"My only aunt!" ejaculated Handforth, staring. "Look at Archie! He's gone off his rocker!"

"Swimming—with all his clothes on!" said Reggie Pitt, shaking his head. "Poor old Archie! He's gone potty at last!"

Peggy Ann, having recovered from her double astonishment, was swimming towards Archie now—and for the life of her she could not understand why he had plunged in so dramatically.

With a few swift strokes, she met him, and then stopped swimming. She looked very charming in her gaily-coloured swimming suit and rubber cap.

"Whatever is the matter, Archie?" she asked wonderingly.

"Don't attempt to swim, dear old thing!" panted Archie. "Just cling to me. I'll have you ashore in two jiffies."

"But I don't want to go ashore," said Peggy Ann.

"No?" ejaculated Archie, with a gulp. "But I thought—I mean, it seemed to me—Odds mistakes and blunders! Aren't you drowning, old girl?"

"Drowning?" gasped Peggy Ann. "Of course I'm not!"

"How frightfully ridic.!" said Archie. "I thought you were drowning!"

"And is that why you swam out to me—fully dressed like this?" asked the girl softly. "Oh, it was champion of you, Archie. But you shouldn't have done it. You've spoilt your suit."

Archie was so confused—so embarrassed—that he hardly knew what to say. He felt supremely ridiculous. In his haste he had jumped to a perfectly preposterous conclusion. Peggy Ann was merely swimming, and he had been ass enough to think that she was in danger!

"I'm most frightfully sorry!" he said awkwardly. "I mean, dash it, you must think that I'm a priceless sort of chump, you know. If it comes to that, I suppose I am a perfectly priceless sort of chump! Absolutely!"

"I think it was very nice of you," said the girl. "Only I can't quite understand why you should mistake my friendly wave for a danger signal."

"Oh, absolutely not," replied Archie. "Perfectly preposterous of me, old fairy."

"I was going to meet you at the Central Pier in about half an hour," said Peggy Ann. "I was just coming out, in fact, so that I could get dressed in time. I'll still meet you there, if you really want me to."

"Oh, rather! Absolutely!" said Archie. "But hardly in half an hour, old girl, if you don't mind. I mean, it'll take me slightly longer—"

"All right, then—we'll say an hour," interrupted Peggy Ann. "You'd better get ashore now, Archie, and change those wet things of yours."

Some of the other girls were coming up, and Archie did not feel like facing them. He gave Peggy Ann a grateful glance, and swam off towards the shore—only to find a whole crowd of grinning St. Frank's fellows awaiting his arrival.

He came out of the water looking very much like a drowned rat. All his superb elegance had gone.

"How's the water, old man?" asked Nipper politely.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Really, Nipper, old scream—"

"You seemed in such a hurry to bathe that I thought the water was exceptionally nice," continued Nipper. "I suppose it's a new fashion to go in dressed like this?"

"You dashed blighter!" said Archie coldly. "You know dashed well that I was under the impression that Peggy Ann was drown— I mean, I thought—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So that's it!" yelled Handforth. "Poor old Archie! He thought Peggy Ann was drowning! Oh, my only sainted aunt! Has anybody seen his keeper?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Archie Glenthorne raced away, his ears burning as the other juniors yelled with boisterous laughter.



When Archie came out of the water he looked very much like a drowned rat. All his former superb elegance had gone. "How's the water, old man?" asked Nipper politely. "And I suppose it's a new fashion to go bathing when dressed like this?" Archie surveyed him coldly, but the other juniors shrieked with laughter. They had no sympathy for the lovesick Archie!

CHAPTER 8.

Time to Take Action!

DIDN'T I say that something must be done?" asked Nipper, looking round at the others.

"But what can we do?" said Reggie Pitt.

"We've got to cure Archie of his fifty-horse-power affection," replied Nipper. "It's not fair to Peggy Ann! Think how embarrassing it was for her out there in the water—with one of our chaps swimming out to her fully dressed!"

There were many chuckles. The group of Removites had gathered together on the beach after Archie had fled.

"Well, he knows what he's about," grinned Dick Goodwin. "He couldn't do better than fall in love with a Lancashire lass!"

"You only say that, you ass, because you're a Lancashire chap yourself," said Handforth, with a sniff. "These Lancashire girls are jolly fine, I'll admit, but there's no reason why Archie should go so dotty over one of them!"

"I dare say it'll be your turn next!" chuckled Goodwin.

"Me?" said Handforth, with a glare. "If you're asking for a thick ear, Dick Goodwin——"

"Well, well!" put in Vivian Travers. "There's no need to get excited, Handforth, dear old fellow. We've been expecting you to 'fall' for one of these Blackpool belles for hours!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth looked like being violent for a moment or two; then he shrugged his shoulders and sniffed.

"Go ahead!" he said tartly. "You can't get my rag out like that! These Blackpool girls are jolly nice, but there are so many attractions of another kind that I haven't any time for 'em."

"Yes, that reminds me," said Church. "What about going along to the South Shore? I want to have a thrill on the Big Dipper, and there's a thing called the Velvet Coaster, isn't there? And the Matterhorn?"

"Rather!" said Handforth enthusiastically. "I've got a handbook all about those shows. We'll go through the River Caves, and we'll try the Whip and Noah's Ark, and all the rest of 'em. Then we've got to go up the Tower, too, and goodness knows what else."

"No need to do everything to-day, Handy," said Nipper. "Plenty of time, you know. We're not leaving Blackpool just yet."

"Yes, but I'm afraid we shall leave before the Lancashire and Worcestershire match, which starts on the 29th," said Handforth gloomily. "Why can't the school authorities allow us to stay over, so that we can see it?"

"Well, I dare say we shall be able to see some decent club cricket matches in Stanley Park," said Nipper consolingly. "But I seem to remember that we were talking about Archie. I really think that we ought to do something for the poor chap. He's in a bad way. Any fellow who can misunderstand a bathing girl's cheery wave for a signal for help is evidently in the last throes!"

"The only thing to do with Archie is to put handcuffs on him, chains round his ankles, and then lock him up somewhere," said Handforth.

"It would be different if Peggy Ann—I think that's her name—had a fiancé," said Nipper thoughtfully. "Or, at least, a boy friend—about twice Archie's size. If he came along and found the girl with a chap



When Archie came out of the water he looked had gone. "How's the water, old man?" a bathing when dressed like this?" Archie stater. They had no

like that, the shock would be enough for him, and he'd soon get over it."

"By gum!" said Goodwin suddenly. "I've got an idea, you fellows."

"Out with it!" said Nipper.

"Well, I used to know a fellow in Blackpool," continued Dick, "named Dave Wad-

dington. He keeps a cycle shop in the town. A big, hefty chap—and he's as keen as mustard on practical jokes."

"But how can he help us?" asked Handforth.

"Well, it's easy," replied Dick. "Why shouldn't we go to this old pal of mine and tell him how the position stands? We'll introduce him to Peggy Ann, and fix it up with her so that Dave Waddington is with her when Archie comes along. Naturally, Archie will be a bit startled to see this chap with the girl, and he'll be scared off

"This fellow, Dave Waddington, may be a right, Dick, but he's a stranger to the girl, and—"

"Easy, dear old fellow—easy!" murmured Travers. "The fair damsel approacheth."

PEGGY ANN and two or three of her girl friends were coming along the beach. Peggy Ann had quickly dressed, and she was now looking fresh and radiant after her bathe, her hair waving in the sea breeze.

"I'm glad you boys are here," she said, as she came up. "I hope your friend, Archie, will be able to get back to the train all right. He was dreadfully wet, you know."

"Anybody who dashed into the sea as he did couldn't help getting wet," smiled Nipper. "But you needn't worry about him; he'll turn up again before long, and as elegant as ever."

There was a brief pause—a rather awkward pause.

"Look here," said Handforth bluntly. "We were just talking about you—Miss—Miss Peggy Ann!"

"Were you?" she asked in surprise.

"Yes, rather!" said Handforth, who generally came out with a thing straight from the shoulder. "We've got an idea that Archie's 'gone' on you."

"I believe he does rather like me," said Peggy Ann demurely.

"But how about you?" asked Handforth. "It's all very well for Archie, but you can't have this silly ass hanging round you for the next few days, bothering you all the time. We've got an idea that you would like him to be choked off."

Peggy Ann's friends were smiling, and Peggy Ann herself seemed amused, too.

"Well, not exactly choked off," she said. "I'll admit he's rather pressing. And I don't like to tell him that I don't want him. He's such a champion sort. So good-natured, and so friendly."

"He's all that," said Nipper. "Archie's one of the best—true blue. But if we can help you, Miss Peggy Ann, you've only got to say the word, you know."

"How can you help me?" she asked, in surprise.

"Well, we think that if Archie came along and found you with some other fellow—a big fellow—he would get the wind up and give you up as a bad job, as it were."

"Oh!"

"He only needs one short lesson like that," smiled Nipper. "Dick Goodwin here is a



rowned rat. All his former superb elegance y. "And I suppose it's a new fashion to go, but the other juniors shrieked with laugh-lovesick Archie!

when Dave Waddington gives him a black look."

"A black look's no good," said Handforth. "He'll have to give Archie a biff on the nose."

"I'm not sure that the girl would agree to all this," said Nipper, shaking his head.

Lancashire chap himself, you know, and he knows somebody in Blackpool who'll help. It must be a stranger to Archie, or he'll suspect something."

"You don't mean anything violent, do you?" asked the girl. "Perhaps it would be as well if Archie was—was simmered down a bit. I like him, but I'm afraid he's getting a bit too interested in me. I mean, he's only a schoolboy, isn't he?"

"That's all—and he's a good-natured sort of chump," said Nipper. "Once he gets over this little affair, he'll be as right as rain again. You see, we want to cure him because he's such a handful, and he'll be getting into trouble with the masters, too. He's neglecting his lessons, and getting absent-minded, and—and all sorts of things. So we really want you to agree to this scheme, Miss Peggy Ann."

She laughed.

"All right, then," she said readily. "If it will help Archie, I'll readily agree. I don't want him to get into any trouble with his masters. But how is it going to be done?"

"Nothing easier," replied Nipper. "You're going to meet him soon, aren't you?"

"Well, he insisted," she murmured.

"When you meet him make an appointment for this evening," said Nipper. "Naturally, he'll grab at it, and agree to be there. Then, when he arrives this evening, he'll find that you've got this big fellow with you. He'll assume that the big fellow is your fiancé, or something like that—particularly when the big fellow gives Archie a black look and tells him to buzz off."

"Oh, it's too bad," said Peggy Ann, in alarm.

"You've got to be cruel to be kind!" said Handforth bluntly. "It's no good taking half-measures with a chap like Archie—when he's so badly smitten. I don't blame him, of course," he added, as he looked approvingly at the girl's blue eyes and pretty face. "In fact, Archie has got thundering good taste—Hi, what's the matter with you, Churchy? Leave my arm alone, Mac!"

There were many chuckles as Church and McClure tried to drag Handforth back. They were in mortal fear that Handforth himself would take a tip from Archie, and get smitten with Peggy Ann's undoubted charms.

"You can take it from us that everything will be all right," said Nipper hastily. "This big fellow is a chum of Dick Goodwin's, and Dick can guarantee him. Can't you, Dick?"

"Dave Waddington is a champion," said Goodwin promptly. "You'll like him, miss."

He'll only be with you for five minutes, anyhow—and we shall be in the offing to watch how things proceed."

Still the girl hesitated.

"I'll tell you what," said Nipper. "We'll go along and see Dave Waddington now, and we'll fix it up with him, and then we'll bring him along and introduce him to you. How's that? If you don't like him the whole thing's off."

"Well, that's better," said Peggy Ann slowly.

"There's really nothing in it," smiled Nipper. "You wait for Archie until he comes up. As soon as he arrives Dave Waddington appears on the scene and makes Archie believe that you're his girl. Archie gets a shock, says good-bye, and he's cured. Dave Waddington raises his cap and goes off, and you won't be bothered any more. That's the whole thing in a nutshell—and I don't see how it can fail to work."

"Oh, I think it will work all right," said Peggy Ann. "But is it quite fair to Archie? He's such a really good sort, you know. I like him immensely—and if he wasn't so—so pressing, everything would be all right. But after the way he ran into the water a little while ago to 'rescue' me, I hardly know what he'll do next."

"You take my tip and let us arrange this plan," said Handforth. "Archie's a fair terror when he gets going, and he won't give you a minute's peace as long as the School Train's in Blackpool. He had an awful time with his Form-master to-day, and he'll be worse to-morrow. He'll get lines and swishings, and by the way he's going on he might even get sacked from the school!"

Peggy Ann nodded.

"All right," she said briskly. "I'll agree! I hate to think of Archie getting himself into such trouble on my account."

"WELL, that's that," said Nipper contentedly.

They were in the town now, and they had arranged to meet Peggy Ann within half an hour outside the Tivoli in Talbot Square.

"I shouldn't be too sure, dear old fellow," said Travers, shaking his head. "Peggy Ann is a tender-hearted damsel, I imagine. It wouldn't surprise me in the least if she backs out at the last minute."

"I don't think so," said Nipper. "Anyhow, it all depends upon this chap, Dave Waddington. If he agrees, and if Peggy Ann likes him, the wheeze is bound to work."

"Well, come along," said Dick Goodwin. "We'll soon be at Dave's place now. I haven't seen him for years, and I'll bet I'll give him a surprise. It's his father who's got the cycle business, of course; but I expect Dave is at work now, too. He left school a couple of years ago."

They found, upon investigation, that the cycle business had now grown into a very large garage and service station. And it wasn't long before Dave Waddington himself

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appeared—brought out from the office by Dick Goodwin.

He proved to be a big young fellow—nearly six feet high—in overalls. Dave, like most Lancashire people, believed in working hard himself, even though he was part proprietor of the garage. He was an open-faced, grinning young fellow, and he shook hands cheerily with the St. Frank's boys.

"What's this Dick's been telling me?" he asked boisterously. "You want me to meet a pretty girl? Where is she? I'm your man!"

Dick explained the situation, with a little help from Nipper.

"H'm! A rather ticklish job," said Dave at length. "It's a tall order, my lads. You don't want me to do anything drastic to your young school chum, I suppose?"

"Nothing much," said Nipper. "Just make him understand that Peggy Ann is your girl—even though she isn't, you know, and put the wind up him a bit. He only needs one shock like that, and the fever will leave him."

Dave Waddington grinned.

"Well, I can spare ten minutes now," he said briskly. "Where's this sweet young thing?"

"No larks, mind," said Dick warningly. "She's a nice girl, and she won't welcome it if you get too fresh with her. Understand, Dave, it's only a wheeze to cure old Archie. The girl doesn't want to meet you at all—it's our idea. And it won't be playing the game if you take advantage of the situation."

Dave chuckled.

"You can trust me, can't you?" he said, giving Dick Goodwin a slap on the back. "I'll play the game!"

CHAPTER 9.

A Shock for Archie!

"**W**HAT-HO! Greetings, and all that sort of thing!"

Archibald Winston Derek Glen-thorne, resplendent once more, gracefully raised his hat as he joined Peggy Ann near the Central Pier. The afternoon was a little older, but the sun was still shining warmly, and the scene in general was as gay as ever.

"However did you manage it in time?" asked Peggy Ann, regarding him with approval. "You look splendid again, Archie."

"Oh, really?" protested Archie. "I mean, how absolutely ridic.! That is to say, absolutely not!"

"And what about your other clothes?" went on the girl. "I'm afraid they're ruined—and it's all my fault."

"Good gad, no!" protested Archie. "I was a frightfully silly chump to assume that you were in danger just because you waved to me. I mean, I ought to have known that you were able to swim like a dashed fish. Kindly refrain from referring to the good old sub-

ject again. What about a spot of something jolly, and all that? The switchback, or a cinema, or something equally ripe?"

"Shall we go to the South Shore, then?"

"Anywhere you say, old dear—that is to say, old thing," replied Archie cheerfully. "I mean, I'm something of a stranger in these parts. But I gather that we shall be able to have large slices of enjoyment if we go hither and thither a bit. Blackpool seems to be one solid mass of amusements, if you get my meaning."

They went off—Archie quite failing to notice that Peggy Ann's friends were no longer with her. Strictly speaking, the girl would have preferred to spend all her time with her girl chums; but she could see that Archie was in deadly earnest, and she hadn't the heart to choke him off. In fact, she couldn't do it.

And before long she found that she was thoroughly enjoying herself in Archie's company.

They went for a long walk along the promenade—which at Blackpool runs for practically six miles in a series of really amazing roads and terraces, sheer with the sea all the way.

Considering that Blackpool has spent over a million pounds on its promenades, one can easily be satisfied that the result is worth while.

As Archie and Peggy Ann strolled along the main promenade, they saw a fine roadway alongside them—with motor-cars gliding to and fro. Then there was a double track for the tramway service—one of the best and swiftest in the country. Between the trams and the sea there was the broad parade; broad enough to accommodate all of Blackpool's thousands of summer visitors without anybody getting in another's way.

The great span which stretches from the North Pier round the bend of the cliffs beyond, is well worth seeing. Tier upon tier, the four splendid promenades continue—the most wonderful parade, perhaps, in the world. Along the lower tier, one is practically level with the sea, and one gets the impression of strolling along the deck of a vessel in mid-ocean. Higher up, there are breezes to battle against—glorious sea breezes, straight from the ocean.

And high above all, crowning everything, is the real promenade—magnificent stretches of wonder, with restful sunken gardens, and cleverly-devised beauty spots.

As for other pleasures—of the more thrilling kind—Blackpool has everything to offer. Dancing, bathing, boating, theatres, cinemas—everything. A number of the St. Frank's fellows were already sampling Blackpool's famous open air baths, acknowledged to be the finest in the world. An immense elliptical building in the Renaissance style, with dressing accommodation for nearly six hundred bathers—and where five thousand spectators can assemble and view the scene. These baths are always supplied with filtered

water, graduated in depth so that the visitors may either paddle, plunge about, or actually swim. It is an aquatic coliseum. And then the piers—three of them. The North Pier, the Central Pier, and Victoria Pier. All are tip-top, and Archie was rather confused by so many splendours during this walk with Peggy Ann. Not that he gave much attention to Blackpool's attractions; he was too contented with Peggy Ann's companionship.

Peggy Ann herself was amused and charmed by Archie's genuine friendship. He was so obviously decent; so patently true blue.

Archie hardly realised how the time had gone when, at last, they found themselves back near the Central Pier.

"Well, I'm afraid I shall have to be going now," said Peggy Ann, smiling. "And you must get back to your School Train, too—"

"Oh, what rot!" protested Archie. "I mean, there's plenty of time yet."

"But we've been walking for nearly two hours," smiled Peggy Ann.

"Good gad! It doesn't seem two minutes!" ejaculated Archie, with a start. "Perhaps you're right, old dear. I mean, what you say is the good old law, you know. I was wondering if there's any chance of—of meeting you—"

"If you could possibly get out later on this evening, how about a visit to the

Empress ball-room?" suggested Peggy Ann, lowering her gaze.

She only just caught sight of Archie's flush—of the gleam of happiness in his eyes—and she felt guilty. For it was at the Empress ball-room that the little "wheeze" was to be worked on Archie. Everything was definitely arranged, and although Peggy Ann had agreed to it readily enough, she was now beginning to feel that it was not quite sporting. Archie was so thoroughly decent. It didn't seem like playing the game. However, Peggy had herself realised that Archie was far too interested in her; and, besides, he would probably get into very serious trouble with the school authorities unless he was forced to come to his senses.

"The Empress ball-room?" said Archie brightly. "Absolutely the stuff to give them, old thing! Absolutely! I'll be there on the good old spot. Just mention the time, and you'll find me waiting."

ARCHIE went back to the School Train in a kind of delirium. He had fixed up the appointment, and he could hardly believe in his good fortune. He was to go to the Empress ball-room with Peggy Ann later on in the evening—and everything was all serene. He felt that he was treading on air.

When he arrived at the School Train, he



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found one or two fellows casually lounging about. The fact that he was late for calling-over did not worry Archie in the least. The expression of seraphic happiness on his face was eloquent.

"You're in trouble, Archie, my lad," said Nipper. "Old Pycraft's on your track!"

"Good man!" said Archie heartily, as he climbed aboard the train.

"But he's after your blood——"

"Who cares?" sang Archie.

He continued humming as he passed through the class-room coach on his way to change his clothes. He quite failed to see Mr. Horace Pycraft barring the way.

"One moment, Glenthorne!" said the Form-master ominously.

"Oh, hallo! So there you are, what?" said Archie, slapping Mr. Pycraft on the back, and gripping his hand. "Topping, old horse! Dashed pleased to see you!"

"Why, what on earth——"

"Frightfully rushed just now, though," went on Archie, beaming. "Sorry I can't stop, old sea-lion. Another time, what?"

He was about to pass on, but Mr. Pycraft caught him by the arm.

"Glenthorne!" he gasped. "Have you gone mad?"

"Not precisely mad, old dear, but I rather think that I'm a bit dotty with joy," said Archie. "Be good enough to remove the good old flipper. I'm in the deuce of a hurry——"

"How dare you?" fumed Mr. Pycraft, who had an idea that Archie was deliberately checking him. "Glenthorne, I am amazed at your insolence! You are late for calling-over."

"Absolutely!"

"What is your excuse for being late?"

"Excuse?" said Archie. "There's absolutely no excuse, old walrus. A chappie can't always be on time, you know——"

"If you dare to use any of these grossly absurd terms to me again, I shall cane you!" snapped Mr. Pycraft. "Glenthorne, you will write me five hundred lines for being late for calling-over."

"Thanks most frightfully, old cheese!"

"What?" gasped Mr. Pycraft.

"Oh, rather," said Archie, beaming. "Anything to please you, old onion!"

He was so enraptured with his arrangement to meet Peggy Ann that he completely forgot Mr. Pycraft's dignity and station. In fact, he hardly gave Mr. Pycraft a thought. And a mere matter of five hundred lines struck him as a trifle. The fellows had not exaggerated when they had told Peggy Ann that Archie was liable to get himself into serious trouble with the school authorities.

"You—you impertinent young scamp!" panted Mr. Pycraft hoarsely. "After what I have said to you, how dare you continue in this strain. And what of the lines that I gave you this morning? Where are they?"

"Echo answers where," chuckled Archie.

"As a matter of fact, old cheddar, I've forgotten all about the dashed things. Awfully careless of me, and all that sort of frightful thing, but you know what it is. Something in the sea air, what? Another time, laddie—another time!"

"Good heavens!" said Mr. Pycraft, his jaw sagging.

He was so startled that he allowed Archie to walk away—but his manner soon altered, and it was evident that Mr. Pycraft was preparing "a rod in pickle" for the love-lorn genial ass of the Remove!

MR. PYCRAFT lost no time in going to Nelson Lee's study. He felt that such behaviour as Archie's should be dealt with by the School Train's Head. Unfortunately for Mr. Pycraft's plan, Nelson Lee was out, so the thing had to be left in abeyance.

Exasperated, Mr. Pycraft seized his cane and went charging through the train, looking for Archie.

"Where is Glenthorne?" he demanded, as he arrived in the Junior Study Coach, and barged into Handforth and one or two other juniors in the narrow passage.

"Somewhere about, sir," said Handforth vaguely.

"I do not intend to chase up and down this train!" snapped Mr. Pycraft. "If any boy here knows where Glenthorne is, let him tell me at once!"

But the juniors seemed to be completely in the dark regarding Archie's whereabouts. Actually, they knew that he was in the dormitory coach, changing his clothes.

Mr. Pycraft met with more success when he came opposite to Study A, and found Claude Gore-Pearce just emerging.

"Do you know where Glenthorne is?" demanded the Form-master.

"Changing his clothes, sir—in the dormitory!" replied Gore-Pearce promptly.

"Rotter!" came a bellow from Handforth, further down the corridor.

Mr. Pycraft found Archie half-undressed, and he was somewhat startled when the elegant Removite gave him a cheery salute.

"Here again, what?" said Archie crisply. "What a lad you are for dodging about, sir! All over the dashed place, if you know what I mean."

"Glenthorne, I have had enough of your nonsense!" said Mr. Pycraft. "Hold out your hand!"

"Good gad! A caning, what?" said Archie. "Oh, well, just as you like, sir. If it's going to give you any pleasure, go ahead!"

He held out his hand, and Mr. Pycraft brought his cane down violently.

"What-ho! Sundry tingles!" said Archie, wringing his hand, but grinning quite happily. "Well, that's that. Thanks very much, sir. There's nothing like getting it over and done with."

"The other hand, Glenthorne!" roared Mr. Pycraft.

"Eh? The other hand? Oh, I see what you mean!" said Archie. "Right-ho! Any old thing, sir. You might as well have a good time while you're about it!"

Swish!

"The other again!"

Swish!

"And again!" grated Mr. Pycraft.

Swish!

"Odds delays and hindrances!" protested Archie. "This is getting somewhat monotonous, isn't it, old shrimp?"

"How dare you call me a shrimp?" belated Mr. Pycraft. "Glenthorne, I am beginning to think that you have taken leave of your senses! Even when I cane you, you are no better! You will write me a thousand lines for this fresh impertinence!"

He stormed away, and Archie sighed.

"Oh, well, I suppose these things are sent to try us," he murmured, as he gazed ruefully at his puffy hands. "I must say that the blighter has plenty of strength in the good old arm department. Dash him!"

And Archie dismissed all thoughts of Mr. Pycraft and the swishing, and proceeded with his dressing. Canings and lines were mere trivialities to him just now!

TEN minutes later Archie emerged from the dormitory coach, resplendent in immaculate evening-dress, with a light overcoat slung over his arm. He was gorgeous from tip to toe.

"What's the great idea?" inquired Bob Christine, of the Fourth.

"Just off, laddie," replied Archie brightly. "Going to the good old dance, you know."

"Have you a permit to go out after locking-up?"

"A permit?" said Archie, waving his hand. "Who cares about dashed permits? Pray don't be so ridic., old dear."

"You'll get yourself sacked if you go on like this," said Bob earnestly. "You mustn't go out to a dance without a permit, Archie! Don't forget that we're under the same rules and regulations as at St. Frank's. You'll be breaking bounds, and that's a serious offence—"

"Be good enough, you ass, to move out of the way," said Archie coldly. "Who cares about bounds? Or who cares about rules and regulations? Dash them! I have an important appointment."

And he pushed past the startled Bob Christine, opened the nearest door, and left the train.

Incidentally, Nipper and Tommy Watson and Tregellis-West and Handforth and a few others left the train, too. They had no permits, but they felt that Archie needed looking after, and they risked the punishment for breaking bounds in order to be ready to stand by him.

Besides, there was likely to be some amusement outside the Empress ball-room very shortly!

CHAPTER 10.

Not as Planned!

"ODDS visions and dreams!" said Archie breathlessly. "I mean to say, how absolutely stunning! Peggy Ann, old girl, you look perfectly priceless!"

He had just met his Lancashire lass, and, in all truth, Peggy Ann was certainly looking wonderful in her dance frock. It was by no means an expensive creation, but Peggy Ann wore it so becomingly that it seemed to Archie that no dance frock in the whole world could be equal to it. It was so warm that evening that although Peggy Ann had a light coat with her she was not wearing it.

They were outside the Empress, and although it was not yet dark, myriads of electric lights were gleaming. The place was noisy with gay laughter and cheery voices.

Peggy Ann felt more guilty than ever. This was the great moment. Neither of them knew that Nipper and the other St. Frank's fellows were within sight—ready to lend a hand if necessary.

"Did you get permission to come, Archie?" asked Peggy Ann, striving to satisfy herself that she was justified in being a party to the trick.

"Permission?" repeated Archie. "Absolutely not!"

"But won't you get into trouble?"

"I dare say there might be a spot of bother later on, but who cares?" replied Archie blithely. "As a matter of fact, old Pycraft swished me rather heftily—I mean— Good gad! I didn't mean to say—"

"Oh, look at your hands!" cried Peggy Ann, with concern. "Oh, how awful! You've been caned—and caned hard! And all because of me!"

"Absolutely not!" protested Archie. "I say, what rot!"

"And now you've come out again—you're breaking bounds," continued the girl. "It's because I asked you to! You might even be expelled from the school!"

The prospect of the sack did not seem to worry Archie in the least.

"Let's go in, old girl," he said hastily. "I mean, what about a slice of dancing, and all that sort of thing?"

Peggy Ann steeled herself now, and she felt more easy in mind. It was very evident that Archie needed a serious jolt to jerk him out of this dangerous condition. For unless something drastic happened, he would undoubtedly get himself into very serious trouble with the school authorities.

"Hallo! Here we are! Sorry I'm a bit late, Peggy!"

A boisterous, cheery voice struck Archie's ears, and he spun round. He beheld a tall young fellow, also in evening dress, with a frank, open, cheery face. He was in the act of taking Peggy Ann's arm.

"Here, I say!" protested Archie indignantly.

Peggy Ann's "fiancé" gave Archie a shove, and the junior went somersaulting backwards into the roadway. When he sat up his superb evening dress was dusty and soiled, and his topper was a battered and ruined wreck. "Oh, you brute!" exclaimed Peggy Ann.



"Friend of yours?" inquired Mr. Waddington, as he glanced at Archie.

"Well, yes," said Peggy Ann. "He's—he's one of the schoolboys from the St. Frank's train."

"Oh, I see," said Dave. "Pleased to meet you, young 'un. Now you'd better be running off!"

Archie bristled.

"Not merely a ridiculous suggestion, but a foul one," he said warmly. "I have arranged to take this young lady into the ballroom. A few waltzes and fox-trots and so forth seem to be indicated. Be good enough to take your dashed carcass elsewhere, you blighter!"

Mr. Waddington, who had been expecting a very easy conquest, regarded Archie with surprise. He had taken it for granted, in fact, that Archie would get the wind up and go away. But this dandified junior was revealing a considerable amount of spirit.

"Now look here, young 'un," said Mr. Waddington genially. "You're only a kid; a schoolboy. You can't take this young lady into the Empress."

"Dash you!" said Archie. "What has it got to do with you, you chunk of interference? You frightful oscillation! Peggy Ann has arranged—"

"Well, I'm going to arrange it differently," interrupted Mr. Waddington. "Come along, Peggy Ann."

The girl hesitated.

"I'm not so sure—" she began.

"But he's only a kid!" protested Dave Waddington boisterously. "Look here, youngster," he added, turning to Archie,

"don't you think it's about time you buzzed off? My fiancée—"

He paused, deliberately, hoping that Archie would jump to conclusions. Archie did.

"Your fiancée!" he babbled. "Good gad! I—I thought— Oh, I say, I'm most frightfully sorry, don't you know! I didn't know—I mean—"

"Well, I hope you understand now," said Mr. Waddington, taking a firmer grip on Peggy Ann's arm.

Archie stood there, dumbfounded. The thing was done. The shock had been given, and the jolt was a complete success!

EVERYTHING would have been all right if Peggy Ann had not glanced at Archie just before she went off with Mr. Waddington. Archie believed that this tall young fellow was the girl's fiancé, and that he—Archie—was an outsider. As a schoolboy of honour he would have stolen gracefully out of the picture, and no doubt he would have quickly recovered from the stunning blow—just as Nipper & Co. hoped and expected.

But that look of Peggy Ann's made all the difference.

It was a glance thrown over her shoulder—an expression of regret, of sorrow, of pain, of compassion. It went right to Archie's susceptible heart.

That look in the girl's eyes restored him in a split second. Somehow, he felt that Mr. Waddington had no real right to carry her off like this. She was being taken against her will; she really wanted to go into the Empress with Archie.

"What-ho!" he exclaimed. "Just a minute, laddie—just a minute!"

"Can't stop now," said Mr. Waddington briskly.

"Yes you can, dash you!" said Archie, grasping Mr. Waddington by the arm and pulling him round. "What's the big idea, you frightful blister? I don't believe you are Peggy Ann's fiancé at all. Is he your fiancé, Peggy Ann?"

Directly appealed to thus, Peggy Ann shook her head.

"No," she murmured uncomfortably. "He's—he's not."

"Then, odds rogues and vagabonds! Be good enough to sheer off!" said Archie hotly. "Good gad! What next? Unhand the lady, dash you!"

Dave Waddington began to see that the whole game might go "phut" unless he acted drastically. And Mr. Waddington was a fellow of boisterous methods. In some ways he was not unlike Handforth.

He seized Archie by the lapels of his coat, pushed him backwards, and set him down violently in the road.

"Oh!" cried Peggy Ann indignantly.

She had not bargained for this—neither had Mr. Waddington. But he was determined to choke Archie off very thoroughly.

"Now, my lad, I hope you'll understand that I'm in earnest!" he said sternly. "I hate doing this sort of thing, but I'm not going to have you bothering this young lady."

"You frightful fright!" gasped Archie, staggering to his feet, and taking no notice of the groups of people who were gathering round. "You dashed blighter! St. Frank's ahoy! Rescue, Remove!"

"For goodness sake don't make a scene," said Dave, in some alarm. "Don't be a young ass! Clear off while you're safe!"

But Archie was too excited to take any notice. He charged with considerable force, and nearly knocked Mr. Waddington off his feet. Before he could reach Peggy Ann's side, however, Dave seized him and held him firmly.

"I meant what I said!" snapped Mr. Waddington, who was now beginning to lose his temper. "Confound your nerve! What do you mean by punching me in the chest like that? Clear out of it!"

The whole affair was beginning to take a turn that none of the plotters had foreseen. Even Mr. Waddington forgot himself.

He gave Archie a shove which sent that unfortunate junior slithering backwards so rapidly that he lost his balance. Once again the Removite crashed over in the road, turned a somersault, and fell sprawling. When he sat up his glorious evening dress was dusty and soiled. His topper was crumpled and ruined.

And then Peggy Ann, as Handforth afterwards remarked, put the lid on it.

"You brute!" she said angrily, turning upon the startled Dave. "Oh, you wretch!"

"Here, I say—" began Waddington.

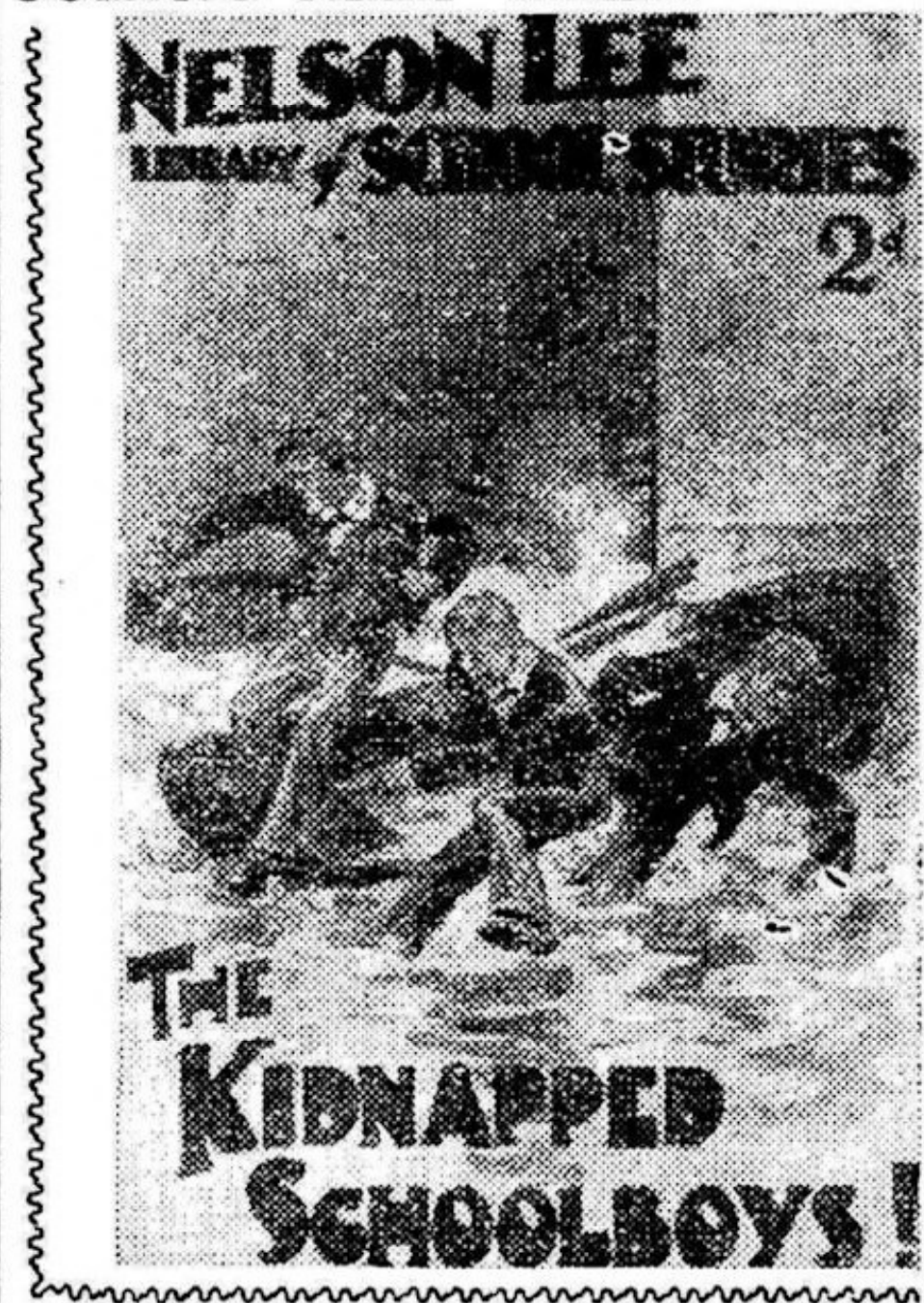
"You know very well that we didn't arrange to do anything like this!" cried Peggy Ann, her eyes flashing. "I think you're a cad! You're a rotter! There wasn't any need to treat poor Archie like that!"

She pushed him aside, ran to Archie, and was just in time to assist him to his feet.

"My only sainted aunt!" said Handforth, from a distance. "Look at that! The whole thing's gone wrong!"

"It's Dave's fault," grunted Dick Goodwin. "There wasn't any need to biff Archie about so violently."

COMING NEXT WEEK!~~~~~



"I'm afraid we've failed," said Nipper sadly.

It certainly looked like it. Peggy Ann had linked her arm with Archie's, and she was leading him away to a spot where it was less crowded.

"I'm so sorry, Archie," she said breathlessly.

"Absolutely! But—but I don't quite understand," said Archie. "I mean—I'm most frightfully sorry to have dragged you into this—"

"You didn't drag me at all," interrupted the girl. "I feel terribly guilty. It—it was only a trick, Archie."

"A trick!"

"Yes; it was arranged by some of your school chums."

"Good gad!"

"They thought that you were getting into trouble with your masters, and they—"

Well, they wanted to make you lose your interest in me," she said softly. "So they arranged with this big friend of theirs—the brute!—to come here. We thought that you would——"

She broke off, hardly knowing how to put it

"They thought that I would give you up, sort of thing?" asked Archie, his eyes gleaming. "Odds schemes and plots! I never thought the good old lads had so much duplicity. I'm frightfully backed."

"I don't see why."

"THE KIDNAPPED SCHOOLBOYS!"

Who's kidnapped?

Why, Edward Oswald Handforth, of course; he's just the sort of chap to land himself in trouble.

He certainly gets a large packet of it in Liverpool—he and his two chums, Church and McClure.

They go down to the docks, and Edward Oswald, ever curious, starts nosing over a tramp steamer—and that's the beginning of many exciting adventures for the Study D chums.

This is a really magnificent yarn, chums, written in Edwy Searles Brooks' best style and full of thrilling situations. Look out for it next Wednesday.

"RIVALS OF THE RAMPANT!"

Stanton Hope's corking serial gets better and better. Don't miss reading next week's absorbing chapters.

ORDER IN ADVANCE!

"I'm backed because everything is all serene," said Archie happily. "I mean, as it was only a trick, and the whole dashed thing is exposed, there's nothing to worry about, what? But I shall certainly refuse to speak to any of those blighters after this," he added firmly.

"You mustn't be vindictive, Archie," she said. "They were only thinking of your own good, you know——"

"Perhaps so," admitted Archie. "As you say, old fairy. Good gad! That's a good word, too. I mean to say, you look just like a fairy, Peggy Ann. So dashed dainty and pretty, and—and all that sort of thing."

She coloured slightly.

"I hope you're not hurt much," she murmured.

"It's absolutely nothing," declared Archie. "And now we'll trickle into the good old

ball-room, what? A brace of fox-trots will restore the good old tissues."

"Ought we to go?" asked Peggy Ann. "If you're going to get into serious trouble over this, I'd rather you went straight home now, Archie."

"Trouble?" laughed Archie. "There's no such word in the good old language, old thing. This way for the ankle exercise!"

He carefully dusted himself down, adjusted his shirt front, which had become somewhat displaced, and then led Peggy Ann triumphantly into the Empress—watched in dismay by Nipper and Handforth and Dave Waddington and the other plotters. Unquestionably, the scheme had sprung a decided leak!

CHAPTER 11.

An Unexpected Arrival!

ARCHIE was extraordinarily lucky. He didn't get back to the School Train until nearly eleven o'clock—long after lights-out in the Junior dormitory. But he succeeded in getting in, and none of the masters were the wiser.

It wasn't really all due to luck.

Nipper felt that Archie needed help more than ever now, and he and Handforth and the others fixed up some bolsters very effectively in Archie's bed, so when the prefect came round to see lights out there was nothing to show that Archie was not fast asleep. Biggleswade happened to be the prefect—and "Biggy" was notoriously careless. Besides, it was a commonplace thing for Archie to be asleep long before anybody else.

After that Nipper and Handforth kept on the watch, and when Archie appeared they whispered to him and hauled him in through one of the windows.

So his escapade went unpunished. But it had been a risky thing, and it wasn't likely that he could escape so easily on another occasion. Not that Archie himself seemed grateful. He regarded all these precautions as entirely unnecessary.

Such things as school rules and regulations were of no importance to him now. He regarded them with supreme indifference. He was "well away."

The next day the juniors were rather anxious about him. It was a half-holiday, and he went off directly morning lessons were over. No doubt he had arranged to take Peggy Ann to luncheon somewhere. It was quite impossible to turn him from his purpose; and to lock him up, and keep him a prisoner, was too difficult to be considered. It might have been easy enough at St. Frank's, but on the train it couldn't be done.

"Oh, well, it's a half-holiday, and he's not likely to get into much trouble," said Nipper resignedly. "The best thing we can do, you fellows, is to leave him alone. He may come to his senses during the day. We've got cricket to claim our attention"

The Junior Eleven had fixed up a match with one of the big Blackpool schools, and the juniors were even now preparing to leave. It was a glorious afternoon, with the sun shining hotly, and with a gentle breeze coming in from the sea.

Handforth & Co. were lounging near the steps of the Study Coach, looking very smart in white flannels and blazers, and with their cricket bags near at hand.

"How much longer are those fatheads going to be?" Handforth was saying. "We shall be late!"

"Plenty of time yet, Handy," said McClure. "It's only just two o'clock, and the game isn't booked to start until three. It's a Saturday afternoon, and we've got special permission to be out later——"

"By George!" ejaculated Handforth abruptly.

"What's the matter?"

"Look!" gasped Edward Oswald. "Am I dreaming, or is it possible—— My only Sunday topper! Look who's here!"

He fairly yelled the last words, and Church and McClure jumped. For, approaching along the side of the permanent-way, escorted by a railway official, were three girls, all of them charmingly dressed in summery frocks, and carrying small suitcases. One of them was Irene Manners, another was Doris Berkeley, and the third was Marjorie Temple—all of the Moor View School!

"Irene & Co.!" ejaculated Church blankly.

This was an unexpected arrival! None of the St. Frank's fellows had had any idea that Irene & Co. were coming to Blackpool.

"By George! This is ripping!" yelled Handforth, as he raced forward. "I say, Irene, how topping! We're delighted to see you!"

"How is he?" asked Marjorie urgently.

"Eh? How's who?"

"How's Archie?"

"Archie!" said Handforth, staring.

"Oh, Ted, please don't be so exasperating," put in Irene. "Can't you tell us how Archie is?"

"He's all right, as far as I know," replied Handforth, in amazement. "Why shouldn't he be? He went off—— Oh, by George!" he said blankly.

He had suddenly recollected that Marjorie Temple was Archie's special girl chum—when the school was at St. Frank's. Archie had apparently forgotten Marjorie of late, and Handforth had a fear of "putting his foot in it."

"But he can't be all right," said Marjorie. "He's ill, isn't he?"

"Ill? Of course he's not ill!"

"But he must be!" insisted Marjorie. "I got that telegram, and Miss Bond gave me special permission to come down to Blackpool at once. She allowed Doris and Irene to come, too—mainly because Doris knows some people who are staying at Blackpool for the holidays, and we've arranged to stay with them until Monday morning."

"Telegram?" said Handforth, repeating the only word he had really heard.

"Yes; from Travers!"

"Travers!"

"Oh, you—you parrot!" said Doris impatiently. "Didn't you know that Travers had sent Marjorie a telegram?"

"This is the first I've heard about it!" replied Handforth. "Here, Nipper! Reggie! Just a minute, you chaps! There's a mystery here!"

Nipper and Reggie Pitt and Harry Gresham and a few others came up—all of them delighted to see the girls.

"You're just in time to come along for our match," said Nipper cheerfully. "Any more sweet young things knocking about? What about Mary Summers? Didn't she come?"

"Just a minute!" said Handforth. "Marjorie says that Travers sent her a telegram——"

"Here it is," said Marjorie, opening her bag. "Please read it for yourselves."

Nipper took the telegram, and the other juniors craned over him as he opened it out. They read these words: "Please try to come at once. Archie ill. Needs you badly.—VIVIAN TRAVERS."

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said Nipper. "When did you get this, Marjorie?"

"Yesterday."

"It's a spoof," said Nipper. "Archie isn't ill at all."

"A spoof!" cried the three girls, in one voice.

"It must be," said Nipper. "Archie's as well as I am, and evidently Travers' idea was to get you girls up here just for the fun of it."

"Then he's a wretch!" said Marjorie indignantly. "We're glad to come to Blackpool, of course, but we've been terribly anxious——"

"Here's Travers now!" sang out somebody.

Vivian Travers, cool and calm, joined the group.

"Well, well," he said, smiling. "Awfully glad that you were able to come, Marjorie. It's nice to see these other girls, too. By Samson, you're needed!"

"A joke is a joke, Vivian Travers, but I think this is going too far," said Marjorie coldly. "What do you mean by sending me that telegram? What what do you mean by telling such—such fibs?"

"Fibs?" repeated Travers coolly. "I can assure you that the telegram doesn't contain one single fib."

"But you've said here that Archie is ill, and that he needs me."

"Well, it's true."

"True that he's ill?"

"Yes."

"Oh, what does he mean?" asked Marjorie, turning to the others. "You've just told me that Archie isn't ill, and now he says——"

"Not ill in the usual way," put in Travers. "He's mentally ill. And, as far as I can see, Marjorie, you are the only person in the world who can cure him."

"I don't understand you at all," said Marjorie helplessly. "If Archie isn't ill, he isn't ill, and there's an end of it. And how can I cure him? I think it was mean and unfair of you to send such a telegram. It upset me tremendously yesterday——"

Travers nodded.

"You'll soon get over it," he said serenely.

"You—heartless——"

"Let me explain," continued Travers. "I didn't want to give you a very serious shock, and I knew, in any case, that you would soon recover when you got here. Let's take the words of my telegram. 'Archie ill—needs you badly.' I maintain that those words are strictly true. I can assure you that if he doesn't have you by his side very shortly he'll run a grave risk of being sacked."

"How?" asked the perplexed Marjorie.

"Since we've been in Blackpool he's been breaking bounds, defying rules and regulations, and behaving the giddy ox generally," said Travers. "He can't help it, poor fellow. As I have explained, he's mentally ill. Or, to put it more plainly, he's smitten. One of these Lancashire lassies, you know——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Nipper and Handforth and the others roared.

THEY could see Travers' point now; they had begun to see it for some little time, in fact. And they were compelled to admit that Travers was smart.

Marjorie Temple was Archie's special girl chum, and with her on the scene it was more than likely that he would quickly recover from his "infatuation" for Peggy Ann. Perhaps it was rather a risky thing to do—to bring Marjorie here—but Travers had plenty of faith in her common sense.

"And do you mean to tell us that you sent that telegram yesterday—before we worked that wheeze with Dave Waddington?" asked Nipper.

"Yes, of course," said Travers.

"You didn't place much faith in that wheeze, then?"

"I was pretty sure that it would fail," said Travers, grinning. "Dear old fellow, when a chap gets in love he isn't normal. It really is a kind of illness."

"In love?" said Irene, opening her blue eyes wider.

"What nonsense!" said Marjorie.

"She's a little girl from Preston," explained Travers. "A charming creature, I must admit, with fair hair and blue eyes—something like you, Irene, and nearly as pretty."

"Thanks awfully," said Irene, smiling.

"Archie happened to meet her during a rain-storm, and the poor fellow was smitten on the spot," exclaimed Travers. "She happened to be coming to Blackpool for her holidays, and we came, too. Need I say more? Ever since we've been here Archie has been—well, not exactly pursuing her, but making himself considerably attentive. They went

bathing together yesterday—Archie without troubling to take off any of his clothes."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He seemed to think that a swimming costume was unnecessary," proceeded Travers blandly. "So he went in fully dressed. After that they went for a long walk, as lovers will, and then they went to a dance together, and Archie crawled in somewhere about midnight."

"This is terrible!" said Marjorie. "Are you serious, Travers?"

"Well, he's not far from the mark," smiled Nipper. "It's not so bad as he makes out, but it's a fact that Archie's really smitten."

"How lovely!" smiled Marjorie.

"We knew you would take it in the right spirit," drawled Travers. "You're really his girl chum, aren't you?"

"I suppose I am," admitted Marjorie, colouring slightly.

"Well, it's your duty to bring him back to the straight and narrow path," said Travers. "I don't know exactly how you'll do it—but that's up to you. I've plenty of faith in your feminine abilities in that line. It will probably be enough if you just find Archie and smile at him."

"Don't be so silly," said Marjorie.

"I was never more serious in my life," declared Travers. "One look at you, dear old girl, and Archie will realise what a mistake he has made. He will allow Peggy Ann to enjoy the rest of her holiday in peace, and he will thereafter be true and faithful to his first love."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I think you're perfectly idiotic!" said Marjorie coldly, as she looked at the grinning Travers. "I like Archie very much, but there's nothing silly about our friendship."

"Of course not," smiled Travers. "All sorts of apologies if I have upset you. I didn't mean to. Only my joke, you know. But, really, Archie does need you. The fellows have done the best they can, but it's all no good. It's up to you to try your hand."

"Well, I think Travers deserves a vote of thanks," said Handforth handsomely. "It was a bit thick, sending that telegram, but it's brought you here, Irene—and that's top-hole."

"It's brought Doris, too," said Reggie Pitt contentedly.

"And the sooner you get busy on this job, the better," said Travers. "I suggest that you find Archie at once, drag him away from the syren of the blue eyes, and bring him to the cricket ground."

"Do you know where Archie is?" asked Marjorie.

"Not exactly—but I spoke to him before he went out," replied Travers. "I thought it as well to get a sort of inkling. He told me that he had arranged to meet Peggy Ann at the Tower for lunch. After that they

were going to have a look at the scenery from the Tower top, and then go for a stroll along the promenade."

"Well, it'll be a bit of a tall order, but we'll try," smiled Marjorie. "I'm a bit doubtful, however. Blackpool is fairly crowded, isn't it?"

"Crowded?" said Handforth. "It's simply packed! Trying to find Archie will be like looking for a needle in a haystack."

But Marjorie Temple was not discouraged. She at least had a starting-point, and she was really keen upon helping the boys to cure the genial ass of his "illness."

CHAPTER 12.

The Lightning Cure!

"ISN'T it wonderful?" said Peggy Ann breathlessly.

"Absolutely priceless," declared Archie Glenthorne. "I mean to say, sea, and all that sort of thing."

They were at the top of the great Tower, having been whisked swiftly upwards on the elevator. Now they were something like five hundred feet above the level of the promenade and the sea.

The view was entrancing.

There was a superb panorama of seascape, landscape, and down below stretched Blackpool, with its teeming visitors. The sun was shining in all its glory upon the vista of blue and brown and gold.

"Some people don't like to come up here," remarked Peggy Ann, "yet really it's as safe as being on the ground."

"Oh, rather," said Archie. "Talking about the ground, what about buzzing down and taking our stroll along the promenade?"

"Yes, if you like," said Peggy Ann.

She hardly knew what to say. Her own desire was to go bathing with her girl friends, but Archie was so attentive and so obviously enjoying himself that she hadn't the heart to send him away. She liked him well enough, but she was a sensible girl, and she had come to Blackpool for a holiday. In her heart, she knew well enough that she would be glad when the School Train moved on to its next stopping-place. And she wasn't the kind of girl to hang round a fellow because he had plenty of money, and because he took her to luncheons and dances and so forth. She was quite embarrassed, in fact, by Archie's lavishness. She wasn't accustomed to this sort of thing.

ARRIVING on the broad expanse of Central Promenade, Archie had an idea of taking Peggy Ann for a ride on one of the open tramway cars, but she seemed to favour walking, and he was quite contented. Ordinarily, walking bored him, but now he was prepared to walk for miles if necessary.

"Are you sure that you're not neglecting any of your lessons by being here?" asked Peggy Ann, trying to give him a gentle hint. "I should feel awfully guilty if you got into trouble——"

"Kindly remove all such dashed ideas out of your head," said Archie. "I mean to say, it's a half holiday, and everything is all serene. Nothing in the whole world to trouble us. There's nothing—— Good gad!"

He uttered the ejaculation in startled surprise, and came to an abrupt halt on the promenade.

"What ever is the matter?" asked Peggy Ann, looking at him in wonder.

But Archie was rendered dumb for the moment. He was transfixed. He had even gone slightly pale. For there, coming straight towards him, was the slim, dainty figure of Marjorie Temple!

It was more by luck than anything else that Marjorie had located him so soon. Irene and Doris were some little distance away, but Archie had not spotted them yet. They had come to the Central Promenade, as Travers had directed, and had walked about near the Tower. So, after all, this meeting was not altogether a coincidence.

"Odds disasters and predicaments," murmured Archie, aghast.

"Are you ill?" asked Peggy Ann. "Ay, but you're looking quite pale, Archie."

"Oh, rather," said Archie feebly. "I mean, absolutely not! The fact is—— Oh, I say, what a perfectly ghastly predic!"

For the life of her, Peggy Ann could not understand what he meant. And Archie himself was having a kind of inward battle. His first impulse was to seize Peggy Ann by the arm and to whirl her away somewhere. One of those rummy-looking tram-cars had stopped pricelessly handy, and Archie nearly jumped on board, dragging Peggy Ann with him. Then he pulled himself up.

Flight like that would be weak—it would be contemptible.

Besides, what had he to fear? And what would Marjorie think if she saw him racing away with this other girl? The situation was certainly an awkward one for the unfortunate Archie.

Marjorie came up, smiling, cool, and demure.

"Why, hallo, Archie!" she said cheerfully. "How lucky to meet you like this!"

"Lucky?" babbled Archie. "I must admit, old thing, that I don't quite see—— Oh, rather! You mean lucky? Absolutely!"

Peggy Ann was looking inquiringly at Marjorie.

"I don't think I know your friend," she said, looking at Archie, a rather cold note in her voice.

"Eh? Oh, no, of course not," panted Archie. "Never seen one another before, what? Silly of me. Kindly get together

and fraternise, and so forth. Marjorie, this is Peggy Ann. Peggy Ann, this is Marjorie. Frightfully pleased to meet you—I mean—”

He paused, confused. It was Peggy Ann's cold look which had given him a shiver. She was beginning to wonder, in fact, if Archie was really genuine after all. If he was, why did this girl come up so boldly and so friendly? Was it possible that Archie knew all sorts of girls in Blackpool?

“I'm just a visitor,” explained Marjorie, smiling at Peggy Ann. “I only arrived in Blackpool this afternoon. You see, I'm at school near St. Frank's. Archie and I have always been chums.”

“Oh!” said Peggy Ann.

At that moment she caught sight of a number of figures in white flannels—Nipper and Reggie Pitt and Handforth and a few more. In a flash, Peggy Ann understood. This was merely another stunt! She did not doubt that Marjorie was an old school friend of Archie's, but it was clear to her that Marjorie had come up like this on purpose to effect that “cure.” And Peggy Ann was glad—for Archie's sake as well as her own. She had enough wit, and enough sense of humour, to appreciate the situation.

“Perhaps I had better be going, then,” she said demurely. “I am sure, Archie, that you will want to talk over a lot of things with your old school friend.”

“Oh, rather—I mean, absolutely not!” said Archie hastily. “That is, yes! Please don't buzz off so quickly, Peggy Ann—I—I mean, Miss Bradbury.”

“I think Peggy Ann is sweet,” said Marjorie, with a smile.

Archie looked at Marjorie through a kind of haze. He had not seen her distinctly yet. He had been so dumbfounded at her unexpected arrival that he was still bewildered and confused.

Now, suddenly, his vision cleared, and he saw her in bold relief, so to speak.

And he experienced a bit of a shock. Marjorie was looking extraordinary attractive to-day. It wasn't so much her charming frock as the girl herself. Marjorie was pretty—dark-eyed, merry, and with little curls of chestnut hair peeping from her dainty hat. If Archie had thought of her at all, he had pictured her in her plain school dress. Now she was attired like the other holiday-makers, in something flimsy and silky and alluring.

“Good gad!” murmured Archie.

It came to him, with overwhelming force, that Marjorie was really the prettiest girl he had ever known. All his old enthusiasm for her returned in a flash.

Glancing at Peggy Ann, he was astonished to find that she was a comparative stranger. Pretty enough, of course—and a really priceless sort—but, after all, Marjorie was *the* girl.

“There's a cricket match on this afternoon,” said Marjorie sweetly. “I thought it would be rather nice, Archie, if we went along to see it? But don't let me alter any of your plans,” she added. “If you have arranged to go somewhere with Peggy Ann—”

“Oh, absolutely not!” put in Archie uncomfortably. “I mean, not exactly. We were just strolling about, you know, and all that sort of thing.”

“I thought about having a bathe with my girl chums,” said Peggy.

“Oh, rather! A good old dip in the briny?” said Archie. “Good gad! You didn't tell me—”

“No,” said Peggy Ann, “but I think they are expecting me to join them. Perhaps it would be better, Archie, if you went off with your friend to the cricket match.”

“Odds enlightenments and eye-openers!” said Archie, with a sudden grin. “I mean to say, what a frightful ass I've been!”

“You mustn't say that—”

“Absolutely!” declared Archie firmly. “Peggy Ann, old thing, I've been a most fat-headed chump. I mean to say, getting swished, and getting impots, and risking the sack, and all that sort of dashed rot.”

“But you told me—”

“Somehow, at the time, it didn't seem to be serious,” said Archie, “but now the good old optics are unstuck. I mean, if I hadn't pulled up with a pretty hefty jerk, I might have got myself bunked from the good old school. What a frightful prospect!”

“I am glad you have come to your senses, Archie,” murmured Peggy Ann.

“Oh, rather! Nothing like being frank,” said Archie. “Straight from the shoulder, what? Thanks most awfully, old dear! I—I mean— But we're still friends, what?”

“Of course,” smiled the Lancashire lass.

“Couldn't you come to the cricket match, too?” asked Marjorie, glancing at her.

“Well, I might drop in later,” said Peggy Ann. “I'm sure it'll be champion to watch the St. Frank's boys playing in a cricket match. Is Archie playing?”

“I think so,” said Marjorie.

“What!” said Archie. “I say, I didn't know—”

“I believe that Nipper has a place for you in the team,” said Marjorie. “That is, of course, if you get to the ground in time. I think some cricket, Archie, would do you a lot of good.”

Vivian Travers' simple plan had certainly worked—and worked well. The mere sight of Marjorie, as he had shrewdly suspected, had done the trick. Although Peggy Ann was pretty, Archie had to admit that Marjorie, in his eyes, at any rate, was prettier. How could he have been such a chump as to ever forget his schoolgirl chum? And how frightfully decent of her to be so dashed sporting over it!

Archie hardly realised that Marjorie was mightily amused over the whole incident—and Peggy Ann was just as amused.

"Cricket, what?" said Archie briskly. "Tally-ho for the good old ground!"

"It's a perfect day for cricket," said Marjorie.

"How about a good old feast afterwards?" suggested Archie brilliantly. "On the School Train, I mean. All the good old lads, and you, Marjorie, and you, Peggy Ann, and your priceless friends? What about it?"

"Would your masters allow it?" asked Peggy Ann dubiously.

"Oh, rather!" said Archie. "Plenty of room in the Class-Room Coach. We can have a perfectly gorgeous spree, and it'll be a ripping finish to the day."

ARCHIE was so enthusiastic that he played like a Trojan in the cricket match that afternoon. He didn't usually figure in the Junior Eleven, but this was a special occasion, and Nipper felt that he was justified in giving Archie a place. Archie not only knocked up twenty-seven runs off his own bat, but he did marvels in the field. For when Archie liked he could be as energetic as any of the other fellows.

It was a good idea of his to have a kind of informal spread after the match. It proved to Peggy Ann that the friendliness

was still there, although the infatuation had gone. Archie ceased to be self-conscious in her presence; he was his old cheery, bright self. The coming of Marjorie Temple had made just that difference; without saying a word, she had brought Archie to his senses.

The feast on the School Train was a huge success. Many of the St. Frank's fellows were inclined to think that Archie's taste was of the best. For these Lancashire girls were merry and care-free, and they proved themselves to be thoroughly true blue.

When the School Train moved on, there were many happy memories of Blackpool. But Archie Glenthorne's Lancashire lass caused him no heartaches when he thought of her.

As for Irene & Co., they were heartily glad that Archie had been so smitten—for they had been enabled to have a very ripping week-end at Blackpool, and they went back to their own school on the Monday well content.

THE END.

(Next week the boys of St. Frank's meet with many exciting adventures in Liverpool and Manchester. Look out for this stunning yarn, which is entitled, "The Kidnapped Schoolboys!")



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E. S. BROOKS

BETWEEN OURSELVES!

OUR AUTHOR CHATS WITH OUR READERS

NOTE.—If any reader writes to me I shall be pleased to comment upon such remarks as are likely to interest the majority. All letters should be addressed, EDWY SEARLES BROOKS, c/o The Editor, THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.



BERNARD W. COOKE

HERE'S a paragraph from your letter—Bernard W. Cooke (Ashby-de-la-Zouch)—which I can reply to better after repeating it: "Did I know that the gates of the Gatun Locks weighed hundreds of tons, and that electric traction cars took charge of big ships along parts of the Panama Canal? No; and I don't mind admitting that my general knowledge during the last six years has been chiefly obtained from the 'N.L.L.' assuming, of course, that these facts that you give us are perfectly true, and not just made up for the story. Please confirm this if you acknowledge this letter in the Old Paper. If parents who condemn this twopenny weekly only knew the benefit that is obtained from reading your yarns, they would not hesitate to buy the 'N.L.L.' for themselves, as well as for their sons and daughters." Well, Bernard, old man, let me assure you that all such information in my yarns as you refer to is certainly authentic. *If you see it in the 'N.L.L.' it is so*—whenever I make references to real places. This has always been my motto. I may say that I go to very great pains to get my facts as accurate as is humanly possible. So if you have learnt a few things during the past six years from my yarns you can comfortably know that I have not misled you. By the way, here's your handsome dial opposite to my unhand-some one this week.

No, "Interested" (Langford). Nipper has no sisters as far as I know. His parentage is a bit hazy, you know, Nelson Lee having become his guardian when he was a real nipper. Of course, he may have a sister or two knocking about somewhere, and perhaps a brother or so—but I've never heard of 'em. Still, you never know! Thanks muchly for the cigarette cards, and for your offer to send another batch.

Yes, Reg. T. Staples (Walworth), I do really keep every letter that is sent to me by readers. I know it sounds a bit tall, but it's a fact—and it may interest you to know that I keep a special box-file for you alone, and other box files for other readers who are equally prolific in their correspondence.

You say: "In any case, do you read every letter right through, or do you, if you come across something that you know is very boring—like mine—just pass it over?" No, Reg, I read them all through, and if they were all as boring as yours I'm afraid I should do no work at all, as I should feel compelled to read them over and over again. Keep it up, old man. Don't fail to let me have my weekly tonic. With luck, you may get a reply by post, or another mention on this page.

The Moor View School—F. R. Dayman (Wellington, New Zealand)—is a private school, and is in no way connected with St. Frank's. Crooke of the Fourth is no relation whatever to Gerald Crooke of St. Jim's. Since it would take too much space for me to give you a full list of Removite's names, I'm afraid you'll have to sort them out of the stories. They are all mentioned at different times, you know, and will be again and again. So here's a chance for you to start a new hobby. It's guaranteed to keep you busy for months.

The occupants of Studies 18, 19 and 20, in the East House, C. Rollins (Birmingham), were not in evidence the last time I looked in. In fact, these three studies are still empty, as I have mentioned before. I can't give you the titles of all the numbers of the Old Series you require, as I haven't the space. Claude Carter is no longer at St. Frank's.

You can always get the Old Paper by mail—J. Davies (Whalley)—if you send your subscription to the publishers. You'll find full particulars on the back page of this issue.

This Week's Instalment is a Corker—Start Reading it Now, Chums!

RIVALS of the RAMPANT!



By STANTON HOPE

Busky Breaks Bounds!

LIKE the other boys, Busky was wearing one of his spare flannel vests which was the regulation nightwear.

As he emerged from his hammock, however, Jack saw in the gloom that he had put on trousers and socks under cover of the blankets, and as he stood on the cold floor—or deck, as it was invariably called at the Rampant—Busky added to his apparel by donning jersey, jumper and boots.

The last person that Jack wished to interfere with was Busky Smith, but on the impulse he sat bolt upright.

"What's the fresh little game?" he demanded.

Startled, Busky drew a sharp breath.

"Phew! It's you, is it, nosey? Pipe down and mind your own bizny!" A pause, and

he added: "If you're so jolly anxious to know, I'm only just going down for something I left in that wash-place."

Jack sank back on the pillow, although he knew that Busky was lying.

After all, it was none of his business, as Busky had told him. If his rival wanted to make a fool of himself, let him, for it was obvious he had some game on which wouldn't be appreciated by the authorities if it were found out.

This became the more apparent by the way Busky left the dormitory. Somewhere patrolling round the Collingwood block was

a Marine sentry, one of several on duty in the establishment, and, aware of this, Busky crept down the stone stairs with such caution that his boots scarce made a sound.

"Oh, let the rotter stew in his own juice!" muttered Jack.

Then less than a dozen words of Barny's letter became illuminated in his mind.

"Stand by him as if you were his own brother."

That was the written request made by the old man who had been his great friend in life, indeed, a second father to him.

Stand by him! Jack's conscience pricked him. Certainly he had not carried out old Barny's wish by letting Busky leave that dormitory without more vigorous protest.

"The chump!" muttered Jack. "Where the dickens has he gone?"

He heard the clatter of the sentry's rifle, and rightly guessed that Busky was lurking at the foot of the stone steps behind the door until the man had gone on his patrol again.

Jack's hands fumbled at the blankets. What was Busky's game? Why this foolhardy breach of discipline so soon after his arrival in the Rampant?

A suspicion began to grow in Jack's mind, and noiselessly he started to get into his uniform.

Before leaving the dormitory, he put some of his newly issued gear into the hammock

"Stand by Clem Smith as if you were his own brother," writes old Barny Morland to Jack, and Jack vows he will—little realising the mess into which he is going to land himself when the time comes to carry out his promise!

and bunched the blankets over it to give the appearance of a human form in the gloom. Then, as silently as Busky, he crept down the stairs.

No easy matter, this, in regulation boots! The stairs were of polished stone and his boots shod with steel. Suddenly, he missed his footing and they shot from under him—and he sat down with a thud!

"C-crums!" he gasped.

For a short space he sat where he was, nursing his bruises and resisting the urge to dash madly back to the dormitory.

But no one came, and he slipped behind the half-opened door of the block to await until the Marine sentry had reached this end of his patrol and had taken his departure again. The "Jolly" halted almost outside the door, as Jack could hear by the metallic click of his heels. There followed the smart clatter of a rifle as the sentry came from the "slope" to the "stand easy" position.

The distant clock of the Porthaven town hall boomed with faint, sonorous note.

Hang it! Was the sentry going to stay there all night? As long as he was just outside the building, Jack could neither set forth after Busky nor creep back to the dormitory. To Jack, in his highly-strung state, what was but a few minutes seemed an hour of waiting!

At last, to the youngster's relief, the sentry marched away.

"Thank goodness!" breathed Jack.

Lights were burning in the officers' mess, which he could see about three hundred yards distant, and he could hear the gruff rumble of voices from across by the main gates. A hurried dive and he covered a wide pathway outside the Collingwood Block which was lighted by an electric lamp in wire casing. A moment later he was in the shadows, and, without hesitation, he made for the small shrubbery at the back of the store building.

Stooping, he confirmed the suspicion he

had formed. Where Busky Smith had hidden that money—the collection made aboard the ferry—there was now a mere hole in the ground. In recovering the loot, Busky in his haste had not taken the trouble even to kick back the earth he had scraped out.

"The rotter!" muttered Jack between his clenched teeth. "I'm hanged if he's going to get away with it!"

In Busky's keeping was no less a sum than £7 15s. 4d. It was meant for the boy who had performed the feat of grounding the ferry on the Pilots' Bank. And Jack rightly considered the money had been earned by him, and that he alone had the right of its disposal.

But where had Busky gone? He certainly had not returned to the dormitory.

A faint metallic sound followed by a muffled grunt caught Jack's ear, and he made his way among various buildings, keeping to the heavy shadows until he reached the gun sheds.

He paused and looked about him.

"It sounded like Busky's voice," he muttered.

The high wall of the Rampant was before him, and his keen eye quickly discerned a rope suspended from it. Approaching nearer he saw that it was a rope evidently borrowed by Busky from the gym, and attached by a hook in the upper end of it to the iron spikes that surmounted the wall.

Busky had "broken ship!"

The thought of the treacherous Busky with all that money in his possession made Jack's blood boil. What did the cad intend to do with it? One thing was certain—that when Busky returned he would have little, if any, of it left.

"My hat!" panted Jack after a pause.

"I'll see it through!"

In this determination, he shinned up the rope, avoided the steel spikes on the top of the wall, and quietly dropped into the ill-lighted and deserted road outside the schools!

HOW THE STORY STARTED.

JACK GILBERT, a cheery youngster of some fifteen years, has his whole career changed in the course of one night. It happens when his rascally uncle, and his only living relative, **LEW BONNER**, asks the boy to burgle a certain place. Jack refuses. A fight ensues, in which Bonner falls through a trapdoor, and is swept away by an underground stream—apparently to his doom. Jack thereupon decides to forget the sordid past and to start afresh. He tells his story to his only friend,

BARNY MORLAND, who takes him under his wing. Barny gets Jack to join H.M.S. Rampant, a naval training school at Porthaven, along with his—Barny's—nephew,

CLEM SMITH, a worthless individual, who hates Jack. Barny tells the boys that he intends to leave a sum of £2,000 to the one who acquits himself best in the Service. Crossing by ferry on the way to the school, the boat on which the two boys are travelling collides with a steamer. Jack is horrified to see his uncle on this latter boat. The lad saves the ferry boat from sinking, but everybody thinks that Smith is responsible for the heroic action. Smith doesn't deny it, while Jack says nothing. At the Rampant, Smith—who becomes known as Busky—is looked upon as a hero. One night Jack awakens to find Busky climbing very stealthily out of his hammock. Is he bent on causing mischief?

(Now read on.)

The Leave Breakers!

DIRECTLY Jack's feet hit the wet pavement outside the naval schools, he berated himself for a fool.

On the second day of his career in the Royal Navy he had broken one of the strictest rules of the Rampant. He had "broken ship," and all for the sake of an avowed rival—the despicable "Busky" Smith.

The street in which he found himself was deserted, but there was a light about fifty yards along. For a space Jack remained crouched in the shadow of the high brick wall, heartily wishing he might return. It was one thing, however, to scale the high wall by a rope from the other side, but quite another to get back again. Of course, he should have dropped that rope over on the outside against the time of his return.

Again there came to his mind the remembrance of old Barney's words which had set him on this crazy mission: "Stand by him as if you were his own brother." Like Cain of old, he was inclined to protest, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

Anyway, there was no sign of Busky Smith, although Jack peered up and down the street and across to some half-finished buildings opposite where the scaffolding stood gaunt against the night sky.

"The big rotter!" muttered Jack, clenching his fists in fresh determination. "I'll be hanged if I'm going to let him blow those dibs I earned!"

Now it was past ten o'clock, but although most of the places where Busky might "blow" the money would be closed, there were bound to be others where he could indulge in a spree, such as dance-halls or billiard-rooms.

Having made up his mind to see the thing through, Jack scurried along in the shadow of the high wall, and dived down the nearest side-street. On this north side of Porthaven, the thoroughfare known as Harbour Street was about the only one likely to offer any attraction to Busky. A brisk walk of ten minutes brought Jack there, and, skilfully dodging a naval police patrol, he peered into those places of amusement which were still open.

Knowing that Busky fancied himself as a billiards and snooker player, Jack pushed open the swing doors of some well-lighted rooms graced by a large green sign and the word "Billiards" in electric lights.

And there he saw his man.

Busky was standing by one of the tables and talking with half a dozen sporty-looking "townies."

"Rightio!" Busky was saying. "I'll play for what you like. I'm no cheap skate!"

A man to whom he was speaking clapped him on the back.

"That's the spirit I like to see in a lad!" he exclaimed heartily. "Pink me, you remind me of me own son, you do—a real sportsman 'e is, if there ever was one!"

Under this flattery, Busky expanded like a football pumped up by air.

"Give me a cue," called Busky to a billiard marker; "and if there is any coffee to be got in this place, supply a cup to each of these gentlemen."

He fumbled in one of the horizontal pockets of his bell-bottomed trousers for his money, but paused with sagging jaw as he caught sight of Jack beckoning to him from near the door.

"'Ullo!" exclaimed one of the men. "'Ere's a young pal of yours. Is he a-goin' to join in?"

Scowling darkly, Busky strode towards Jack.

"You noseey young beast!" he spluttered. "What the thump d'you mean by followin' me here?"

There was a steely glitter in Jack's eye.

"Come outside," he invited, "and I'll tell you."

"Go and eat coke!" exploded Busky. "Or, if you like, go and sneak on me for breaking leave—only mind you don't land in for a packet of trouble yourself!"

"You'd better hear what I've got to say," Jack told him. "Back in the dormitory you lied to me when you said you were merely going out to get somethin' you'd left in the washhouse. Instead of that, you dug up the money that was handed you aboard the ferry, and you've come here, like the poor fish you are, to lose it to a beastly bunch of shore sharks. Well, you just aren't going to do it—see!"

"Oh?" ejaculated Busky, bristling. "And what exactly are you going to do about it?"

"Just this," replied Jack hotly. "If you don't come out in the street now, I'll set about you here in front of all these new flash pals o' yours!"

"What! Why you know jolly well——"

"Ay, I know you're bigger'n me! I'll put up with what you can hand me so's the two of us will get chucked out into the street, and you don't spend that money o' mine! And if a naval police patrol comes along and picks us up—well, it'll be your own fault!"

The "sportsmen" round the billiard table were arguing with a marker about a previous game, and did not get the drift of Jack's remarks. By this time they had become aware, though, that the two boys were squabbling, as was plain to tell by Jack's raised tones and the changing colours in Busky's coarse face.

"C'mon!" impatiently shouted one of the men. "If that young pal o' yours ain't going to play, let's get busy."

Equally eager were the rest to get on with the task of trimming the feathers of the plump young pigeon which had come to them like manna in the wilderness.

But Busky hesitated.

He was quite confident that, with all his advantage of strength and weight, he could lick Jack, who showed the unmistakable marks of the previous fight. But he knew

also that Jack's grit and courage were out of all proportion with his strength, and that this comparatively frail boy from London's East End would assuredly carry out his threat. Then the pair of them would be slung out, with all the risk of a crowd collecting and the naval police making their unwelcome appearance.

Muttering savagely under his breath, Busky turned to his new-found pale.

"You'll have to excuse me a minute, gen'lemen," he mumbled. "My—my pal tells me that there's some naval cops coming through the street and looking into places of this sort. We'll beat it for a few minutes and come back when they've gone."

"Hi! Don't go!" yelled the man desper-

break leave and join up with a rotten bunch who clearly earn half their living on the billiard tables."

"Cheeky cub! That's my bizny!"

"Right; leave it at that!" Jack retorted. "In the second place, you've got jolly near to turning into a common thief!"

"You—"

"Shut up! A thief! That's what you'll be if you spend so much as a penny of that money raised aboard the ferry! It wasn't you who beached the boat—it was me—and therefore that 'brass' doesn't belong to you."

"It was given to me!" argued Busky.

"Only because the chaps aboard the ferry



Jack suddenly wriggled out of the policeman's grasp and, as he did so, he ducked, butting his captor right in the stomach. "Oooch!" gasped the worthy representative of the law.

ately. "There's a small room at the back where—"

But before he could get the words out, Busky hurriedly dived through the swing-doors after Jack, leaving behind him the most disappointed bunch of "sportsmen" in all Porthaven!

The Pain of Parting!

ONCE round the corner of the first quiet street, Busky stopped and angrily dragged round Jack to face him.

"Now let's have a settlin' of this here and now," he rumbled.

"I mean to," Jack replied. "In the first place you're as potty as they make 'em to

thought you were the fellow who'd performed the stunt. But you know, and I know, that you were squirming like a beastly worm on the deck when the boat was grounded. Now hand it over!"

"Shan't!"

"You jolly well will!" exclaimed Jack determinedly. "There's not a penny of that money going into the pockets either of you or those tough townies."

"That so?" exploded Busky. "Now hear what I've got to say: I won't have you followin' me about like a shadow. Everyone from the admiral down thinks I shoved the ferry aground, and they won't believe a word you say now even if you squealed. The dibs were handed to me, and although I offered to divvy up fifty-fifty before, I'm now

hanging on to the lot. And what are you going to do about it?"

"Simply this," said Jack, scarce able to keep his quivering hands from the mean cad. "To-morrow, or as soon as I can get leave, I'm going along to the Seamen's Hospital to see Cap'n Kilby, skipper of the wrecked ferry."

A grin spread over Busky's face.

"You can see old Admiral Britton himself if you like!" he jeered.

"No, Cap'n Kilby will be enough," returned Jack; "for it happens that before he crashed down the bridge ladder and got knocked out, he saw who was standing at the wheel."

"You—you mean," he gurgled, "that there's someone who saw you at the wheel and can recognise you?"

"Beginning to savvy—eh?" remarked Jack. "Cap'n Kilby, so far as I know, is the only one who did see me at the wheel. I dare say he's come to before this, and he'll be able to back me up when I say that all the time you're nothing but a rotten fraud!"

Busky sucked in the night air as though he had received a short-arm jab to the stomach.

From bullying he tried pleading. Again he offered to go fifty-fifty, but to Jack that money which had been collected from the people aboard the ferry was not to be put to any base use.

He remembered his own struggles in London and the kindness of many of the East End folk to him in his darkest days. In gratitude to them he wanted to give this money, which he himself had earned, to those who were poor and needy.

"I'll tell you what," he said to Busky. "Coming through these parts on the way to the schools the other day, I saw a convent or somethin'. We'll beat it round there now, and you shall put that money of mine in the collecting-box for the orphans."

"My aunt! You're batty!"

In desperation, Busky pleaded. He would put the 15s. 9d. in the box, and they'd split up the £7.

Jack said no; the whole lot was to go to the poor.

Busky was almost weeping as they made their way to a grim building in a quiet street, and stopped beside a heavy wooden collecting-box riveted to the wall.

"Look here," mumbled Busky desperately, "if I do put this money in the box, you'll not go near that ferry skipper? Promise that."

"Right! That's a go!"

First, Busky took a bit of paper from his pocket and a stub of pencil.

"We'd better put a note in with it," he growled.

On the note Busky wrote: "£7 15s. 9d. With best wishes from Boy Clement Smith R.N." This, Jack would not have at all; but finally he allowed Busky, who was fuming inwardly, to write another note bear-

ing the words: "£7 15s. 9d.—From the boy who beached the ferry."

Busky's face was a picture as he inserted this slip into the slot. Then came the pain of parting! One by one he put in the seven £1 banknotes, and afterwards the coppers and silver. Then, hardly able to keep his hands from Jack, he abruptly turned on his heel and rapidly slunk away.

Jack remained standing on the pavement. It gave him the utmost satisfaction that the callous Busky had been beaten in this round of the rivalry between them. A number of poor orphan children would benefit, and the parting with the money was actually a benefit to Busky himself, who now would not be able to make a fool of himself among the snooker sharks.

Jack was about to turn away when he noticed that a half-crown which Busky had last put in the box had got stuck against a copper in the slot.

Afraid that some dishonest person might come along and see it, he tried to push it down. Finding himself unable to do this, he took out his jack-knife and attempted to depress the penny so that the half-crown might fall.

"Crumbs!" mumbled Jack. "The giddy box must be full!"

And then a heavy hand fell on his shoulder, and a gruff voice burst upon his ear:

"Ho, my young admiral! Robbin' the poor-box, heh!"

One glance Jack took over his shoulder, and he glimpsed a stern face ornamented by bushy moustaches, and a black chin strap surmounted by a helmet.

A copper! Thanks to the goloshes supplied by the Porthaven council, the limb of the law had been able to approach him without registering the usual sounds attributed to a policeman's feet!

And Jack, who, owing to his association with his crooked uncle, Lew Bonner, had spent most of his young life in fear of the police, gave one mighty squirm and wrenched himself free.

The policeman made a frantic grab at him to regain his hold, but the boy adroitly butted him in the belt, causing him to double up like a half-shut penknife.

"Oooch!" gasped the constable.

Before he could straighten himself, Jack was sprinting up the street like a hare.

Phceeeep!

As the constable gave chase, he sent a shrill blast on his whistle to attract the attention of policemen on other beats. Promptly Jack swerved round the corner, with only one thought in his mind—to get back to the Rampant, and lively!

(But Jack is to find that that is easier said than done. The police are properly on his track now, and they'll take some shaking off. Oh, yes, Jack is going to have an exciting time of it next week, and that's why you mustn't miss reading next week's gripping instalment, chums!)



Our Weekly Pow-Wow!

By
The Editor.

Your Editor welcomes letters from all his readers; send him one now. Address it to: The Editor, "Nelson Lee Library," Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

I'VE got some good news for you this week, chums.

Do I detect a slight raising of your eyebrows in polite inquiry? Listen, and I will tell you all about it.

For some time past I have been receiving requests to publish a portrait gallery of the St. Frank's characters. At first I hesitated. A portrait gallery has already appeared in the Old Paper—many years ago, admitted—and I did not think there was any real necessity to publish it again. But still the requests poured in from readers, and finally I felt I must reconsider my decision. I reconsidered, and then it was I realised that in the past few years the Old Paper has expanded enormously. Thousands of new readers have been enrolled; new characters have come to St. Frank's. And, realising those two points, I decided that I would be justified in starting a new portrait gallery.

And so it has come about. At least, it will come about in a fortnight's time. A portrait gallery of the St. Frank's characters will definitely appear in the NELSON LEE LIBRARY the week after next.

So much for item number one. Item number two concerns the St. Frank's League. By now, of course, the League has grown into a big thing, its membership numbering many thousands. But that is no reason why it shouldn't expand even more. I want to see every reader of the NELSON LEE LIBRARY become a member. The League offers many advantages, one of the chief being that it brings together by correspondence readers from all parts of the world. Also, as Chief Officer, I am always willing to help and advise members.

But, as I have said, I want ALL readers to become League-ites. And I want them to write to me and tell me anything interesting they've ever done or heard of in connection with the League; to tell me, if they are St. Frank's League club secretaries, how their clubs are progressing. The best and most interesting of these letters will be published week by week, and the senders will receive prizes of pocket wallets and penknives.

Join the St. Frank's League NOW, chums

—it might mean your winning a prize in the near future! In the meantime, look out for full particulars of this offer.

I also have in mind two or three other new features which I intend to start in the NELSON LEE LIBRARY very soon now. Details of these will be given next week—so make sure you don't miss next Wednesday's bumper issue. To be on the safe side order your copy NOW.

THE EDITOR.

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED!

Albert Gilmore, Glenbrook P.O., Waiuku, Auckland, New Zealand, wants to hear from readers anywhere, and to exchange postcards, stamps and papers.

H. Cathcart, 1421 Gallowgate, Parkhead Cross, Glasgow, E.1, wishes to correspond with readers in India, China, New Zealand, South Africa, Canada, Ireland and U.S.A. All letters answered.

G. C. Bew, 13, Hillingdon Parade, Hillingdon Heath, Middx., wants to correspond with readers interested in locomotives, especially those in U.S.A.

P. C. Jansen, the International Correspondence Club, Beeklaan 538, the Hague, Holland, wishes to correspond with readers in South

(Continued on page 44).



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Percy Young, 9, Wrayburn Street, Edge Hill, Liverpool, wants news of George Jessop, late Venice Street, Mentone, Melbourne; also Robert Sandon, late Redrock Street, Liverpool.

A. D. Luke, 8, Paradise Place, Plymouth, wishes to correspond with readers; ages 16-20; has back numbers of the N.L.L. for sale.

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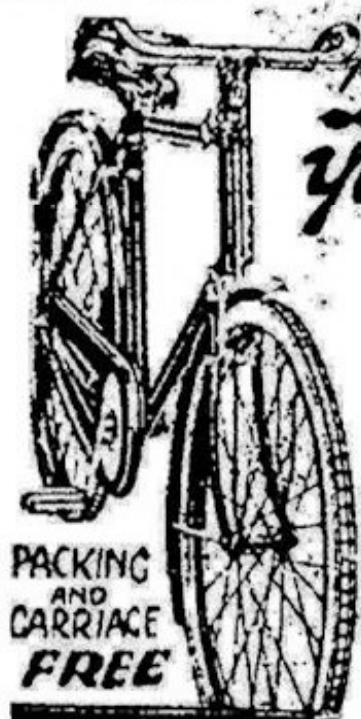
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