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THE RIVAL SPORTSMEN!

Edward Oswald Handforth—baseball player! A rollicking long complete fun, sport and adventure yarn, featuring the cheery chums of St. Frank's.

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THE RIVAL



By

EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

Some of our American cousins reckon that we're not quite wide awake on this side of the pond, but they'll have to admit that the St. Frank's fellows managed to pull the legs of their American visitors within a very few hours of their arrival in the Old Country.

CHAPTER 1.

The School Train in Bath!

"HALLO! This looks interesting," said Nipper, looking up from a newspaper.

The genial skipper of the St. Frank's Remove was reclining on the little lounge in Study C. Actually, it wasn't a study at all, but a compartment of the special "study coach" on the St. Frank's School Train.

In the next compartment certain ominous noises were audible. Not that this was sur-

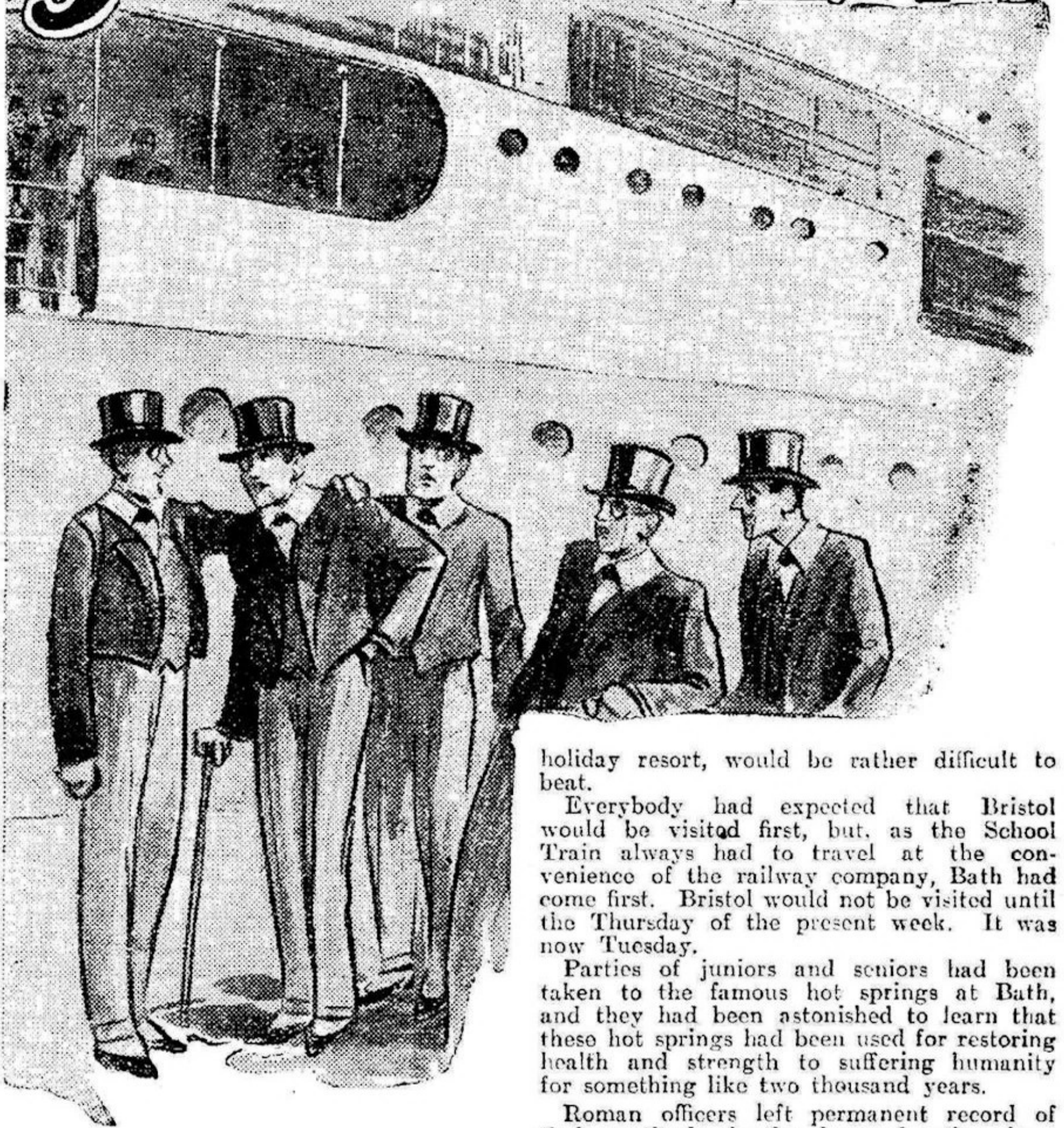
prising, for Handforth & Co. occupied that space, and ominous noises were customary there.

"I wish this rotten grammar were interesting," grumbled Tommy Watson. "Blow prep! It's a shame to make us do prep. on a fine evening like this when we're in Bath, too! We haven't seen half the town yet!"

"Buck up, then, and we'll go for a walk," said Nipper, smiling. "I finished my prep. ages ago. You ought to put more zip into it, my lad."

Tommy Watson grunted, and went on with his work. Sir Montie Tregellis West sighed, and went on with his. Nipper had finished,

SPORTSMEN!



and he was now glancing through one of the local newspapers.

It was a gloriously fine evening, and the view from the School Train was a splendid one—the rolling Somerset countryside, with the city of Bath nestling quite near.

The famous St. Frank's School Train had left Wales, and was now once again in England. For a day or two the train had been on a quiet siding near Bath, and most of the fellows had been greatly interested in that celebrated old city—which, as a

holiday resort, would be rather difficult to beat.

Everybody had expected that Bristol would be visited first, but, as the School Train always had to travel at the convenience of the railway company, Bath had come first. Bristol would not be visited until the Thursday of the present week. It was now Tuesday.

Parties of juniors and seniors had been taken to the famous hot springs at Bath, and they had been astonished to learn that these hot springs had been used for restoring health and strength to suffering humanity for something like two thousand years.

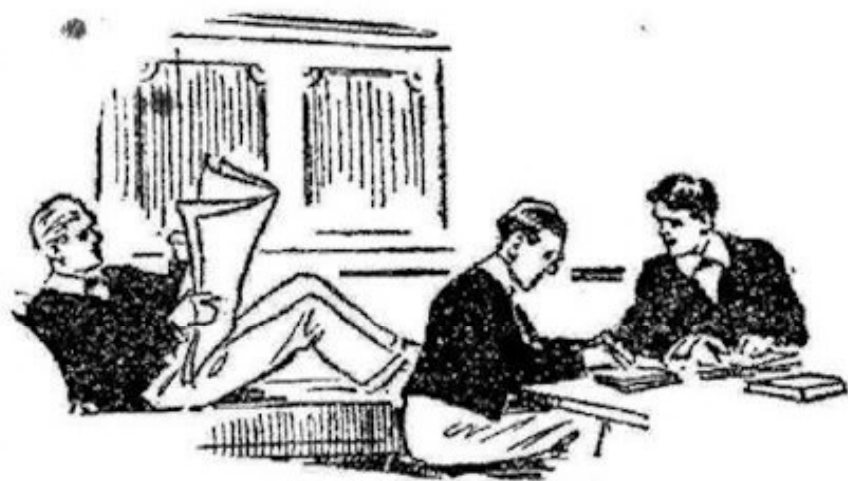
Roman officers left permanent record of their gratitude—in the shape of votive altars to the goddess of the springs.

In Roman times Bath was known as Aquæ Sulis, and it was a most important spot even as far back as the first century.

Indeed, throughout the ages the famous waters of Bath have been doing their wonderful work.

The St. Frank's boys had been startled to learn that half a million gallons of health-giving water flows every day from these amazing hot springs of Bath. They are natural hot springs—with a temperature of a hundred and twenty degrees Fahrenheit.

They are rich in radium emanation. This water is so hot when it rises from the bowels of the earth that it requires no greater temperature. It is served for drinking, and it is used for bathing. It contains its full salts and gases and radio activity. These waters have been rising for two thousand years, and no one can tell for how many more thousands of years they will go on doing so. It is said in legend that the hot springs



were discovered there over eight hundred years before the Christian Era.

The waters rise from a great depth—probably not less than five thousand feet. So somewhere below Bath there is a fracture in the earth's crust, communicating with the heated regions far below.

As far back as the year A.D. 54 the Romans erected the most sumptuous temples, and for nearly four centuries the Roman city of Aquæ Sulis was a celebrated spa. And Bath, to this day, is no less celebrated.

Quite apart from the interest of the hot springs, the St. Frank's fellows had found Bath to be one of the most glorious spots they had visited during the course of their tour. Wonderful country all around; delightful rambles amongst the leafy lanes of Somerset. Cricket fields in plenty, where they could practice.

Many of the juniors had frankly said that they would be sorry when the School Train moved on. Bath was so peaceful—so kindly, and so enjoyable.

Yet, curiously enough, those very same juniors would soon be asking to leave Bath a day earlier than the school authorities intended!

WELL, what's the interesting item of news?" asked Tommy Watson, pushing his books away with a sigh of satisfaction.

"Finished?" asked Nipper, looking up from his paper.

"Yes, thank goodness!"

"You, too, Montie?"

"Five minutes ago, dear old boy!"

"Then come along to the Common-room," said Nipper briskly, getting to his feet. "This is too good to keep to ourselves. Might as well let the other fellows into it."

"Must be something special," remarked Watson curiously.

"It is," said Nipper.

"Something about cricket?"

"You'll hear in a minute," chuckled Nipper. "Don't be impatient, my lad!"

They went out of the little study, and found a number of fellows crowding in the corridor. Handforth and Church and McClure were there, and a little farther along Vivian Travers was chatting with Harry Gresham and Jimmy Potts.

"I want you fellows," said Nipper. "Come along to the Common-room. Something important."

"Cricket, I'll bet!" said Handforth.

"It isn't," said Nipper.

"But it must be if it's important," argued Handforth. "What else is important but cricket?"

They followed Nipper down the train corridor into the next coach, until they came to the Junior Form-room, which was shared, during this tour, by both Removites and Fourth-Formers. Mr. Horace Pycraft presided over the mixed Form. But when the juniors were free, the coach was used as a Common-room by them.

There were a good many other fellows lounging in there—Boots and Christine and a number of other Fourth-Formers; Gore-Pearce & Co., of Study A; Reggie Pitt and a number of his West House stalwarts.

"Good!" said Nipper, as he looked round. "Nearly all here! Just what I want!"

"What is it—a Form meeting?" asked Reggie Pitt, looking up.

"Well, it wasn't meant to be, but that's what it practically amounts to," said Nipper. "I've got a newspaper here, and there's an item in it that's very interesting."

"Something more about Bath, I suppose?" asked Handforth, with a sniff. "These hot springs are all very well, but a chap soon gets fed-up with them. We're not invalids; we don't want to drink the waters for our health!"

"This item of news isn't about Bath," said Nipper cheerfully. "It's about some Americans."

"Americans aren't interesting——" began Handforth.

"They're American boys—American schoolboys," went on Nipper hastily, before Handforth could say any more. "They're arriving at Bristol to-morrow by boat, direct from the United States."

"Schoolboy tourists, eh—something like ourselves?" asked Reggie Pitt.

"Exactly," said Nipper. "That's just what they are—schoolboy tourists. They're coming to England for the first time in their lives. It says in this paper that not one of them has ever been out of America before. The experience is an entirely novel one for them, and to-morrow, when the ship docks in Bristol, they'll have their very first glimpse of England."

"They'll think they're in wonderland," said Bob Christine. "All Americans go dotty over our scenery—and I'm not surprised. They've got nothing like it over in their own country."

"But here's the point," said Nipper. "I can see a chance here to work a glorious jape!"

"On these American kids?"

"Yes."

"Good gad!" put in Archie Glenthorne, arousing himself from one of the seats. "I mean, dash it! Not that, laddie! Absolutely imposs!"

"How is it impossible?"

"Odds shocks and staggerers!" replied Archie. "We can't absolutely play tricks on visitors to our shores, you know. Absolutely against the good old grain, laddie. Decidedly not the thing, old scream. That sort of thing isn't done."

"Oh, I don't mean anything malicious," said Nipper. "But there's no harm in a quiet little jape. We haven't had many opportunities of japing on this tour, and I rather think we're spoiling for a good one."

"You bet we are!" said Handforth promptly.

"Hear, hear!"

"Choke up the idea, Nipper!"

"Don't take any notice of that fathead, Archie!"

"Good gad! Really, I mean

Archie Glenthorne was shouted down, and he subsided back into his seat.

"Now, then," said Buster Boots briskly, "what's the wheeze?"

"Well, I've already told you that these American schoolboys have never been in England before," said Nipper. "There are between fifty and sixty of them, I understand—some from New York State, some from Pennsylvania, some from the Middle West, and so on."

"A crowd of the best assorted, as it were?" asked Pitt.

"That's it," nodded Nipper. "And all of them unfamiliar with England—and the English."

"What's the idea of emphasising that last bit?" asked Handforth, staring.

"Because the average American—particularly from the smaller towns—has all sorts

of weird and wonderful ideas about the English," replied Nipper. "We've been over in America, and we know. They think that London is always foggy—that nearly everybody goes about wearing monocles; that we all drop our 'h's,' and that we say such things as 'Bai Jove!' every other minute in our conversation."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Draw it mild, old man!" protested Tommy Watson.

"But it's true!" said Nipper. "American schoolboys are probably more ignorant on these points than the grown-ups. They think we're a lot of piecans—no good at sports, and duffers generally. What a chance for us to spoof them!"

"But how?" asked half a dozen voices.

"By going to meet that ship!" replied Nipper. "By pretending

to be exactly as they think we are—monocles and dropped 'h's' and everything!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"To-morrow they'll see their first sight of our shores," urged Nipper. "If we meet them on the dock, they won't have had a chance of seeing any English people. We shall be the very first! A crowd of St. Frank's chaps come to welcome them! And

WHO'S WHO AT ST. FRANK'S!



VIVIAN TRAVERS.

Remove Form.

Study H.

A curious mixture of good and bad, although at the moment he is on his best behaviour and is one of Nipper's staunchest supporters. Utterly reckless, especially when riding his motor-bike, on which he is an expert. A fine all round sportsman.

they'll see us as they have always imagined us! Later on, of course, we'll disillusion the poor mutts!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's a wheeze!" said Travers firmly. "Dear old fellows, it's not only a wheeze, but it's a gilt-edged brain-wave. I'm all for it!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Rather!" said Buster Boots. "It'll be rich to jape some of these American chaps. The U.S.A. schoolboys are even worse than the grown-ups—they think they know everything, and pretend to be older than their years. It'll teach them a lesson, too—it'll show them that we English chaps are just as smart as they are—if not smarter!"

CHAPTER 2.

The Jape of the Tour!

EVERYBODY was talking at once, and there was a great deal of laughter, too. Nipper's idea was accepted with enthusiasm. Even Handforth was excited.

"It's a funny thing I didn't see that paper—or I'd thought of the wheeze," he said, amid fresh laughter. "But are you sure of your facts, Nipper?"

"Well, of course, I can only go by what this paper says," replied Nipper. "And it states there, plainly enough, that all these American schoolboys will catch their first glimpse of England to-morrow, when their ship docks at Bristol. Most of them are ordinary, middle-class chaps from the smaller towns, and they are the very types who get all these wrong ideas about the English."

"But, here, wait a minute!" said Handforth in alarm. "There's a snag!"

"I know it," nodded Nipper.

"Oh, you know it?"

"It's a snag that can be overcome, I think," said Nipper. "You mean that we're not due to go to Bristol until Thursday?"

"Yes."

"Well, I shall have to see the guv'nor about it," said Nipper coolly. "I don't know whether we can wangle it, but we shall have to ask him if we can go to Bristol to-morrow, instead. If the train can't move on, we can easily make a special trip of it. Bristol's only a few miles away."

"That's true," said Reggie Pitt. "What time does this ship dock? Does it say in the paper?"

"Yes; during the afternoon."

"Couldn't be better," said Boots. "It's a half-holiday to-morrow. Bristol is quite near—and that ship is going to dock during the afternoon. The situation was absolutely made for us, my sons!"

Archie Glenthorne was looking dubious.

"Of course, it's all frightfully rich and frightfully brainy and frightfully interesting, and all that sort of thing," he said, "but is it quite playing the game, laddie? Visitors to our shores, if you gather the trend."

"That doesn't make any real difference, Archie," said Nipper, smiling. "I'm not proposing an ill-natured, practical joke. When it's all over, we'll tell these American schoolboys all about it, and invite them to the School Train for a big feed. If they're sportsmen, they won't mind in the least."

"If they're sportsmen, they'll laugh as heartily as we do," said Reggie Pitt.

"It'll take them weeks to learn these things in the ordinary way," said Nipper. "They'll get a mild surprise here, and a mild surprise there, and gradually they'll find out that all their conceptions of the English have been wrong. Well, my wheeze is to put them on the right track immediately—directly we've had our bit of fun. And to start with we'll send a wireless to that ship, welcoming them to England, and saying that a representative crowd of fellows from one of England's greatest public schools will meet them at the dock."

"That's good!" said Harry Gresham. "They'll be ready for us, then."

"They'll be on the look-out for a lot of dudes—and they'll find a lot of dudes!" said Nipper contentedly. "See the wheeze? They think we're slow, and my idea is to send them back to America with something to talk about—something that will show the Americans in the old home towns that we're not quite such idiots as they believe us to be."

"Well, how about putting it to Mr. Lee?" asked Handforth briskly. "He's our headmaster on the School Train, and if he puts the kybosh on the whole game, we're done. I suggest that I go to see him—"

"Then, alas, we shall be done in real earnest!" murmured Travers.

"You silly ass—"

"I think you'd better leave it to me, Handy," said Nipper gently.

"Rot! It needs a fellow with plenty of tact—and I'm the fellow!" said Handforth.

"But I'm the Remove captain—the junior skipper—and it's really my job," said Nipper. "I thought about getting up a deputation, but I dare say it will be better if I go alone. I know how to handle the guv'nor."

Handforth was shouted down, and Nipper was advised to trot along to Nelson Lee's study, and get it over as quickly as possible.

So Nipper trotted.

HE found Nelson Lee busy with some papers, but the famous schoolmaster-detective generally had time for a friendly word with Nipper.

"You look unusually innocent, young 'un," he said suspiciously. "If I placed a pat of butter in your mouth just now, I don't

believe it would melt. What's the favour you want to ask?"

"It's no good—you always spot me, guv'nor," complained Nipper. "It's not a favour for myself, but for the whole crowd of us in the Junior School."

Nelson Lee shook his head.

"No concessions," he said firmly. "I can't do it, Nipper. The St. Frank's Governors laid down a hard and fast law that while this School Train was touring, the usual routine should be maintained."

"Cheese it, sir!" protested Nipper. "I'm not going to suggest any alteration to the routine. I was only wondering if we could be at Bristol to-morrow, instead of on Thursday. Couldn't the train do the trip to-night, instead of to-morrow night?"

"I'm not so sure about that—the railway company might not be ready," said Nelson Lee.

"But it's only a very short trip, sir."

"I know. But, all the same, this is a special train, and it has to be fitted in at the convenience of the railway company," said Lee. "And why are the juniors so anxious to leave Bath? According to what I have been hearing, I rather thought that they wanted to remain here the whole week."

"Read this, sir," said Nipper, laying the newspaper in front of Lee.

Nelson Lee read the all-important item.

"Well?" he said, looking up. "I take it that you want to meet this ship?"

"That's it, sir," nodded Nipper. "These American boys haven't been in England before, and it would be rather good if a crowd of St. Frank's chaps went along to give them a sort of welcome."

Nipper did not think it necessary to explain exactly what kind of welcome he had in mind. And, fortunately, Nelson Lee did not ask any awkward questions.

"Well, of course, it is quite an excellent idea," he said. "It would be a friendly gesture to these American boys, and one that I entirely approve of."

Nipper rather wondered if Nelson Lee would approve of the proposed jape, but he did not risk alluding to it.

"The ship doesn't dock until the afternoon, and it's a half-holiday, so it won't interfere with the ordinary routine, sir," he explained. "Only it'll be a lot better if the School Train is in Bristol to-morrow, because we can bring a crowd of these American chaps back with us, and stand them a feed. You wouldn't mind that, would you, sir?"

"Not at all," replied Lee. "Give them a feed, by all means. I imagine that they will enjoy a feed as much as any other type of schoolboy. I will see what can be arranged."

"With the railway, you mean, sir?"

"Yes; I'll see if we can be moved on to Bristol to-night," replied Lee. "As you say, it will be much better if the train is located there. It might be awkward to bring a big crowd of those American schoolboys to Bath. I don't suppose it'll make much difference whether the train moves to-night or to-morrow night."

"Thanks awfully, sir," said Nipper eagerly. "You're a brick"

"But not too hard a brick, eh?" chuckled Lee.

"Oh, and there's something else, sir," went on Nipper. "I want to send a wireless message to this ship, if I may. Just a few words like this: 'Welcome to England. Look out for big crowd of St. Frank's schoolboys when you dock. England's greatest public school greets you. Hamilton, junior captain.' How's that, sir?"

"Not bad," chuckled Lee. "Especially 'England's greatest public school.' Nothing like being proud of your own school, Nipper, eh? Leave it to me, and I'll have that message wirelessed as soon as possible."

"Good egg!" said Nipper. "Thanks awfully, sir! You certainly are a brick!"

"WELL?" went up a general chorus, when Nipper returned to the Common-room.

"It's all fixed," said the junior skipper coolly. "We're going on to Bristol to-night; we can meet these American chaps to-morrow afternoon; and Mr. Lee is sending a special wireless message of welcome straight away—signed by me."

"Hurrah!"

"Bravo, Nipper!"

"Mr. Lee's a sports man!"

"Hear, hear!"

"I take it," asked Travers, "that you didn't mention anything about the jape?"

"You take it correctly," grinned Nipper. "Somehow, I thought it just as well to keep the guv'nor in the dark about that little detail. Why bother him with such trivialities?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"While these American chaps are here, we'll invite them to a game of cricket," grinned Nipper. "We'll give them the surprise of their lives!"

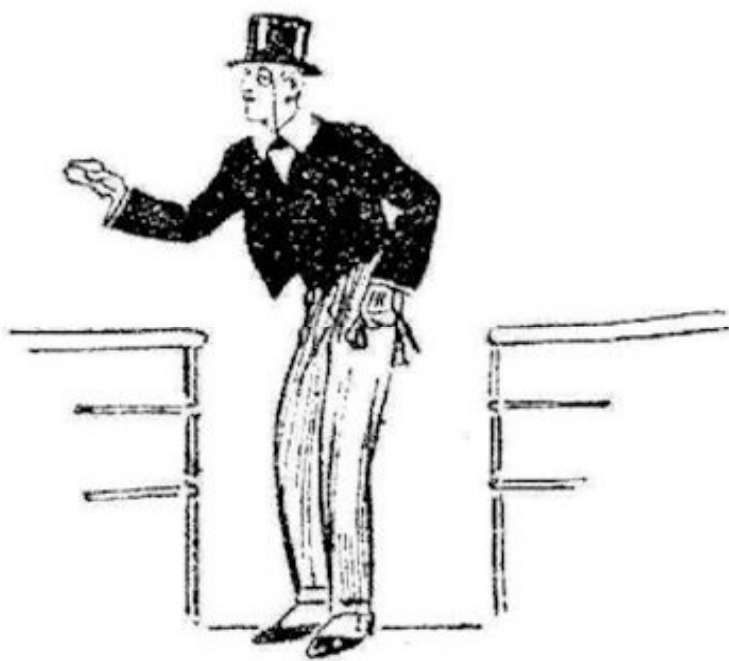
"With cricket?" asked Handforth.

"Yes."

"How do you make that out?"

"The Americans look upon cricket as a dotty sort of game," replied Nipper. "They think there's no thrill in it—they believe that it's as tame as noughts and crosses."

"You're not suggesting that we should fix up a fake game, are you?" asked Reggie Pitt.



"Of course not," said Nipper. "A genuine game. We know well enough that cricket is one of the most glorious of sports—as typically English as the leafy Somerset lanes. The Americans only scoff and laugh at cricket because they don't know the game. Well, we'll show them something!"

And for the rest of that evening there was much discussion—and many preparations. William Napoleon Browne, of the Fifth, somehow got a whisper of the plot, and he decided, then and there, to be embroiled in it. In fact, he decided that he would be the leader of the whole jape.

Needless to say, he was gently and politely told that he could go and eat coke. He could, if he chose, join in with the juniors, but he was certainly not going to be the leader. And Browne, with a regretful sigh, relinquished his idea of taking full charge. But he was really a junior at heart, and he was as keen as mustard upon taking part in the great joke.

THAT night the School Train stole away from Bath in the small hours. Many of the seniors were rather indignant about it because they wanted to stay in Bath until the end of the week. It was like the nerve of those confounded juniors to influence Nelson Lee in this way! One or two of them, when they heard the news, had gone so far as to protest to Lee. But when they heard that the object of the premature departure from Bath was to give a welcome to the American schoolboys, they could not very well keep up their attitude.

When morning came, the school awoke to find itself on another siding. It was quite a pretty siding, alongside a shaded country lane, a mile or so outside Bristol. The railway authorities, acting under instructions from Nelson Lee, always selected such a siding as this. For it was as well that there should be no distractions during the hours of school work. And it was better, too, for the fellows to be well clear of the goods yards outside the busy stations. It would never do to have crowds of schoolboys roaming about over the railway tracks. There were very strict rules about the fellows wandering on to the railway. It was an offence punishable by a flogging for any boy to cross any of the lines, unless they were the lines of another siding not in use.

These rules were very necessary on a tour such as this. Nelson Lee did not want any tragedies to mar the success of this round-Britain tour.

Nobody was anxious to go into Bristol that day—at least, none of the juniors. They went into the town, of course, in order to get to the docks; but they were not keen on sight-seeing. That could come later, after this present affair was over.

The Removites and Fourth-Formers hardly waited for the midday meal to be over. Then they all went off in a great crowd. They completely filled up the first tramcar

they could find, and they were soon in the heart of Bristol.

"There's plenty of time," said Nipper. "I got the guv'nor to make inquiries this morning, and the ship doesn't dock until about three o'clock. I know exactly which dock she's coming into, and there's no hurry. It's just as well that we've got a bit of time, too, because we've got to do some shopping."

"What sort of shopping?" asked Handforth.

"Well, to begin with, we shall have to buy up all the monocles in Bristol," grinned Nipper.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't suppose there'll be enough to go round, so we can make shift with watch-glasses, or something of that sort," said Nipper. "Anyhow, let's get to the shops, and have a look round."

And the gleeful juniors were soon busily engaged on their final preparations for the great jape.

CHAPTER 3.

Putting It Over!

IT'S a rummy sort of town!" remarked Handforth, as he waited with several others at the tramway centre for the rest of the crowd to come along. "I mean, these docks cut right into the middle of Bristol."

"That's one of the characteristic features of the place," said Church, nodding. "This is really Colston Avenue, but most people, I think, call it the tramway centre. Look at those boats in the dock over there. Jolly picturesque, if you ask me."

There are very few ports where docks and city meet as they do in Bristol. There is something astonishing about it. One is in a busy street, with tramcars and buses, and other traffic passing to and fro; and there, within a few yards, the funnel of a steamer is sending forth its hazy steam. Right within the heart of the city there are these wonderful docks.

And then, beyond, up the Avon, of course, there are other immense docks—the Royal Edward and the Avonmouth and others. For centuries Bristol has been one of the most important ports of the kingdom, and to-day Bristol retains its proud position.

The actual beginning of Bristol is lost in the mist of age. According to the Welsh chronicler, Geoffry of Monmouth, the town was founded by King Dyfneval, or his sons, Bryn and Belin, the former of whom is alleged to have sacked Rome in 391 B.C. But this is little better than mythology, for there are no actual records to verify Geoffry's statements.

But it is known that some prehistoric tribe established a settlement on the Avon. In Plantagenet times a grant was made to the city by Edward III., in return for services



"Good gracious!" said Nipper, with a start. "Can it be one of our masters?" The figure that strode up was tall and thin, and he was wearing a voluminous gown which flapped in the breeze. In one eye was a monocle, and sticking out from his cheeks were side-whiskers. As the juniors stared they nearly exploded. For the newcomer was William Napoleon Browne!

rendered by it in ships and men at the siege of Calais. This grant took the form of a charter, conferring a privilege hitherto reserved for London alone, this being the constitution of the borough into an independent county. And under the Lancastrian kings the wealth and enterprise of Bristol greatly developed.

The present-day eminence of the Port of Bristol crowns a long and ancient historic record, reaching back over two thousand years. Hundreds of different classes of goods from and to more than two hundred and fifty ports of the Empire and foreign parts contribute to the trade of the port.

"**T**HERE they are!" said McClure briskly.

Nearly all the other Removites and Fourth-Formers came crowding up—for they had agreed to meet in tramway centre. Most of the fellows were grinning, and there was a general air of expectancy.

"Everything's all serene," said Nipper, as he came up. "We haven't been able to get enough eyeglasses to go round, but we're all fixed up with something or other."

"Good egg!" said Handforth. "What about getting to the dock? Where is it? We don't want to be late, you know."

"We shan't be late," said Nipper. "Plenty of time—and the dock isn't very far off."

"I'm not altogether sure, laddies, that I approve of this dashed business," said Archie

Glenthorne. "I mean, it's a bit on the raw side when all you chappies pull my good old leg. I mean, this dashed eyeglass business. Good gad! It isn't everybody who can wear an eyeglass, you know."

"It isn't everybody who wants to, Archie," said Nipper gently. "We're only doing it for a joke——"

"Absolutely," nodded Archie. "But I'm not absolutely sure that the joke is in good taste. It would be frightfully frightful to offend these American chappies."

"If we were going to work this jape on a crowd of English chaps, would you object, Archie?" demanded Handforth.

"Good gad, no!"

"Then you needn't object now," said Handforth. "If these American kids aren't as good sportsmen as our own fellows, then I shall be surprised. But, personally, I don't believe for a minute that they'll be spoofed," he added firmly.

"You think they'll twig the wheeze?" asked Nipper.

"Of course they'll twig it," replied Handforth. "They won't be so dense as to accept us as genuine examples of British schoolboys. Not likely!"

"All right—wait and see," grinned Nipper. It was noticeable that the good people of Bristol were paying quite a lot of attention to the St. Frank's crowd. This was hardly to be wondered at, for all the boys were dressed in their best. Not only this, but they all sported spats, and they wore their topplers in spite of the heat of the summer's

afternoon. They looked a crowd of dandies. Archie Glenthorne, for the first time in his St. Frank's existence, was satisfied with his schoolfellows. For once they looked fairly respectable in his eyes.

The fellows themselves, however, were thoroughly uncomfortable—but were ready to suffer this for the sake of the jape.

“**A**W, gee! Can you imagine it?”
A youth of about sixteen was leaning over the rail of a fairly big steamer that was just coming into dock. There was a number of other youths of his same age standing about on the decks, looking interestedly at the docks and the surrounding vista.

And there, within full sight, were the St. Frank's fellows. They were on the dock, lounging about languidly and lazily.

There was, indeed, something ludicrous in the appearance of all these top-hatted schoolboys. Without exception, every one of them sported a monocle; without exception, they looked half asleep; and their walk was an exaggerated crawl.

“Say, fellers, come and get an eyeful!” grinned the American boy who had first spoke. “Gee! These must be those English guys who sent us the wireless greeting.”

“Some babies!” remarked one of the others.

“You said it, Al,” nodded another.

It was hardly surprising that the American boys should look with such astonishment and amusement at the St. Frank's juniors. They were not schoolboys at all—but caricatures. With their top hats, their spats, their monocles, and their lounging attitudes, they looked absurd. It hardly seemed possible that the American boys would accept them at face value.

Yet it was a fact that, so far, none of the visitors had jumped to the truth. They looked at these English schoolboys, and they grinned. But they did not suspect. For the St. Frank's fellows were very much as the American boys had expected them to be.

It was perfectly true that none of these American youngsters had ever been to England before. The deck of the steamer was crowded with them. They were all sorts and sizes, their ages ranging between fifteen and seventeen. Some were dressed in white flannels, some in plus-four suits, others in ordinary lounge suits. And soft collars, of course, were general.

They were typical American youths from Illinois, Minnesota, Indiana, Pennsylvania, and California. Amongst this crowd there were representatives of many of the middle west states. Others were from the far west, and a few were proud of the fact that they were easterners. But all of them were one hundred per cent Americans, and never before this trip had they been on a visit to England or Europe.

In fact, the majority of them had never left their home towns until now. They were schoolboy tourists, and this trip had been planned from an educational point of view.

Nipper & Co. saw no reason why they should not start educating their schoolboy rivals without delay.

The whole thing was made easy by the fact that this was the very first English port at which the steamer had called. She was docking now, having come straight in from the Atlantic. Bristol was the first English city that these American boys had ever set eyes on. How were they to suspect that the St. Frank's fellows were ragging them? They naturally took it for granted that the crowd of top-hatted boys was a representative throng of youngsters from an English public school.

“Gee! Do they look dumb?” asked one of the boys on the deck.

“I'll say so!” grinned another.

“Well, we know what these English guys are,” remarked another. “But listen, boys! They sent us a nice greeting, and I guess we'll have to be polite.”

“Oh, sure!” went up a chorus.

“I'll say this is some little burg,” commented another of the American boys. “Bristol, eh? I guess it was from this port that the Pilgrim Fathers set out.”

“Aw, put a sock in it!” grinned one of the others. “Listen to this sap, boys! Everybody knows that the Pilgrim Fathers sailed from Plymouth.”

“Sure, so they did!” admitted the other youngster, looking crestfallen.

It was some little time before the gangway was placed in position. There was a good deal of bustle on the dock, and the St. Frank's fellows, acting under instructions from Nipper, held well aloof. They did not want to get anywhere near the ship. It would never do to become too eager.

Nipper himself was the only one who approached the gangway after it had been placed ready. And Nipper used an exaggerated edition of Archie Glenthorne's languid stroll. He went over the gangway at a snail's pace, his monocle in his eye, his expression one of sleepy amiability.

“Haw-haw! Frightfully pleased to meet you, what?” he drawled, as he arrived on deck, and found himself surrounded by the American boys. “By gad, don't you know! I 'ope you've 'ad a frightfully priceless voyage, what?”

His words and his style of address were ridiculous. And he gazed at the American boys as though it was a sheer effort to use his eyes at all. As a matter of fact, it was a piece of very good acting.

“Listen, Unconscious,” said one of the American boys gently. “I figure that you're one of the guys who sent us that wireless message?”

“Oh, rather!” replied Nipper. “My name's 'Amilton—Dick 'Amilton, don't you know. Captain of the jolly old juniors,

what? We thought it a priceless sort of ideal to come along and welcome you to England. Who's the dear old chappie who is leading everythin', as it were?"

"Can you imagine it?" murmured one of the American boys in wonder.

Another of them—a bony youth of about seventeen—pushed some of the others aside and strode forward. He held out his hand to Nipper, and they shook.

"I'm sure glad to meet you, Hamilton," he said heartily. "My name's Hank Robinson, and my home town's South Bend, Indiana. Guess I'm pleased to meet you. Gather round, fellers, and give this English guy the glad hand!"

"Oh, sure!" went up a chorus.

"I say—I mean, I say!" protested Nipper, as they all tried to shake hands with him at once. "Dash it! Pray don't be so 'cavy'-anded. We English schoolboys aren't used to it, don't you know?"

"Guess we'll open your eyes a bit," grinned Hank Robinson. "Say, can't we get ashore yet? We want to meet your buddies, Hamilton."

"Oh, rather!" agreed Nipper. "I presume you mean the chaps?"

"You said it," grinned Hank. "The chaps."

"Of course—of course," drawled Nipper, apparently finding it difficult to keep awake. "Oh, rather! They'll be frightfully pleased to know you. We've 'ad special permission to come down, what?"

"That's good," said Hank. "Well, boys, what about it? All set?"

"You bet!" said some of the others.

"All right—shoot!" said Hank.

"Oh, I say!" protested Nipper. "You can't shoot here, you know!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Gee, this guy's dead from the neck up!" murmured one of the Americans. "I always knew these schoolboys were dumb, but——"

"Oh, no!" interrupted Nipper sweetly.

"My word, no! We're not dumb at all; we can all speak, don't you know?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The American schoolboys yelled with laughter.

Yet it never dawned upon them that they were being kidded. Nipper was exactly as they had imagined a great many English schoolboys to be—dandified, slow, and altogether "dumb."

CHAPTER 4.

Keeping It Up!

PERHAPS the American boys were slightly surprised; perhaps they had hardly expected their English cousins to be quite so absurd. Yet, having had no previous experience of English Public schoolboys, they naturally accepted these representatives as genuine samples of the whole class.

Before long they were allowed to cross the gangway, and to stretch their legs upon the dock. They were glad to be off the ship, after their voyage. It was good to feel solid ground beneath their feet again. They were on English soil—they had achieved one of their dreams.

Handforth and Reggie Pitt and Travers and the others were standing about in little groups, talking together in an aloof manner. They affected to take no notice whatever of the American boys, who were now in close proximity—and examining them with frank interest.

Hank Robinson and his companions, in fact, had expected the English boys to come up and greet them, and to exchange views and to ask them what they thought of their country. Over in the United States, the first thing a native does when a visitor arrives is to ask the visitor what they think of America. The visitor, of course, has had no opportunity whatever of forming any opinion of America; but the Americans are anxious to know, all the same.

Hank and Al and the others naturally assumed that these English boys would make the same sort of inquiries. Yet they said nothing; they held themselves completely aloof.

"Say, what's the matter with these guys, anyway?" asked Hank, glancing at Nipper.

"There's nothing the matter with them," replied Nipper. "They're all right. We've all been 'ere for some little time, don't you know, waiting for you fellahs to come ashore. My word! This is going to be a rippin' occasion, what?"

"But why don't they speak?" put in Al.

"Speak?" said Nipper, staring. "But how can they speak to you?"

"I guess they've got tongues, haven't they?"

"Oh, rather!" replied Nipper. "I say, you know, that's frightfully smart of you! Tongues, what? Of course they've got tongues! But, don't you see, they haven't been introduced to you!"

The American boys gasped. Then they looked at one another, and then they burst into roars of laughter. They had always heard that English people never spoke to strangers until they had been introduced. In fact, this is one of the standard jokes of America. And here it was proving to be no joke, but absolute fact!

"Say, listen!" said Hank, trying hard to restrain his laughter. "You don't need to introduce us. That's bunk. Can you imagine it, boys?" he added, looking at his compatriots. "Gee! So this is England!"

The American boys laughed afresh, and the St. Frank's fellows looked at them in a kind of dazed astonishment, as though they could see nothing whatever to laugh at.

"If you'll give me your names, I will introduce you, one by one," said Nipper gently.

"Aw, you don't need to do that," said Hank, with a wave of his hand.

"Oh, but it's necessary," insisted Nipper. "They can't possibly speak to you until they have been introduced."

"All right," said Hank, with a grin. "Get busy."

"I'll take you one by one."

"All right."

"It won't take very long, but I can assure you that it must be done," said Nipper.

"All right."

Nipper took Hank Robinson across to the juniors, and he gravely introduced him to Handforth, and then to Reggie Pitt, and then to Archie Glenthorne and the others. They all shook hands solemnly and frigidly—although they were having much difficulty in keeping themselves from bursting out into loud laughter.

"Say, this is going to take all day," said Al, coming up. "My name's Al Pope, and my hometown is Peoria. Shoot!"

AND so, one by one, and with interminable wearisomeness, the American boys were introduced to the St. Frank's fellows, Nipper acting as the host. And all the time the St. Frank's fellows were talking in a drawling, stand-offish manner. Hardly any of the fellows expected that the American boys would accept all this grotesque play-acting as a true picture of British public school life. Yet they did! They "swallowed" it whole!

The conditions were, in fact, very much what they had expected to find—only a lot worse. And it was noticeable that the American boys were already regarding the Saints with a thinly-veiled contempt. They looked upon themselves as being altogether superior. They came from America—from the greatest country in the world! They were free Americans—and these "saps" here were a bunch of "dandified dummies."

However, the introductions were all over at last, and after that the two crowds mixed fairly generally.

"You'll 'ave to come to our train, old fellows," Handforth was saying, with a perfectly ridiculous air of affectation. "What-ho! My word, and all that sort of thing! You'll 'ave to come and see how we do things, what?"

"You bet!" grinned one of the Americans.

"No, I don't bet," said Handforth, looking horrified. "Good gracious! Betting is prohibited at St. Frank's."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You don't get me," said the American boy. "I guess you don't know our American language."

"But your American language is English, isn't it?" asked Handforth, in mock surprise. "I 'ave hallways understood that the Americans spoke English. I shall 'ave to ask my schoolmaster about this. Dear me!"

"Forget that schoolmaster stuff," said Al Pope. "Nix on it, boy friend! I can tell you right now that the American language is surely different from the English."

"You said a mouthful, Al!" nodded one of the others.

"Sure I did," agreed Al. "Don't I know?"

"Wait a minute!" said Handforth, becoming rather aggressive at the tone. "You know, do you? Why, you silly ass, the American language is only a dotty perversion of the English——"

He paused as McClure nudged him. Handforth had momentarily forgotten his rôle, and he had become himself.

"We keep to the old customs, what?" he went on, with a return of his exaggerated drawl. "Oh, good gracious, yes! My word, absolutely! What-ho and so forth!"

Nipper pushed forward.

"We thought that it would be rather rippin' if all you American fellows came along to the School Train," he said, addressing everybody in general. "I think you know that we're not actually at St. Frank's just now, what? We're on a special train of our own."

"Sure," said Hank. "We've heard of it. One of your funny little English trains, eh? We've seen one or two coming up the river. Gee! Your freight trucks make me smile!"

"We've got bigger trucks on our toy railways," said one of the others, grinning.

"Well, of course, we can't expect to have such a wonderful train as you might have in America," said Nipper modestly. "But we're English, don't you know, and so we must be satisfied."

"Oh, sure," said Hank. "You're not accustomed to anything else, are you?"

Handforth wanted to punch him on the nose, but he restrained himself. The American boys were quite keen upon making the trip to the School Train, especially when they heard that there were some special motor-coaches handy. But just then a rather extraordinary figure appeared on the dock, and it came striding towards the groups of young people.

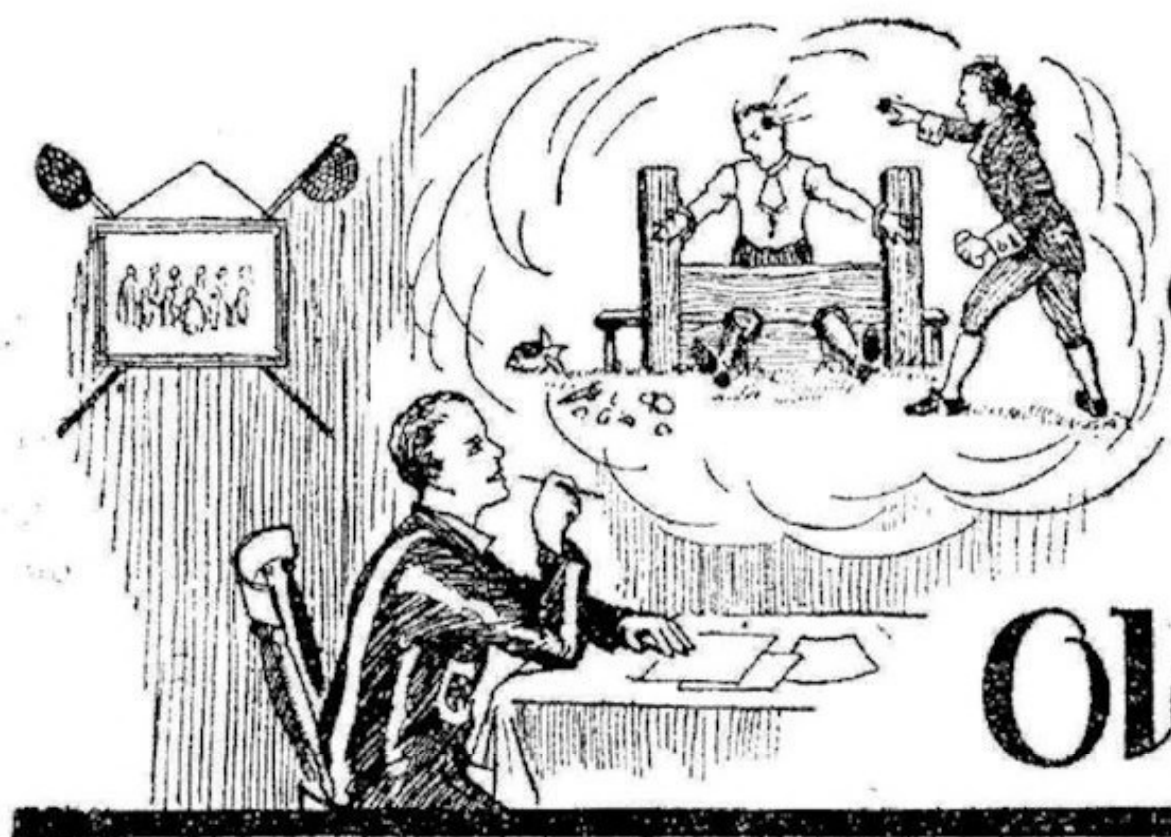
"Say, who's this guy, anyway?" asked Al.

"Good gracious!" said Nipper, with a start. "Can it be one of our masters?"

They all looked. The newcomer was tall and lanky; he wore an extraordinarily voluminous gown which flopped in the breeze. On his head rested an enormous mortar-board—about twice the size of any normal mortar-board. In one eye there was a monocle, and sticking out from his cheeks were long side-whiskers.

The St. Frank's juniors nearly exploded. In refraining from doing so, they proved themselves to be heroes. For they instantly recognised this newcomer as William Napoleon Browne, of the Fifth.

(Continued on page 14.)



St. Frank's in the Old Days!

In this article, Edgar Fenton, the captain of St. Frank's, tells of some exciting events that happened in the "good old days."

I'VE just finished reading "A Early History of St. Frank's," which I dug up out of the library, and, having read it, I'm convinced that it must have been great fun to live in those "good old days."

According to this book, St. Frank's has had its full share of excitement in the past.

For instance, what must have been an awful experience for those concerned happened in the summer of 1897. A number of junior boys went out on an exploring trip among the many caves and underground passages to be found round Caistowe at that time.

Going down one of the passages, the boys came upon a big underground pool of water. They went forward to have a look at it, and were surprised to see the water moving. Evidently some big fish, they thought, and one junior—Gregory by name—more curious than the rest, stood right on the edge.

To the horror of those watching, something suddenly streaked out of the water and curled round young Gregory's legs.

And then the others understood. The pool contained an octopus!

Pluckily they went to the rescue of their unfortunate chum. They were all carrying small daggers, and with these they hacked at the octopus' tentacle and sought to haul Gregory out of the monster's clutch.

The awful battle continued for some considerable time. One or two of the other juniors also found themselves caught in the clutch of the pain-maddened octopus as it flung out its numerous tentacles. But their terror lent them strength, and at last, when almost on the verge of collapse, they managed to free themselves.

None of the juniors was seriously injured, but it was many a day before they forgot their terrible experience in that underground

passage—and never again did they go exploring there!

A PERIOD of intense excitement at St. Frank's occurred during the Stuart rebellion, in the eighteenth century. Many of the scholars joined up with the rebels, and they suggested that the school would make an excellent stronghold or headquarters. So the rebels stormed the school. Naturally, the boys left in St. Frank's resisted, and a great fight ensued.

The battle raged for days. It seemed that the rebels would triumph, for they were easily superior in numbers, and those inside the school were running short of food. Then, just when defeat seemed certain, the King's troops came to the rescue, and St. Frank's was saved.

In those early days, of course, all the villages throughout England had their own stocks on the village green. You know what a stock is—a wooden contrivance with holes in it through which all the bad lads of the village had to stick their arms and feet so that people could pelt their faces with bad eggs, and rotten fruit, and anything else handy.

Well, it seemed to be the custom at St. Frank's for all the decent fellows to collar the rotters after they had done something out of place, and to frog's-march them down to the village green. Here the bad lads were thrust into the stocks, and then their Form-fellows used to enjoy themselves by hurling at them anything they could lay their hands on.

This strikes me as being a jolly good stunt. We ought to have one of these contrivances at the school, for I could name several fellows at St. Frank's who might profit from an experience in the stocks.

The Rival Sportsmen

(Continued from page 12.)

"Boys, boys, boys!" sang out Browne as he approached. "Now, now! Remember your manners! Ah! So these are our young friends from across the Atlantic! Well, well, well! Splendid!"

The astonishing feature about the whole thing was that the American boys did not jump to the fact that they were being spoofed.

The fact that nobody else within sight acted in the same way meant nothing. The American boys naturally took it for granted that these public schoolboys were of a different class. And, in the same way, they accepted Browne as a typical English schoolmaster.

"I cannot tell you what pleasure it gives me to meet all you American children," said Browne benevolently, as he smiled upon the Americans. "Well, well, well! Let me thank you for your generosity and kindness in coming to our shores. I cannot tell you how we appreciate it."

"We sure ought to be paid for it," said Al.

"The fact that you are not paid proves to me your abundant good-nature," said Browne kindly. "We, in England, have often heard of the wonders of America. We know that it contains the most marvellous people in the world—the people who chew gum so cleverly!"

Nipper thought it advisable to butt in. Browne was enjoying himself thoroughly—and so were the other St. Frank's fellows—but if William Napoleon went on like this he would let the cat out of the bag before the appointed time.

"Please, sir, we want to take our American friends to the School Train," said Nipper. "If you will let us, sir, we'll go to the waiting coaches now."

"To be sure," agreed Browne promptly. "Let us hope that our young American friends are not too disappointed with these coaches."

Yet when the crowd arrived at the spot where the motor-coaches were waiting, it was found that these vehicles were of the super class—magnificent saloons, with enormous pneumatic tyres, with superb coach built bodies, and with luxurious interiors.

CHAPTER 5.

Something New in Cricket!

"GEE!" said Hank Robinson, open-eyed.

He and the other American boys had expected to find some rather insignificant vehicles after what William Napoleon Browne had said. Yet these visitors knew, at the first glance, that the motor-coaches were equal to any in the United States—if not better. They were huge and imposing. Moreover, they happened to be entirely British.

There was some little delay at the start, for one or two American gentlemen came along and wanted to know where the boys were going, and how long they would be, and so forth. Browne, however, soon smoothed these matters over. He made it quite clear that the American boys were going to the St. Frank's School Train, and that they would be brought safely back to the ship during the evening.

Nipper took care to secure a seat next to Hank Robinson, who appeared to be the appointed leader of the whole American crowd.

The coaches glided off noiselessly, and, without doubt, the visitors were impressed. And as the vehicles rolled through the ancient city of Bristol, they were more impressed still. It was their first glimpse of the real England. And it wasn't long before they abandoned their air of superiority; they were filled with wonder at the quaint old buildings, at the aged churches, and at the great and splendid shops of which Bristol boasted.

"It's only a small town," said Nipper disparagingly. "Yet it's a wonderful town."

"I guess it's sure old," remarked Hank.

"Oh, not so very old, don't you know," said Nipper. "Of course, it was here long before Columbus discovered America, but that's nothing."

Hank was silent.

"It's a famous port, too," went on Nipper. "Some say that the Romans had a camp here, but I don't think it has been proved. You see, it's most frightfully difficult to prove these sort of things. Those priceless old Romans made camps everywhere in England. And our dashed ancestors were so frightfully careless that they allowed these camps to die out. Makes it so deuced awkward, you know. Now, not far away there's a place called Bath, and it's a well-known fact that the Romans were there two thousand years ago."

"Gee! That's some little time!" agreed Hank. "Say, this city doesn't seem to be so very small! You've got street cars and motor-buses, and everything!"

Many of the American boys seemed to be quite astonished. Perhaps they had expected to find the streets of an English city filled mainly with horse-drawn vehicles. They had so many false impressions of England that they were rather bewildered now that they were in close touch with the real thing.

AND when they saw the School Train they were positively flabbergasted.

For, in the whole length and breadth of the United States there was no train to compare with this wonder belonging to St. Frank's. The train was looking superb in her two tones of blue, with the gilt lettering gleaming on every coach.

The American schoolboys were taken by surprise.

They had expected to find a small train—and they saw a train that was even bigger than those in America. A little of their self-satisfaction gave way to awe.

But just at present they were not allowed to go too near the train; there was always the chance that a genuine master would come up and greet them. Something else had to be done first.

The coaches stopped two or three hundred yards away from the train, and here, on one side, there was an excellent cricket ground. A number of white-clad figures were lounging upon it. Little did the American boys dream that everything had been prepared for them!

A certain number of fellows had been left behind—all ready to do their bit when the time came. The time had come now.

"Oh, look!" shouted Handforth, as he jumped out of his coach. "Look! Dear me! My word! They're just going to start playing a game of cricket! We must watch this!"

"Of course," said Nipper. "You'll watch the cricket game, won't you?" he added, turning to the American boys. "Cricket is our great summer game, don't you know. A wonderful game—full of excitement and thrills. We can't do anything else until we have seen the game."

"Go ahead!" said Hank. "We'll try anything once!"

There were one or two anxious glances cast in the direction of the School Train as they all went crowding on to the cricket field. But, fortunately, there were no masters in sight at this lazy hour of the afternoon. And none of the seniors was in evidence, either.

The American boys wanted to become more closely acquainted with this wonderful School Train, which had taken them so completely by surprise. They had heard so much about the "little" English railway trains that they had never believed that there could be any really good-trains in England.

The travelled American citizen, of course, has no misconceived ideas of our railways; but people from the smaller towns of the middle states—particularly youths—are full of strange misconceptions regarding the old world.

And these schoolboy tourists from "the other side" were rankly contemptuous of cricket. They had always thought that cricket was the sleepest, silliest game under the sun. Cricket was a game to be laughed at—to be scorned. No self-respecting American schoolboy would dream of taking the slightest notice of it. It was a slow, preposterous, long-winded sort of game.

Well, here was a chance to show the Americans something novel!

They had always believed this game to be slow; well, it would be slow this afternoon!

Fortunately, the St. Frank's fellows had an excellent ground quite near the train. Nipper had fixed it up that very morning, having spotted the ground as soon as he had got up. It really belonged to a local junior club, but Nipper had soon got permission to play upon it—having stolen a march on the seniors, in fact, who had been rather indignant ever since.

THE American boys were successfully marshalled into the field, and they were rather intrigued by the fact that Handforth and Nipper and Travers and the others were showing signs of great excitement. They were shouting at the white figures on the cricket field, waving their hands, and generally giving a display of wild enthusiasm.

Yet there was nothing to be enthusiastic about. The cricketers were more or less stationary, and, as one of the American



boys remarked, they were in danger of going to sleep standing up.

"Well, let's go!" said Hank Robinson.

"Not yet," said Nipper. "We don't want to go until we've seen the game."

"You don't get me," grinned Hank. "I mean, let's have the cricket game, boy friend! We've heard about this game, over in the States. Ed. Thomson, who comes from Minneapolis, once saw a cricket game in a movie. Say, Ed., you ought to be tickled to death."

"I sure am," said Ed. Thomson, with a wide grin. "It's dandy to have an opportunity of seeing the genuine thing. But, say, when does it start?"

"Start?" said Handforth, staring. "This game started long ago!"

"Aw, quit fooling!" said Ed. "Those guys in white haven't moved since we've been here!"

"You don't understand cricket, that's all," said Nipper. "The St. Frank's eleven is in the field. One of the opposing side is batting now."

"Geo!" muttered Hank. "I sure thought they were waiting for something."

The American boys turned their attention more closely to the field. One and all, they had believed that the game was only in

preparation. It was news to hear that it was actually in progress.

And now that they gave the field their closer attention, they were mildly astonished. But only mildly. They had expected to see something like this.

The fieldsmen were standing about indolently, languidly. When the bowler took his run, it was a mere jog-trot, and the ball went down at a funeral pace, rolling down the pitch until it reached the batsman. The latter gave it a weary kind of tap, and then rested on his bat. One of the fieldsmen came out of a doze, dragged himself forward, picked up the ball, and tossed it in a forlorn kind of way back to the bowler.

"And this is cricket?" asked Hank, looking at Nipper.

"Cricket!" repeated Nipper, his eyes sparkling. "The most wonderful summer game in the world!"

"Oh, sure!" said Hank hastily.

"The game that stirs your blood, what?" said Nipper. "Don't you find it gripping?"

"Say, listen!" broke in Al Pope bluntly. "Are you guys telling me that this game is good?"

"It's our national summer game," replied Nipper promptly.

Al compressed his lips.

"This beats me," he said frankly. "Go ahead with it, buddy, and don't forget to wake me up when you're through!"

CHAPTER 6.

The Real Thing!

"PUNK!" said Ed Thomson disparagingly. "That's what it is—just plain punk!"

"What is?" asked Travers.

"This game," replied Ed. "Say, you guys don't get any kick out of it, do you?"

"You must be thinking of football," said Travers, shaking his head. "There's no kicking in cricket."

"Aw, gee! What's the matter with you guys?" asked Ed. "Can't you understand plain language?"

"It all depends upon what you call plain," replied Travers. "Just now you said this game was punk. Is that plain? What does 'punk' mean?"

"It means rotten!" retorted Ed.

"Rotten!" echoed Travers, horrified. "Cricket? Rotten? My dear old priceless fellow! You don't know what you're talking about! Cricket is the only game worth 'aving. It's 'ead and shoulders above every other game. 'Ow you can 'ate it is more than I can hunderstand."

Hank pointed.

"What are they doing now?" he asked.

"They're not still playing, are they?"

"Of course they're playin'," said Nipper.

"There's a new bowler goin' on."

"A new which?"

"Bowler," said Nipper. "The fellow who throws the ball, don't you know?"

"Oh, I've got you," said Hank, nodding. "That feller is sure a streak of lightning!"

The new bowler was dragging himself along with painful slowness, and when he tossed the ball he threw it so leisurely that it only fell half-way down the pitch.

The batsman came out, tapped the ball, and then laid himself down across the pitch, and apparently went to sleep.

The rest of the players took no notice of him, but continued the game. The ball was recovered, and the bowler prepared to send it down again.

"Play!" he called out languidly.

The batsman looked up, dragged himself to his feet, and went back to the wicket. The watching juniors were nearly suffocating with suppressed laughter by this time. How any sane person could accept this as a real game passed their comprehension.

Yet it was a fact that the American boys were still completely fooled. They had always heard that cricket was slow—and now they knew it!

"Aw, they're a bunch of suckers!" said Ed Thomson contemptuously. "Say, boys, let's go! I guess we'll die standing up if we stay here much longer!"

"Let's go to some place else," said Hank. "We'd like to give this School Train the once-over—"

"Oh, not yet!" broke in Nipper anxiously. "My word, no! Good gracious, what are you thinking about? The game won't be over for an hour or two—"

"We'll be dead before then if we stick around here," interrupted Hank.

"But you 'aven't seen 'alf what these chaps can do," urged Nipper. "Cricket is the most priceless game, don't you know. Haw-haw! You will 'ave your little joke, what?"

Before Hank could reply, a sharp voice broke in.

"Nipper! Handforth! Boots! What is the meaning of this nonsense?"

The boys spun round, and found Nelson Lee amongst them. They had been so intent upon watching the farcical game that they had not observed Lee's approach.

There was something grim and ominous about Nelson Lee's attitude. He was no caricature of a schoolmaster; he was dressed in an ordinary tweed suit, and he looked business-like and active.

"I suppose all you boys are from the American ship?" he asked, addressing the visitors generally.

"You bet!" went up a chorus.

"I'm pleased to make your acquaintance, young men," said Nelson Lee pleasantly. "I am afraid that these boys have been having some fun at your expense. Nipper! Did I hear you dropping your 'h's' just now? Did I hear you talking in a most ridiculous drawl?"



"I suggest that you choose an eleven and we'll fix up a cricket match," said Nipper. "After that we'll play you at baseball. How's that?" If the St. Frank's fellows expected the American boys to be interested, they were disappointed, for Hank Robinson and his compatriots burst into roars of laughter.

"Yes, sir," said Nipper, grinning.

"And what is the meaning of this preposterous game?" continued Lee, indicating the field. "I've never seen such an exhibition in my life!"

"It's cricket, sir," said Handforth. "We've been showing these American boys what cricket is."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The whole St. Frank's crowd burst into a concentrated yell of laughter. It rolled out like a clap of thunder, and went echoing and re-echoing up and down the meadow. The cricketers caught it, and they joined in with tremendous gusto. Bats were flung down, the ball was dropped, and the cricketers suddenly sprang into great activity.

"Say, what's all this, anyway?" asked Hank Robinson, staring in bewilderment.

"You'll understand in a minute!" chuckled Nipper. "Look here, guv'nor, don't butt in, you know! We've only been having a bit of fun with these American chaps. We've been kidding them."

"Kidding us!" yelled Al Pope.

"Geel!" went up a general exclamation.

"They seemed to expect that every English chap would wear a monocle—so we've been wearing them," explained Nipper, with a grin at Nelson Lee. "Don't forget to wink at it, sir. They thought that cricket was the rottenest game in the world, so we played it rather slowly—just to satisfy them."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The American schoolboys did not seem to be in the least satisfied. They were dumbfounded as they looked at the suddenly active juniors—as they watched the monocles being flung away—as they saw the boys springing into full life, and becoming normal youngsters.

"Ahem! Well, perhaps I won't make any more inquiries," said Nelson Lee dryly. "All right, young 'uns. Go ahead with it—but don't keep up the joke any longer."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Thanks awfully, sir."

"You're a sportsman, sir."

Nelson Lee went off the field, leaving everybody weak and exhausted from uproarious merriment.

It took two or three minutes for the truth to soak into the minds of the American boys. Then, when they fully realised that they had been kidded up to the eyes, they felt somewhat indignant.

They had been fooled—they, Americans, fooled! The wisest guys on earth! And, now that they came to think of it, they could easily see that the whole thing had been a plot from beginning to end. It was quite impossible that there could really be such idiots as these English boys had pretended to be.

"Well, thank goodness I can get rid of this rotten thing!" said Handforth, as he

slung his improvised monocle away. "Great Scott! I shall have a pain in the eye for a fortnight!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We dished you properly, my lads!" went on Handforth, grinning at the startled Americans. "You don't really think that we wear these fatheaded spats all the time, do you?"

He tore off his own, and threw them away.

"I never want to see 'em again!" he went on. "Archie can wear spats and an eyeglass if he likes, but the rest of us have got more sense!"

"Say, you guys aren't so dumb as we thought!" said Hank Robinson, with a sheepish grin. "Gee! You don't even drop your 'h's' now."

"We're not so jolly careless," said Reggie Pitt. "Dropping 'h's' isn't half so common in England as you Americans seem to think. Take a look at us now. You're seeing us as we really are."

Hank Robinson and his crowd looked on, and they breathed hard. These St. Frank's fellows were now active, alert, brisk, and noisy.

Their former reserve had completely departed. No longer were they distant and aloof; no longer did they speak in haughty tones. They were just a crowd of light-hearted schoolboys.

"You put it over on us all right," said Al, as he looked at Nipper. "You put it over good."

"I'll say you did!" agreed Ed. Thomson, nodding.

"We were taken right in!" growled Hank. Nipper grinned.

"Cheer up!" he said amusedly. "We couldn't resist the temptation, you fellows. No ill-feeling, you know. All in the day's fun. But, really, we English schoolboys aren't half so standoffish as you Americans seem to think. The opportunity of spoofing you was such a good one that we couldn't let it go by."

"And don't you really wear these eyeglasses all the time?" asked one of the other American boys.

"Never wore one in my life before," replied Nipper. "I'll admit we've got one chap who wears a monocle—Archie Glen-thorne—but he's an exception. And we don't say 'My word!' or 'Don't you know!' or things like that. We just used them for the occasion. You see, you expected to hear such things, and we hated the idea of disappointing you."

"But listen!" said Al Pope. "What about that master? Was he phoney, too?"

"Phoney? Oh, you mean was he a fake?" asked Nipper. "Of course he was! Browne, old man, step forward! Let me introduce you!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Mustn't forget the introductions!" grinned Reggie Pitt.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The American boys did not seem to appreciate the joke.

"That introduction business on the dock was all bunkum," explained Handforth, grinning from ear to ear. "My only sainted aunt! You don't really think that we need to be introduced in that formal way, do you? That was all part of the giddy game!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It seems to me," said Hank Robinson, "that if there are any saps right here at this moment we're the bunch! You guys sure have the laugh on us."

"Do not let it worry you, brothers," said William Napoleon Browne, as he deftly removed his voluminous gown and enormous mortar-board. "A joke is a joke, and it is now over. Let us welcome you to our School Train. I would add that there is a special meal in readiness, and I shall have much pleasure in presiding—"

"Cheese it, Browne!" grinned Nipper. "I'm the junior captain, and it's my job to preside."

Browne sighed as he removed his side-whiskers.

"Alas! It is a pity, Brother Nipper, that you do not appreciate my sterling worth," he said. "Without wishing to blow my own trumpet in any way, I must remind you that I am more gifted than yourself—particularly in the conversational equipment."

"You're rather too conversational, old man," said Nipper. "Once you get started, there's no stopping you."

"I will admit that my enthusiasm sometimes carries me away," said Browne, as he beamed upon the American boys. "Brothers—or should I say cousins?—let me assure you that my references to the United States of America were uttered in a sense of jocularly. Let there be no ill-feeling. We have had our simple jape, and now all is over."

"Is this guy keeping it up, or does he talk like that naturally?" asked Hank, appealing to Nipper.

"Oh, he can't help it," smiled Nipper. "That's his usual way."

By this time the Americans had thoroughly accepted the situation. They knew that they had been fooled, and, although they were indignant to begin with, they soon got over it. They proved themselves to be sportsmen, and they laughed at themselves quite heartily.

And after that they were escorted to the School Train, where they were unstinted in their praise. Never had they believed it possible that such a train as this could exist in a country that they had always assumed to be "dead."

These young visitors from America were learning quite a few things on their first day on English soil!



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CHAPTER 7.

The Challenge!

"O H, boy! I'll say this train is sure the elephant's elbow!" declared Hank Robinson enthusiastically. "It's a cracker-jack!"

"You said it, Hank!" agreed Al Pope. "And these English boys are honest to goodness regular fellers!"

They had had an excellent feed on the School Train, and they had been treated royally by their hosts. They were feeling contented and good-natured now.

"Come along to the cricket field, and see some real play," said Nipper.

"How come?" asked Hank. "Was that cricket game phoney, too?"

"Everything was phoney," grinned Nipper. "We fooled you nicely, my sons—and we got away with it!"

"You sure pulled a line of bull on us," remarked Al sadly. "Gee! And we thought you were a lot of boneheads!"

"Boneheads nothing!" said Hank. "These English guys are as snappy as they make 'em. Nix on that bonehead stuff, boy friend! I'll tell the world that these St. Frank babies are sure nifty!"

"Can the wisecracks, and let's go," said Ed. Thomson briskly.

"Go where?" put in Handforth. "We want you to see our cricket."

"Anything you say, buddy," replied Hank. "We thought maybe we'd take in a show to-day, but there's plenty of time. You guys made a break this afternoon, and we thought that cricket game was the bunk. Maybe we shall think different soon."

"You certainly will," said Nipper. "We'll show you cricket as it really ought to be played. And if you don't tell us that it's a first-class game—exhilarating, exciting, tense—we'll eat our hats! Cricket's the finest summer game in the world!"

"You guys seem to get by with it, anyway," said Al Pope. "Let's go!"

"Hot dog!" chorused some of the other American boys.

Handforth scratched his head.

"I'm jiggered if it's not true when people say that the Americans speak a different language!" he declared. "My only hat! I can't understand half what these chaps are saying!"

"That's fierce!" grinned Hank. "But I guess you'll soon get the low-down of our language."

"Get the what?"

"Aw, what's the use?" put in Ed. Thomson. "Let's see this cricket game."

LIKE all Americans, they were impatient. They wanted to be doing something. And before long something was doing—in earnest.

Just for the purpose of this demonstration, a Remove eleven was selected against a Fourth Form eleven. John Busterfield Boots won the toss, and he elected to bat. The Removites went on to the field, and Buster Boots and Bob Christine came out wearing their pads and carrying their bats. Crowds of juniors collected round the field, and the American boys were gathered there, too, watching with great interest.

"Sure looks snappy," remarked Al, with approval.

It was snappy, too. The evening was perfect, and a more picturesque scene than this could hardly be imagined. The countryside was glorious just here, and the meadow was an excellent one for cricket. In the background stood the School Train, handsome and imposing. And in the distance the city of Bristol was clearly visible. More than once the American boys allowed their gaze to drift over the long vista of green countryside. All this was new to them—magical, alluring. The English countryside was different from anything they had ever seen in all their lives.

Harry Gresham started the bowling for the Remove. And Gresham, of course, was one of the hottest bowlers in the junior eleven. His first delivery was a beauty, and Buster Boots only just managed to turn it away to leg.

Indeed, throughout that over, much to Boots' consternation, Gresham continued to deliver perfect balls. It was as much as Buster could do to keep his wicket intact.

There were no runs, the over being a maiden.

"Say, when do they start?" asked Hank, glancing at some of the St. Frank's juniors.

"Start?" repeated Church. "They started long ago!"

"Can you beat that!" said Hank. "I thought this was a snappy game?"

"You wait until it gets going!" replied Church, with some heat.

Nipper bowled from the other end, and with the second ball of the over came a touch of excitement. Christine got in a late cut, and the ball went speeding off towards the boundary, with Handforth well after it.

That hit resulted in two runs, Handforth succeeding in collecting the leather just before it reached the boundary line. It had been a very smart piece of fielding, and there was some clapping.

"Aw, gee!" muttered Al Pope. "Do they call this a game?"

"Maybe there'll be something to see soon," said Hank.

There was. With the fifth ball of the over Nipper captured a wicket. Christine rashly hit out and Travers, at square leg, making a sudden leap sideways, brought off a glorious catch. The leather went "slap" into his hand, and he held it securely.

"How's that?" yelled the wicket-keeper.

"Oh, good catch!"

"Well played, Travers!"

There was a great deal of applause, and Christine walked off the field.

"Say, what's all this?" asked Hank, turning to the St. Frank's spectators. "What happened?"

"Christine was caught out," explained a Removite.

"Oh, I get you," nodded Hank. "That's part of the game, eh?"

"Of course," said the Removite. "When the ball is caught direct from the bat, it means that the batsman is out."

"Oh, boy! Can you imagine that?" chuckled Hank. "When a guy catches the ball, the other guy is out! I'll tell the world this is a fierce game!"

The other American boys chuckled.

"Are you trying to be funny?" asked Armstrong of the Fourth.

"I don't need to be funny, buddy—this game's funny enough!" replied Hank.

"You said a mouthful," agreed Al Pope, with conviction. "By what I've seen of it, cricket is sure the bunk!"

"We don't need to knock it too much," put in Ed. "These babies seem to like it!"

"Knock it?" repeated Armstrong. "What do you mean?"

"When a guy knocks a thing, it means that he's criticising it," explained Ed. patiently. "I guess you don't understand our language."

"And I don't want to, either!" retorted Armstrong tartly. "Language, eh? You Americans are supposed to speak English, and I'm jiggered if anybody can understand you!"

"Where do you get that stuff?" demanded Hank. "You poor fish, the American language——"

"Say, cut it out!" urged one of the other American boys. "You don't need to get sore, Hank. Let's watch this punk game."

Another Fourth-Former was in by this time, and the game soon settled down to something brisk and attractive. The batting was good, and the bowling interesting. But, somehow, the American boys failed to find any interest in the match.

"It's a saps' game," commented Ed. Thomson, after a while.

THE ST. FRANK'S QUESTIONNAIRE!

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

- 1.—What are the colours of the Ancient House?
- 2.—Who was it that had such an influence on Ralph Leslie Fullwood, causing him to drop all his bad ways and become true blue?
- 3.—What is the name of the inn in Bell-ton which, although out of bounds to the boys, has such a good reputation that it can be entered on legitimate business without risk of punishment?
- 4.—Who is the master of the Fifth Form?
- 5.—Of what kind of material is St. Frank's mainly constructed?
- 6.—Who is the most unpopular prefect in the school?
- 7.—How far from St. Frank's is the Moor View School, and along which road?
- 8.—What is Mr. Sutcliffe's Christian name, which Form does he preside over, and what is his chief interest in life?
- 9.—Where does Willy Handforth keep his pets?
- 10.—Who is the best boxer in the junior school?
- 11.—What junior's two brothers flew the Atlantic?
- 12.—What is the name of the nobleman who has taken the St. Frank's boys on so many holiday adventures abroad?

"Let's go," suggested Hank. "I guess we've seen enough of this dope. If I stay here much longer I'll sure pass out."

They made no attempt to lower their voices, and their comments were heard by a great many of the St. Frank's fellows, who were becoming indignant. It was a bit thick of these American boys to "knock" cricket in this way.

Cricket! The finest summer game in the world! And these Americans, instead of appreciating it, were sneering at it! If they had not been guests, they would certainly have been bowled over and severely bumped. A number of the St. Frank's fellows were feeling inclined to throw etiquette to the winds.

Nipper and his cricketers were feeling very pleased with themselves on the field. They were convinced that they were giving their visitors an excellent display, and they were equally convinced that the visitors were being impressed. Therefore, it came as something of a surprise when the American boys signalled by waving their hands and then started moving off.

"JUST a minute you chaps!" sang out Nipper. "There seems to be something wrong. Our guests are going!"

"What the dickens for?" demanded Handforth, staring. "The game isn't half over yet!"

"Perhaps there's been a message recalling them to their ship?" said Reggie Pitt.

"I don't think that's likely" replied Nipper. "It's not a school ship. All these chaps are here on holiday and their time

is their own. I think we'd better make a few inquiries."

"Go ahead," said one of the Fourth Form batsmen. "Don't mind us!"

Nipper and Handforth and Travers, and a few others went running over the field towards the big crowd of American boys, and other fellows came running up, too.

"Just a minute, Robinson!" sang out Nipper. "Not going yet, are you?"

"I'll say we're going!" replied Hank.

"But what for?"

"Oh, I guess we're kind of tired," replied Hank. "This cricket game—"

He broke off, and all the other American boys were silent.

"Well?" said Nipper ominously. "Out with it!"

"You guys have been regular fellers, and we don't want to hurt your feelings," said Hank good-naturedly. "So I guess we'll quit right now."

"You won't hurt our feelings," said Nipper. "We're playing this game of cricket on purpose for you. We wanted you to see cricket as it really is."

"We've seen enough, believe me," said Ed. Thomson.

"I'll say we have!" chorused some of the others.

"Don't you like it?" asked Nipper.

"Oh sure!" replied Hank. "But I guess we'll be on our way."

"Hold on!" said Handforth grimly. "Before you go on your way, my sons, we want to hear your true opinion. You think this game is rotten, eh? Say it! Don't mind us, you know! We'd rather you speak out!"



The batsman came out, tapped the ball bowled to him, and then laid down across the pitch and apparently went to sleep. "Say, boys, let's go," said one of the American visitors contemptuously. "I guess we'll die standing if we watch this match much longer!"

"Yes, of course," said Nipper. "Tell us exactly what you think, Robinson."

"You won't get sore?" asked Hank.

"Not a bit!"

"On the level?"

"On the level," said Nipper, smiling.

"Shoot, kiddo!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, baby, this cricket game of yours is punk—just plain punk!" said Hank Robinson deliberately.

"In other words you think it's rotten?"

"I'll tell the world it's rotten!" said Hank.

"Say, it's not a game at all. Any guy could learn to play cricket within five minutes."

"Aw, how do you get that way?" put in Al Pope. "Five minutes nothing! A guy doesn't need to learn this game at all!"

"No?" asked Nipper sweetly.

"Not on your life!" said Hank. "Al's right, boys! This cricket game is a boob's game."

"If we stay here and watch it we'll be saps!" said one of the others.

Handforth bristled.

"Why, you rotters!" he said indignantly. "You don't know what you're talking about! For two pins I'll biff—"

"Cheese it, Handy!" interrupted Nipper. "No biffing! We invited these American chaps to speak out, and we mustn't get out of temper. It's just as well to know that they think that cricket is a rotten game."

"For the love of Mike, why do you guys play it?" asked Hank Robinson, in a wondering voice. "Gee! You look like a lot of saps in those nifty white suits. Say, any kiddo could chase a ball and throw it in. You can't put this stuff over on us! No, sir!"

Nipper remained very calm.

"Let's get this straight," he said pleasantly. "You all think that cricket is a soft game?"

"You said something, brother!" nodded Hank. "Soft is right!"

"And you think that you could play this game without any previous experience?" went on Nipper.

"Oh, sure," chorused a number of the American boys.

"I guess there's nothing to learn," added Hank. "Why, over in the States our funerals are quicker than this dumb game!"

"These guys ought to see us playing a ball game," said Ed. Thomson.

"A ball game?" said Handforth. "Isn't cricket a ball game?"

"Nix on it!" laughed Hank. "We mean a real ball game!"

"Baseball?" asked Nipper.

"Hot dog!" said Hank, his eyes shining. "You've spilled it, baby! Baseball is the only

game in the world! I'm handing it to you that—"

"Just a minute, old man," interrupted Nipper gently. "Just a minute! Is there any chance of us seeing you playing in a game of baseball?"

"I'll say there is!" replied Hank. "We've got everything with us—costumes, bats, and all the rest of the fixings. Would you like us to show you a game?"

"We'd like something more than that," replied Nipper, with a grim note creeping into his voice. "I've got an idea, my sons!"

"Spill it!" said Hank briefly.

"You fellows have just said that cricket is a rotten game," said Nipper. "Well, I'm going to challenge you."

"Yeah?"

"You American chaps have never played a game of cricket, and we English chaps



The batsman came out, tapped the ball to sleep. "Say, boys, let's go," said one of

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have never played a game of baseball," said Nipper. "I suggest that you should choose an eleven, and we'll fix up a cricket match. After that, I'll select a baseball team from my players, and we'll play you at baseball. We'll see which of us comes out best. How's that?"

CHAPTER 8.

An Interesting Experiment!

"BY George! That's a pretty ripping idea!" said Handforth enthusiastically.

"Rather!"

"Good egg, Nipper!"

"That's the stuff!"

"Let's make these American chaps show what they can do!"

Robinson and his compatriots merely looked surprised for a moment or two, and then they burst into roars of laughter. They seemed to think that the suggestion was a huge joke.

"Say, can you beat that?" yelled Hank. "What about it, boys?"

"These guys make me laugh!" said Ed Thomson. "We'll take up that challenge!"

"Aw, gee! Is it worth it?" asked Al.

"Worth it!" said Hank. "You bet it is! We're not going to have these English guys getting the laugh on us. No, sir! That challenge is accepted right here and now!"

"Good man!" said Nipper briskly.

"Let's get this doped out good and proper," continued Hank Robinson, grinning. "You guys want us to play a game of cricket with you?"

"Yes."

"And after that you'll play us at baseball?"

"That's right."

"Boy, you don't know what you've asked for!" said Hank candidly. "Baseball is a *real* game!"

"And cricket isn't, eh?"

"Cricket is a saps' game, and if it wasn't for this challenge we wouldn't be seen dead playing it," replied Hank frankly. "But you've put it up to us, and I guess we've got to accept. Say, we'll pick up this punk cricket game in two minutes, and we'll show you English guys that it's dead easy. And after that we'll knock you cold in the ball game!"

"That's all right—we're quite willing to be knocked cold," said Nipper. "But aren't you a bit optimistic, Robinson? Don't you think that you might have a bit of trouble with cricket, never having played it before?"

"We've seen it, and, boy, that's enough!" put in Ed Thomson.

"Listen!" said Al. "We haven't got the dope on this cricket stuff. We don't even know the rules."

"Don't worry about them," said Nipper. "We'll give you a book of rules, and you can take it back to your ship with you and study them. I've got a book in my study in which baseball is fully described. We'll all get the hang of baseball while you're learning about cricket."

"Aren't we going to play the game to-night?" asked Handforth indignantly.

"Can't be done," replied Nipper. "There isn't time. A thing like this needs prepara-



and then laid down across the pitch and apparently went to sleep contemptuously. "I guess we'll die standing if we wait much longer!"

"Exactly," nodded Nipper. "They despise our cricket, and say that they can play it without any learning. Well, here's a chance for them to prove their words."

If the St. Frank's fellows expected the American boys to look flabbergasted, they were rather disappointed. For Hank

tion; these American chaps have got to get their costumes and things from the ship, and we must mark out a field for the baseball game."

"Guess we'd better do that, boy friend," said Hank. "You guys don't know a thing about baseball. We'll be right here to-morrow, and we'll get it all lined up."

AND so it was arranged. Everybody on the School Train was intrigued by the novelty of the challenge. Browne succeeded in working up quite a lot of enthusiasm amongst the seniors, and it was certain that a great many Fifth-Formers and Sixth-Formers would be watching these two games on the morrow.

There was something very unusual—very attractive—about the whole idea.

These American boys had never played cricket, and Nipper & Co. had never played baseball. So the handicap would be precisely the same in each case. And it would be interesting to discover which set of boys came out best. The Americans, of course, had no doubt whatever as to the outcome. They regarded cricket with contempt, and, in their native spirit of over-confidence, they believed that they would be "all over" the English boys. They reckoned that they would put up a fine performance of cricket, and that they would then knock the St. Frank's fellows cold in baseball.

Nipper spent quite a lot of time during the rest of that evening, and on the morrow, in driving home the fact to the Removites and Fourth-Formers that this experiment was not going to be so very easy. There was no sense in taking anything for granted. They were all new to baseball, and it was practically certain that they would be beaten. But it was equally certain that the American boys would be beaten in cricket. The crux of the thing was to give the Americans a bigger hiding than the Americans gave them.

After that, perhaps, these American youngsters would not be quite so pleased with themselves.

Baseball was the one subject of conversation during every minute of spare time until tea-time on the following day. Books were raked out, and baseball was studied in all its aspects. The rules were learned, and everything in connection with the game was looked up.

In fact, by the time the hour drew near for the experiment, the St. Frank's juniors knew so much about baseball that the game seemed quite familiar to them. In theory, they were acquainted with all its intricacies.

"Baseball, eh?" said Handforth, with fine scorn. "Why, it's only a glorified edition of rounders!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, so it is!" insisted Handforth. "They play rounders in kids' infant schools—and these Americans have the nerve to

tell us that cricket is a 'punk' game! By George! We'll show 'em!"

NIPPER shook his head as he joined the group that was collected about Handforth.

"Go easy, Handy, old man," said the junior skipper, shaking his head.

"What do you mean—go easy?"

"Don't sneer at baseball," said Nipper. "We don't want to follow the example of these American boys. They've been running down cricket, although they've never even played the game. We haven't played baseball."

"But it's just like rounders——"

"That may be; yet, at the same time, I dare say it's a splendid game," said Nipper. "Anyhow, it's popular enough in America. Millions of people go to see it every year in the States. There must be something in it, or there wouldn't be so much enthusiasm. Anyhow, let's wait until we've played it before we criticise it."

"Yes; we'll leave all the 'knocking' to the Americans," said Reggie Pitt. "It's a habit of theirs to talk a lot. And sometimes they come a cropper. I've an idea they'll come a cropper this evening."

During the day a number of the American schoolboys had been over, and had been very busy in a neighbouring meadow, which had been expressly hired for the occasion. Everything had been prepared for baseball. The in-field, or diamond, had been carefully marked out, posts had been placed at the corners, and there were canvas bags at the bases. Then, again, there was the pitcher's plate—on which the pitcher must keep one of his feet when delivering the ball. It all looked very business-like, and the St. Frank's fellows were vastly interested.

The evening was still young when the Americans arrived. Eleven of them were dressed in white flannels—ready for cricket—and grinning hugely. Others were wearing the regulation baseball costume. They wore striped suits, with knickers buckled just under the knees, and with padding here and there. These baseball players, too, carried an assortment of strange headgear, which, no doubt, would be brought into use when the game started.

"All set?" asked Hank Robinson, as he came up.

"Everything waiting," replied Nipper, smiling.

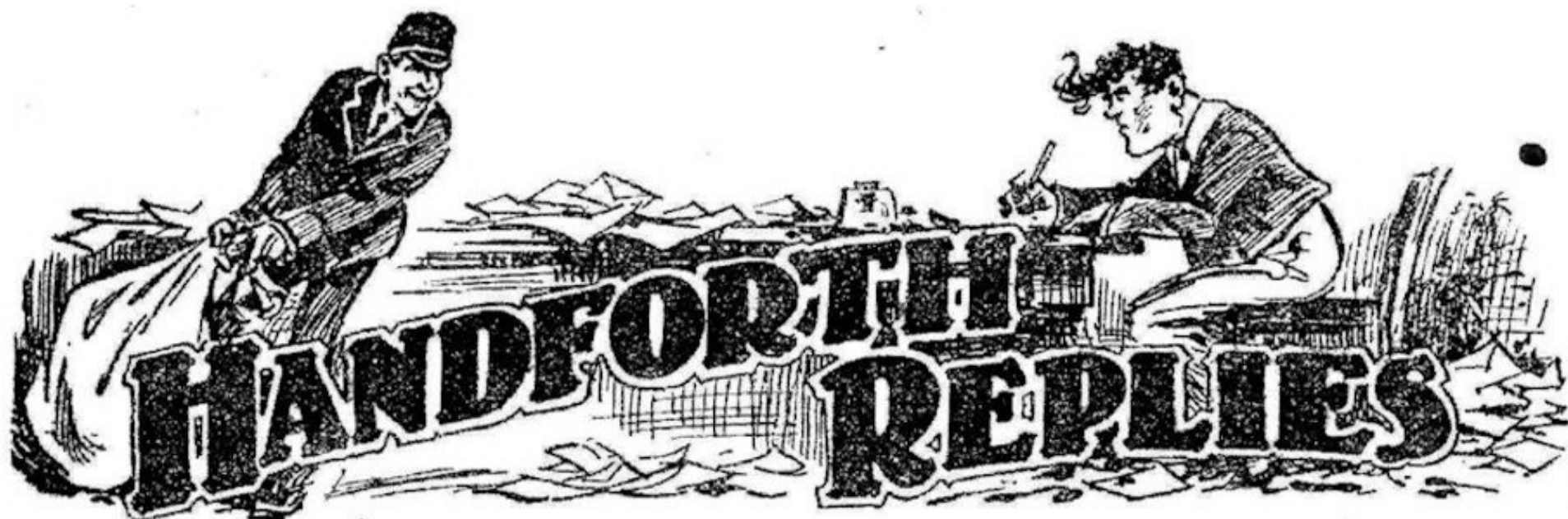
"Hot dog!" said Hank.

"You look pretty good in those cricketing clothes," said Handforth, as he glanced at the Americans who were in flannels.

"Gee! I may look good, but I feel a sap!" said one of them.

"No need to feel a sap yet," replied Handforth. "Wait until the game's been going a bit!"

The Americans were as full of confidence as ever. It was, of course, over-confidence.



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

"CURIOUS" (Walsall).—"Can the moon ever be reached; and how far is it away from the earth?" Of course it can be reached. It only wants a chap with a few brains and a knowledge of astronomy to work it all out. I shall go there myself one of these days; I've got thousands of wonderful ideas for inventions which would make travelling there as easy as Fatty Little eats pie. I don't know the distance from the earth to the moon off-hand, but I'll let you know when I get there. I'll drop you a note, shall I? I'll wrap it round a stone so that it won't blow away.

"X1."—This is not a reply but a request. Will the rotter who signed himself "X1" and suggested that the origin of the name "Handforth" came first from a notorious burglar whose motto wasn't "Hands off!" send me his full name and address? If he will, I'll exchange it for his future address—the name of the hospital they'll take him to when I've finished with him!

NIPPER.—What are you talking about, you ass? You say your dog Boz is worth ten pounds. Who left it to him? Or perhaps you've got his worth mixed up with his weight.

V. R. H. (Rugby).—"As our chemistry master says that there is a certain amount of heat even in a snowball, I should like to know how many snowballs it would take to boil a kettle?" You're a funny chump, aren't you? Try it out for yourself when winter comes; and, in the meantime, here's a poser for your chemistry master from me: How many icebergs would it take to set the Thames on fire?

"HANDY" (Bradford).—What do you mean by saying you're me? It's an insult. There's nobody else like me in the whole world. (Hear, hear!—and what a relief.—ED.)

"HISTORIAN" (Ilford).—"Who was Nelson, and what made him famous?" I believe Nelson was an admiral or something, and he fought a battle at Trafalgar Square. I don't know why an admiral should fight a battle at Trafalgar Square of all places, but I must be right, because his statue is there. I expect he became famous because he invented the half-nelson—a hold in ju-jitsu and wrestling. If you want a demonstration, come and see me!

EDWARD OSWALD.

They had no justification for assuming that cricket was such a childishly-easy game to play. To them, it had seemed slow and simple. But they were liable to get a big surprise.

When any of the St. Frank's juniors remarked upon their serenity, they only laughed, and retorted that they had every reason to be easy in mind. Why, any bono-head could hit a ball of that size, and with a bat four or five inches wide! In a real ball game—in baseball—the bat was only a kind of round stick. And—oh, boy!—it needed some skill to hit a ball away with an implement of that sort!

It was in this spirit of thinly-veiled contempt that the American "cricketers" came upon the field. Everything was done in the ordinary way—just as though these Americans were a proper school team.

All round the field, crowds of spectators had gathered. Nearly all the Fifth-Formers and Sixth-Formers were there, and, needless to say, the Third had turned out to a man. It can safely be said that ninety-eight per cent of the scholars on the School Train were on the spot.

"How do we start this thing?" asked Hank Robinson.

"Well, it's usual for the two captains to toss," replied Nipper. "On a fine day like this, and with such a good wicket, the winner generally elects to bat first."

"All right—shoot!" said Hank.

The toss was taken, and Nipper named the coin correctly.

"You American fellows may take the field," said Nipper. "We St. Frank's chaps will open the batting. Is that all right with you?"

"You bet it is," replied Hank promptly. "You guys are going to do the batting, eh?"

"That's it," said Nipper. "We'll get as many runs as we can, and then it's your turn to come in. Do you see?"

"I've got you," said Hank. "The whole eleven of you go in, don't you?"

"Yes—and it's your job to get us out—either by breaking our wickets or catching us out."

"Sure!" replied Hank, grinning. "I guess you guys won't last long. We've got baseball pitchers in our team, and this cricket bowling looks dead easy. You won't last long."

"No?" said Nipper sweetly. "Go ahead, then!"

CHAPTER 9.

Surprising the Americans!

THERE was a little hush round the field as Nipper and Handforth came out to open the batting. They looked very business-like as they walked towards the wicket.

"Hurrah!"

"Go it, St. Frank's!"

"Show us what you can do!"

"Let's have plenty of runs!"

Handforth waved his bat, as though to assure the spectators that he, at least, would get plenty of runs.

There had been a bit of argument during the day as to which two juniors should open the batting for St. Frank's. Nipper, as captain, was naturally chosen. He had suggested that somebody else should go in; but, as Reggie Pitt had pointed out, it was more than likely that the two opening batsmen would last so long that no others would be necessary. And Nipper was certainly one of the best batsmen in the junior side.

Handforth had kicked up such a fuss when it was suggested that he should not be Nipper's partner that in the end he had been allowed to have his own way. And perhaps this was just as well—for Handforth was a great slogger, and the American bowling would probably suit him perfectly. He was just the fellow to show the Americans what real hitting was.

Hank Robinson and his men, very similar to the St. Frank's fellows, had been study-

ing all day. They had been reading the rules of cricket, and they had learned them by heart. So they came on the field fully equipped for the match. They knew the whole game in theory—but this was their first experience of it in practice.

A boy from Columbus, Ohio, named Jim Warren, opened the bowling. He was a smallish, leathery kind of youth, and he looked very capable.

It was clear that Hank Robinson had been studying the rules of cricket very closely, for he placed his field in the approved manner. To look at, now, these Americans might have been playing cricket for years.

"Come on, Jim!"

"Oh, boy! Show your stuff!"

The American boys shouted with enthusiasm as Warren prepared to deliver the first ball. He took a run, his arm came over, and the ball bounced violently half-way down the pitch—and then bounced again just as it was within reach of Nipper's bat.

Clack!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was an excellent hit, and the ball went sizzling through the fieldsmen, not one of whom made the slightest attempt to stop it. Apparently, they had been taken by surprise—never believing that that ball would be hit.

"Come on!" sang out Handforth cheerfully.

They ran three before the ball was thrown in again, and Handforth was delighted. He was facing the bowling now.

Down came the leather again, and this time Jim Warren judged his distance a little better, although the delivery was many feet out. Handforth leapt, his bat flashed round, and the next second the ball went soaring away, well beyond the limits of the meadow.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good old Handy!"

"That's the way to knock boundaries!"

Handforth rested on his bat.

"We'll show 'em!" he said contentedly.

The American boys were not looking quite so serene now. This game wasn't such a saps' game, after all!

The third ball of the over was sent away for another boundary—and the fourth, too. Then Handforth sent up a skier, and for a moment the St. Frank's crowd believed that he was out.

But the American who ran for the catch made an awful mess of it. It was a simple catch—a dead easy one. But it slipped through the American boy's fingers as though they had been greased.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It had seemed so easy to watch—but it was so very different in practice!

"Gee!" said the boy who had failed.

"This darned ball is too big!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

BY the time four overs had been played, Nipper and Handforth were still going strong—and the score-board showed the figures of 78. And now it was the St. Frank's fellows who were chuckling and grinning; the Americans had fallen silent. They had promised themselves a big laugh over this game, but, somehow, they did not feel much like laughing now.

The fieldsmen were getting better; they were returning the ball more quickly, and they were shaping fairly well. But the bowling was weak, and Nipper and Handforth had not the slightest difficulty in knocking almost every ball to the boundary.

As soon as the 100 had gone up, Nipper tucked his bat under his arm and started walking away from the wicket.

"Hey! What's the idea?" asked Handforth, staring.

"This innings is finished," replied Nipper. "I'm going to declare."

"What?" yelled Handforth. "But we haven't been playing for more than half an hour!"

"What does that matter?" said Nipper. "I'm the skipper of this side, Handy, and I know what I'm doing."

Handforth breathed hard. Yet, after a moment's reflection, he decided that Nipper was right. The pair of them would stay in the whole evening by the look of things. Far better to declare and let the opposing side bat now. A hundred runs was quite a decent score, and Nipper would be safe in declaring.

"What's the big idea, buddy?" asked Hank Robinson, as he came across to Nipper.

"I'm declaring."

"You're doing what?"

"Declaring."

"What does that mean?"

"Haven't you read the rules?" asked Nipper. "I'm satisfied that our total of 100 is strong enough. You fellows can go in to bat now. We'll take the field."

"Aw, gee! What do you know about that?" exclaimed Hank. "I thought it was our job to take ten wickets to get the whole side out? We haven't taken one."

"You don't need to," said Nipper. "We think we can beat you."

"Say, listen!" chimed in Warren, running up. "Do you think that we can't get a hundred runs and beat your total?"

"Yes, that's what I think," nodded Nipper.

"Say, you're throwing this game away!" said Warren excitedly. "You haven't seen anything yet! We may not be so good at the bowling, but, oh boy, wait until we start batting!"

"All right," said Nipper. "We'll wait until you start batting. But I don't think we need carry on this innings any more. I'm declaring it closed for a 100 runs, and no wickets."

THE American team didn't like it. They felt that it was a bit of a slight. A miserable 100 runs! Well, if these English guys liked to be so bone-headed, it was their own doing! It was only necessary to get one run over the English total, and the Americans would win.

This was all very well—but they had wanted to win in a more decisive manner. It was their job to get ten batsmen out, and they hadn't even got out one! And now the St. Frank's skipper had called in all his men! To the Americans it seemed a rash proceeding.

But Nipper knew exactly what he was doing.

The St. Frank's Junior Eleven took the field, and everybody looked confident and cheerful.

"This is worth watching, by jingo!" said McClure. "It's a rotten game, of course, but these American fatheads are being put in their right place! Cricket's a rotten game, eh? A game for saps, eh? Well, perhaps these Americans are changing their minds now!"

They were. They were changing their minds rapidly. They were coming to the conclusion that cricket was a much harder game to play than it looked. And after a very few minutes they had every reason to feel thoroughly alarmed.

Harry Gresham opened the bowling—as he had done on the previous day against the Fourth-Formers.

Hank Robinson was the batsman, and he had taken up his position somewhat awkwardly—which was only to be expected, seeing that he had never played cricket before. But his confidence was unshattered. It was firmly fixed in his mind that it was the easiest thing in the world to knock this leather ball just where he wanted to. Handforth could do it with apparent ease—so why not he?

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Gresham took his run, the leather leapt from his fingers, hissed down, and Hank's bat went up.

Crash!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The ball was certainly a true one, and it should have been easy enough to stop. But Hank lifted his bat up, and allowed the ball to slip underneath it. His wicket lay shattered.

"How's that?" asked the wicket-keeper politely.

"Out, I think," said the umpire, with a grin.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"For the love of Mike!" ejaculated Hank blankly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The American skipper walked off the field rather dazedly—feeling, however, that something had gone wrong somewhere. The next man came in, Gresham delivered the second ball of the over—and again the wicket was spreadeagled.

"How's that?"

"Out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, St. Franks!"

And then, after that, the procession started. Ed Thomson created something of a sensation by hitting a ball. But he rather spoilt it by running, and the next second the ball was thrown in, and his wicket was knocked sideways. The other batsman had not run at all, being too startled.

Another of the American cricketers managed to get at the ball, and he tossed it beautifully into Handforth's waiting grip. All the rest were clean bowled by either Gresham or Hussi Khan. It was the greatest farce that the St. Frank's fellows had ever seen.

Ten wickets down—for no runs whatever!

Of course, it wasn't a game at all; it was a sheer piece of foolery.

But it had certainly served its purpose.

The American boys, by this time, were thoroughly and everlastingly convinced that the game of cricket was an expert one, and a difficult one.

"Well?" asked Nipper, as he smiled at Hank Robinson.

"Listen!" replied Hank impressively.

"If you hear me making any more wise cracks about cricket, you can call me a big cheese!"

"You've rather changed your mind about cricket, I think?"

"Boy, you said a mouthful!" declared Hank. "I'm handing it to you right now that cricket is a dandy game. I guess you've knocked us for a row of beans!"

"At any rate, old man, I think you'll admit that cricket is harder than it looks," said Nipper gently. "It isn't such a kids' game, is it?"

"I'll say it isn't!" replied Hank, with emphasis.

"Say, listen!" put in Jim Warren. "Wait until we start the ball game! You guys are going to have your eyes opened!"

"That's quite likely," chuckled Nipper. "But we've one consolation; we can't possibly do any worse at baseball than you fellows have done at cricket!"

CHAPTER 10.

Taken Down a Peg!

EVERYTHING was ready for the game of baseball to start.

"Now, don't forget," said Nipper, as he spoke to his men. "The game is comparatively simple. The pitcher delivers the ball to the batsman, and the batsman tries to send it out of reach of the fielders—and far enough out on the field, too, to enable him to run round the bases. And if he reaches the home base—his starting point—without being put out, he scores a run."

"It's a bit different from cricket," remarked Reggie Pitt.

"A home run, in baseball, is a tremendous achievement," said Nipper. "You needn't expect that we shall get any home runs to-day, my lads! If we can manage to get from base to base it'll be something. As soon as three of the batting side are put out, the fielding side comes in. There are nine innings altogether, and some of them may only take a few minutes."

"We know all about it," said Handforth, nodding. "Let's get busy."

Yet, much as they had studied the rules of baseball, they were feeling very strange and awkward as they prepared for the ordeal. They could appreciate, in some measure, the feelings of the American boys when these latter had started playing cricket. It was now the turn of the Americans to grin.

All the spectators were taking a keen interest. There were nine players on each side, and the distribution of the fielding side was watched keenly. The Americans were fielding to open the game; and the catcher was an extraordinary-looking object with his great gloves, his pads, and his face mask. The pitcher was ready to start the business, and he was looking keen. These two—the pitcher and the catcher—are very much the same as the bowler and the wicket-keeper in cricket. Then there was the first baseman, the second baseman, short stop, and third baseman, and then the three out-fielders—left, right, and centre.

The idea of the game is for the pitcher to deliver a ball to the batsman standing at the home plate; and the batsman tries to hit the ball in such a way, and in such a direction, as shall give him time to reach at least one of the bases before the ball can be returned to the baseman standing there. If the batsman succeeds in reaching the base in safety, another man takes his stroke



Hank Robinson raised his bat to strike as the ball hissed down the pitch. Crash! "Ha, ha, ha!" roared the St. Frank's juniors. Hank had allowed the ball to slip underneath his bat and his wicket lay shattered. "How's that?" asked the wicket-keeper politely. Hank himself looked dazed. He had thought cricket was an easy game to play!

from the home plate. Then the first striker tries, in the meantime, to reach the next base, and so on.

The man who has now seized the bat must emulate his predecessor's move, and knock the ball away so that he can get to the first base. Each individual batsman must make the circuit of all the bases before a single run is scored. A side is out when three batsmen are dismissed. There are nine innings played by each side in a game, and the entire game can be completed within a space of two and a half hours.

Of course, if a batsman makes a home run it is quite a sensation. But home runs are by no means common.

THE American boys were yelling themselves hoarse now. They were madly excited over the beginning of this game. The St. Frank's fellows could not see the reason for all this tumult. Baseball looked like being a faster game—a more hectic game—than cricket; but, at the same time, it did not greatly appeal. Perhaps this was because the St. Frank's boys were unaccustomed to it.

The pitcher had taken up his position facing the batsman—who was Nipper—and both his feet were squarely on the ground, and in front of the pitcher's plate. He made one or two contortions, and then flung the ball with all his strength.

"Ball one!" sang out the umpire, who was standing near to the catcher.

"What does that mean?" asked Handforth, who was ready to take his turn.

"It means that it was a bad ball," said Church. "Haven't you read the rules? It didn't pass over the plate, or something—

or else it was higher than the batsman's shoulder, or lower than his knee. They've got all sorts of tricky rules about pitching, you know. I believe that if three balls are pitched like that in succession, the batsman can walk to the first base without even making a hit."

The next ball came along, and this time it was delivered with greater accuracy.

"Strike one!" shouted the umpire.

The catcher caught it, Nipper having completely missed.

Then the next ball came down, and this time Nipper's round bat—a kind of stick—flashed through the air, and the ball went hissing away.

"Hurrah!"

"Well hit!"

Nipper flung the curious bat down, and ran for the first base. One of the fielders had muffed the ball, however, and it was still some distance away. Nipper ran—towards the second base.

Everybody was yelling. The ball was sent in, and the baseman grabbed it just a second too late.

"Gee! That was some run!" panted the baseman, looking at Nipper.

"Did I do all right?" grinned Nipper.

"You sure did!"

Handforth had the bat now, and he was swinging it suggestively. Down came the next ball, round swung Handforth's arm in a terrific swipe—to miss the ball completely. A roar of laughter went up when he was seen nearly to lose his balance as a result of his terrific effort.

"By George! How did I manage that?" said Handforth, somewhat startled at missing the ball. "I believe that was a no-ball."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The St. Frank's juniors and American boys within hearing roared with laughter.

"Take it steady, Handy!" yelled Nipper. "That was ball number one, and you didn't manage anything."

"All right, my lad!" roared Handforth. "I'll show 'em!"

He was swinging the bat in a determined manner now. The ball was returned to the pitcher, who, after taking a short run, sent down the second delivery. Round swung Handforth's arms in a tremendous swipe, and the little sphere went sailing away at terrific speed. Whether that hit had been a fluke or not, Handforth had made a glorious hit.

"Look out!" he roared. "I'm coming!"

He didn't trouble about dropping his bat, but kept it with him. He reached the first base—the second base. And in the meantime, Nipper had got home. A run already!

The American boys looked on aghast. They had expected to wipe up these English schoolboys in baseball. And here were the St. Frank's fellows putting up quite a good show!

"What do you know about that?" asked Hank, looking at some of his fellow players.

"These babies are sure smart!" said Al Pope. "Gee! We mustn't let them beat us!"

"Aw, put a sock in it!" said one of the others.

YET as the game went on, it became startlingly clear that the St. Frank's boys were taking to baseball in an extremely clever manner. Not that they really liked the game. It had none of the charms of cricket. Yet, in a way, it was allied to cricket.

And it was the cricketing experience which stood them in such good stead now. Hitting the ball was quite different, but the principle was the same. And the best St. Frank's junior batsmen were in this team.

It must be admitted that the pitching was very poor. These American boys, who thought themselves so smart, were really extremely weak. A good pitcher, no doubt, would have made the game look very different.

These American boys, straight from the ship, had had no practice. In fact, they had been without baseball practice for some weeks, and now they found themselves badly equipped for this test. In this respect, perhaps, the advantage lay with the St. Frank's boys, since they had had a good deal of cricket of late.

Handforth revealed amazing promise as a pitcher when it came to his turn—for he had insisted upon trying his hand at pitching. It was so very different from ordinary cricket bowling that Nipper had decided that none of the junior bowlers should be put on. Their cricketing experience might very

easily handicap them now. There is no over-arm movement in pitching for baseball. The ball is flung; it is thrown with all the pitcher's strength.

And Handforth was just the fellow for this kind of job.

In fielding, too, the St. Frank's fellows were infinitely superior. The American batsmen knocked the ball away as Handforth sent it down but in a flash it was retrieved, sent in, and the first basemen had the batsman out.

And so it went on.

COMING NEXT WEEK!



AND the startling feature about the whole affair was that St. Frank's won!

Nipper & Co. actually won the baseball match. It was the culminating blow for the Americans; every scrap of their arrogance was taken away from them. They were a humbled crowd now. Never in their lives had they had such an experience as this. And their opinion of British schoolboys rose to an extraordinarily high pitch. After this they would talk in a very different strain about cricket—and about the "boneheadedness" of English public schoolboys! They would have something to remember when they got back to the United States!

"Of course," said Nipper afterwards, "we're not claiming any great victory over this, Robinson."

"You're sure a crackerjack!" declared Hank frankly. "You're all crackerjacks!"

"Honest to goodness, we got you all wrong!" put in Ed. Thomson. "Say, boys, I guess it's our turn to entertain you. We want you to come over to the ship this evening, and we'll give a good time!"

"That's very nice of you," said Nipper. "I think we can arrange it. Thanks awfully!"

"It's fierce, the way you put it over on us," said Hank regretfully. "But I guess we're out of practice."

"That's about the truth of it," said Nipper, nodding. "You see, you fellows

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Comedy: that's supplied by—you can guess—Edward Oswald Handforth. Handforth, not content with his part in the big film, wants to make a film of his own!

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haven't had any baseball practice for a long, long time. But we've had quite a lot of cricket, and that makes all the difference. You're all stiff and stale from your ocean voyage, whilst we are fresh. If it hadn't been for that, I expect you would have licked us to a frazzle."

There was a tremendous difference in the attitude of the victorious St. Frank's fellows. There was no crowing—no boasting—no arrogance. It was an object lesson which the visitors could not possibly overlook.

"The more we see of you English guys, the more we know how wrong we've always been," said Hank, with straightforward candour. "We've had you British all wrong. We sure thought you were a bunch of saps."

"I guess we're the saps, Hank," said Al ruefully.

"You said it, Al," nodded Hank. "Gee! These guys have put it over on us good and

proper. And listen! The more we see of England, the more we marvel at it. For the love of Mike! Why don't you advertise this bully country of yours?"

"We're like that," said Handforth. "We don't believe in advertising—not in that way, anyhow. And what's the result? When people come to England, they get a pleasant surprise. They find it's a lot better country than they had ever dreamed. If you talk about a thing too much, and boast about it too much, it's liable to become disappointing for those who come to see it. But we, in England, don't care about bragging of what we've got. Why, at this very moment England is full of Americans who are touring about, getting surprise after surprise."

"You haven't seen anything yet!" grinned Nipper.

"I'll say we haven't!" replied Hank, with conviction. "London! Gee! I've always looked upon London as a one-horse city. I guess I shall have to change my opinion after this."

"You sure said a mouthful, baby!" replied Handforth.

THAT evening, fairly late, the St. Frank's juniors were entertained right royally by their American hosts on board the ship in Bristol docks. The American boys were completely changed. Their arrogance had gone, their boasting was conspicuous by its absence. This short spell in England had taught them an excellent lesson. And now they were proving themselves to be true sportsmen—they were doing their very utmost to wipe out that rather unpleasant impression which they had first created.

And when the School Train went on its way, some days later—this time bound for the South Coast—the American boys were very sorry to see the last of their new friends.

"They're all right, those American chaps," said Nipper, summing them up. "At heart, they're as sound as a bell. It's not their fault that they're inclined to be a bit boastful—that's the American characteristic, and it's been instilled into them since they were tiny kids."

"A few weeks in England will do them good," said Handforth. "By George! We did them a bit of good when you come to think of it."

And this was a statement which nobody could deny. And the occupants of the St. Frank's School Train were not likely to forget their stay in Bristol for many a long day.

The End.

(Next week finds the cheery Chums of St. Frank's in the New Forest and the Isle of Wight—where they are destined to meet with many more stirring adventures. Look out for this fine yarn on the bookstalls next Wednesday—it's entitled: "St. Frank's In The 'Talkies'!")

GOSSIP ABOUT ST. FRANK'S



Things Heard and Seen By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

THE other day I was asked by one of the chaps—Jack Grey, I think it was—what had happened to Bernard Forrest. You remember Bernard Forrest? He was several kinds of a rotter, and deservedly got the sack. I believe he's at another big school, somewhere in the West of England, and it's fairly evident that his people must have used their influence to get him in. As an out-and-out rotter, I don't think he is anything like so bad as a fellow named Claude Carter, who was at St. Frank's before Forrest's time. Claude was, without doubt, the world's worst. A regular young bounder without a single redeeming feature, and when he left St. Frank's, the old school felt cleaner. This, incidentally, answers a question which Clem O'Sullivan, of Mount Lawley, West Australia, has asked me in one of his letters.

* * *

I CAME across Willy Handforth a few days ago, while the School Train was in Swansea. I had taken a trip down there to have a general look round, and to see how things were going, and to get some material for the current yarn. I found Willy presiding over a queer kind of feed in his study. He was dishing out chunks of fruit, with a tough green skin and yellow pulp. He invited me to have some but, knowing what these Third-Formers are, I insisted upon knowing what the stuff was before I took the chance. Willy assured me that the fruit was ripe mango, and, taking pity on my ignorance, he proceeded to tell me that the mango tree is an evergreen, and that it is a native of the East Indies. The fruit grows in bunches, kidney-shaped, each fruit being from three to six inches in length. It seems that he had got hold of his supply from one of the ships which had just come into port. He must have got round one of the officers, or perhaps a head steward. It's uncanny how that kid wangles these things. Rummily enough, I've had a letter from Eric A. Miles, who is lucky enough to

live in Hastings, and he asks me what a mango is. Here's an answer to his letter, ready-made, so to speak.

* * *

ULYSSES SPENCER ADAMS, the American Removite, was awfully wild when I saw him this week at St. Frank's. He's one of the chaps who failed to qualify for the School Train trip, and it seems that he had just had a letter from Harry Gresham, one of his old study-mates, telling him all about that affair at Bristol, when the St. Frank's chaps spoofed all those American boys. Adams was inclined to be peevish; he told me that it was like my dog-gone nerve to leave him out of it! As if I am to blame! After he had called me a bonehead and a sap, I gently reminded him that if he was as clever as he made out, he would have been on the School Train himself. I sternly advised him not to be jealous, and added that he was not only a cheap skate, but a poor fish. And he was then compelled to confess that I had said a mouthful.

* * *

POOOR old Handforth was in an awful stew in Bath this week. He gave Church a beautiful thick ear, and then found out that he had blamed Church for something which another chap had done. He didn't even give Church a chance to get a word in edgeways—until it was too late. Just like him, of course. As Olive Mitchell, of Hounslow, remarks in a letter to me, Handforth is generally in deep distress when he has impulsively made a bloomer. Of course, there's no excuse for a fellow who gives a chap a thick ear like that; but old Handy is always so tremendously sorry, and his distress is so genuine that he is invariably forgiven. There's no pretence about Edward Oswald, and it's his very bluntness and his exceedingly human faults which make him so popular with his schoolfellows. They treat Handforth as a

joke, but they think the world of him, really. I dare say many of you will agree with these words of Olive Mitchell's: "I love Handforth's many faults, and admire his obvious distress when he has unwittingly landed one of his pals in the 'cart.'"

* * *

ARCHIE GLENTHORNE is a queer sort of mixture—as Charles Barker, of Windsor, has discovered for himself. Only this week Archie proved that his indolence is more or less assumed. A crowd of chaps failed to shift him when they suggested a sightseeing trip. All he wanted to do was to relax, and he insisted that he hadn't sufficient energy to move the good old bones a couple of yards. Yet when he heard, five minutes later, that one of the fags had met with an accident three miles away, he was the first one to dash off for the first-aid outfit; and, what is more to the point, he was the first to arrive, and the first to render the necessary skilful treatment. Fortunately, the fag wasn't hurt much, but there's no doubt that Archie's promptness helped a great deal. The more I know of Archie, the more I discover that when it comes to an emergency he is quicker than the quickest. At least, he's just as quick.

* * *

I MUST say that James Clayton, of Everton, Liverpool, looks very serious in his photograph, which you see this week alongside this paragraph. He tells me he's been reading my yarns for nine years, but I hope it is not my stories that have made him take on such a serious expression. I wonder if he happened to meet any of the St. Frank's chaps while they were in Liverpool the other week? I know for a fact that Handforth & Co. went to Everton—Handforth having some sort of idea that the place is overflowing with toffee.

* * *

ONE of our readers, who prefers to be known under the alias of "Petrol," and who, incidentally, happens to be a young lady, hailing from High-bury, is guilty of the following spasm. She doesn't guarantee the metre, but I think the sentiment is quite good: You'll understand why I say this after you've read it:

"Of all the books that I read with zest,
For one that is better than the best,
Give me the good old 'Nelson Lee!'
'Tis a fact (I think you'll all agree)
That if you're feeling worse than chronic,
And in dire need of a real good tonic,
There's nothing half so clean and pure,
Which at the same time is a perfect cure

For all your ills (this advice is free),
Than to 'up' and buy a 'Nelson Lee.'

In it you'll read of schoolboys true;
You'll soon forget that you felt blue
When you start to read of Handy's woes;
(He's always dotting someone's nose).
And when you meet the cheery Nipper
You'll realise why he is skipper.
Then up comes Archie with spotless shoes,
And wearing a suit of most violent hues.
And here is—— But wait and see——
You'll find them all in the 'Nelson Lee.'
"E.A."

I'm afraid the metre is just a trifle wobbly here and there, and it seems to me that our fair poet should have put a penny in the slot now and then.

OUR READERS' PORTRAIT GALLERY



James Clayton

* * *

LOTS of visitors to St. Frank's make the chaps wild by displaying a complete ignorance of the Fifth House. They all know, of course, that there are four—the Ancient House, the Modern House, the West House, and the East House. But these visitors—like C. A. Spencer, of Leicester—forget all about the School House. This isn't a boarding house, as I have repeatedly pointed out; but, in a way, this is the most important House at St. Frank's. It faces you as you turn in the gateway, and it's impossible to miss seeing the imposing clock tower. If we include the Head's house, which is tucked away on the farther side of Inner Court, we can truthfully say that there are six Houses at St. Frank's. It goes without saying

that the School House is the most unpopular building of all—as I have found out by making sundry inquiries—for it is in this House that we find the class-rooms and the lecture halls and the laboratories and everything else connected with work.

* * *

LEWELLYN REES, of the Sixth, who is a prefect in the West House, was somewhat bucked when I met him soon after he had received a letter from his pal, Morrow. Rees asked me if it's true that a Welsh junior is coming to St. Frank's. He's naturally interested, being Welsh himself. I assured him that Morgan Evans is already as good as in the Remove. He's the youngster who got imprisoned in a cave near Swansea recently. You remember, don't you? Handforth & Co. were very prominent in rescuing him. Evan's father was so pleased with the fellows that he now wants his son to go to the same school. But as the summer holidays are so near, I understand he's not joining St. Frank's until after the vacation.

EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

MORE STIRRING CHAPTERS OF THIS POPULAR SERIAL!

RIVALS of the RAMPANT!



By STANTON HOPE

Venom to the Rescue!

JACK turned sharply on hearing a voice, and saw Ginger wriggling up upon the damaged signal-bridge.

"You crazy ass!" yelled Jack in alarm. "Didn't I tell you to keep under cover?"

"Keep your wool on, raggie!" grinned Ginger. "The ten minutes are more'n up, and I wasn't a-goin' to stay down in that funk-hole any longer."

"Rot!" cried Jack; then suddenly raised his voice in a joyful yelp. "My aunt, look over there! I believe the flagship's making a signal in reply to mine—and, anyway, there's no more scrap-iron being flung about!"

The sun had burst from between the clouds, mottling with a silken sheen areas of the grey Channel, and from the flagship there flickered a bright light at irregular intervals. Flash—flash, flash—flash! The Terror was signalling by heliograph, a powerful glass that reflected the sun's rays, although neither of the boys aboard the target-ship knew the name of the apparatus.

Nor could they read the message being sent, for it was in Morse code, and, although being sent slowly as from the naval standpoint, was much too fast for either of them to read with their very limited knowledge of this signalling system.

For all that, it was a message of cheer, because they guessed it meant that the work-

ing arms of the mechanical semaphore aboard the Thunderous had been noticed.

"Aye, it's all serene!" whooped Ginger exultantly. "Here comes a T.B.D.!"

The ship he referred to was the torpedo-boat destroyer, fitted with the powerful wireless installation for controlling the target-ship, and she cut like a knife through the intervening miles of sea.

"Come on down, Ginger!" piped Jack. "We'll go and rouse Teak and tell Busky Smith!"

One after the other, they swung themselves nimbly from the broken signal-bridge and clambered down the super-structure of the shell-torn deck.

The decks and super-structure were riddled with holes like a pepper pot, and in some parts there were great rents in the steel, as though giant shears had torn through it. By means of the wireless, the ship had been stopped, and Jack and Ginger hoped that by the same means the oil-fuel sprays had been turned off in the boiler rooms. She had settled a little lower in the water, and there still remained the danger that her boilers might explode before the destroyer could get alongside to take them off.

Swiftly they dragged up the hatch cover and tumbled down the ladder.

"C'mon, you big, lubberly worm!" howled Ginger, applying his toe to Busky's stern-sheets. "Help us to get Teak on deck."

What is Jack Gilbert's rascally uncle—Lew Bonner—the one man who can ruin Jack's career, doing in Sandcliff, where the Regatta is being held? This is a heavy blow to the plucky lad of H.M.S. Rampant!

The petty-officer was still lying in the bunk with his eyes closed, and Busky was cringing on his knees on the deck.

"I—I'm ill!" groaned Busky. "I think it must ha' been the exposure in that open boat last night. I couldn't climb up there on deck if they told me now I could leave the Navy with a pension."

"Oh, pull yourself together, you big weed!" interposed Jack impatiently. "The shooting's stopped and there's a ship making for us at full speed."

The effect on Busky was remarkable. In an instant or two his appearance became changed from a dismal and pallid sufferer such as you see in newspaper advertisements labelled: "Before taking Pinkerton's Pale Pills," to a smiling and robust fellow of the type that bears the label, "After taking."

"I'll try and help," volunteered Busky, hauling himself upright. "Bad as I feel because of last night, I'll help get the P.O. up on deck, though it wouldn't have been fair to have taken him up if there was the slightest risk."

"You clew up your jaw tackle, you mean skate!" rasped Ginger, through his gritted teeth, "or you'll get one of me 'pusser's crabs' planted on you again!"

"Who are you a-threatenin', you carrot little shrimp?" rumbled Busky, throwing out his chest. "Wait'll I get you back in the Rampant!"

So abject had been his fear and misery before, that he seemed totally unaware that Ginger had already booted him. Once again, now that danger was past, he was the big, bouncing bully, who had thrown his weight about among the New Entries and Preliminaries in the naval schools.

Between the three of them, they got Petty-Officer Teak up the ladder and on to the open deck. He came out of his deep slumber, but was still dazed from the heavy thump he had received on the head.

"Hooray!" yelled Jack. "Here's the T.B.D. almost a-top of us!"

He and Ginger raced across the damaged deck, leaving Busky with Petty-Officer

Teak, who was propped against the hatch coaming.

And a fine sight the destroyer looked as she raced up with two great ostrich plumes of spray whipping away from her knife-like cutwater.

"Clangety-clang!" went the engine-room telegraph bell aboard her, and then, at slower speed, she swept round with the foam creaming in her wake. Again the bell clanged out and gruff orders were given; the engines reversed and set the water dancing like soapsuds all about her as she edged in toward the Thunderous.

On her hull she bore a white-painted letter and a number, and aft in brass lettering was the name "Venom." A small brow was shoved across to the target-ship, and a lieutenant and two or three ratings ran across.

"Great smoke!" exclaimed the officer, as the boys sprang erect and saluted. "How the blazes did you get aboard here?"

"We got adrift last night, sir," responded Jack. "But can we explain aboard the destroyer, 'cause this ship's leaking like a sieve and we've been thinking that the boilers are going up any minute!"

The officer communicated with the captain on the Venom's bridge, who bawled through a megaphone for a repair gang to go aboard.

What happened after the mechanics had gone below, Jack and his mates from the Rampant never fully learnt. Certainly the Thunderous had been holed badly, but the men did a patched-up job in her to stop the inrush of water until the vessel could be towed back to port for more extensive repairs.

Meantime, Jack, Ginger, Busky and the petty-officer were transferred to the Venom, and Commander Anstey, skipper of the destroyer, interviewed them on the quarter-deck.

The petty-officer, who had recovered somewhat, told how the motor-boat from the Firedart had got adrift in the mist while

HOW THE STORY STARTED:

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

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

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

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

GINGER JONES. One day the three lads, together with Petty-officer Teak, are sent out in a motor-boat to retrieve a torpedo. Another boat makes off with it, and Jack recognises one of the occupants as his rascally uncle. Just then a thick mist sweeps over the sea, and Jack and his companions lose their bearings. All night they drift; to make matters worse, P.O. Teak strikes his head on a gunwale and becomes unconscious. Then a warship looms up. Jack, Ginger, and Busky go aboard. Suddenly shells begin to burst around them, and Jack realises that they are on board a target ship, and that the Fleet is firing at it. The motor-boat is smashed, and Teak is brought aboard. Jack goes aloft to work the signalling apparatus. He sends out the one word "Banana," and then a shell explodes and damages the apparatus so that it is useless!

(Now read on.)

chasing a craft that had taken the practice torpedo in tow.

"I don't know much about what happened afterwards, sir," he said. "I took a fall in the boat before the Thunderous was boarded and got knocked out, and I only remember seeing this lad, Boy Clement Smith, looking after me when I came to."

The skipper turned to Busky, whose name had been mentioned.

"I only did what I felt to be my duty, sir," murmured the hypocritical Busky, with a squirm. "Someone had to look after the petty-officer and protect him."

The steel-grey eyes of Captain Anstey surveyed him closely.

"Boy Clement Smith!" he murmured. "You are the lad who beached the ferry at Porthaven?"

Busky swallowed.

"Y-yes, sir," he stammered.

Some of those standing near took his hesitancy for modesty, but Ginger Jones reddened and glanced sharply at Jack, who was standing by with impassive face.

"Then I suppose, my boy," said Captain Anstey, a twinkle of mirth showing on his weather-beaten face, "that you were the fellow who sent that strange message--'Banana'?"

The cad of the Rampant, who knew nothing about Jack's latest heroism, looked blankly at him.

"Me, sir?" he gulped. "I wouldn't do any such thing! I was looking after the P.O. here--"

"While my pal, Jack Gilbert, climbed up to the signal-bridge of the Thunderous, sir," put in Ginger proudly. "As plucky as they make 'em, he is!"

In simple words, Ginger went on to tell how they feared an explosion of the boilers aboard the Thunderous, and how Jack had braved the storm of shells for the sake of them all.

"You acted in the best traditions of the Service you have recently joined, my boy," said Captain Anstey to Jack, "and your shipmates should feel grateful to you. Now I must make a signal to the flagship explaining the affair."

While this was being done, the Venom stood by the target-ship waiting for temporary repairs to be finished to her hull. The signal was made, and a short while afterwards a cruiser detached itself from the Fleet, under orders to tow the Thunderous back to port.

The Venom proceeded to Porthaven, and there the three boys and the petty officer from the Rampant were landed with instructions to return to the schools.

Long before this it was generally known in the Rampant that the missing quartette had been rescued, because the Fleet flagship had wirelessly the news concerning them.

In their turn the boys and Teak learnt that the torpedo had been returned and a claim put in for the reward. The money, however, had not been paid over, and, after

the report which Petty Officer Teak made, it never was. With a certain interest, Jack heard that the return of the torpedo had been made by a man named Jem Gavin, and not by his own uncle, Lew Bonner, who had been one of the party in the motor-boat which had taken away the "fish" in defiance of the naval craft sent to retrieve it.

In spite of that happy escape from tearing death in the old target-ship, Jack felt very "down in the mouth" when all the excitement was over.

Previously he had been aware that his crooked uncle, Lew Bonner, was alive; now he had the disquieting knowledge that this man who could so easily ruin his new Navy career was actually living in or near Porthaven.

Hitherto, so far as he was aware, his uncle did not know he was in the Rampant. At any time there was the chance of his meeting him again and being recognised, and, knowing his dissolute uncle as he did, he was certain that Bonner would have no hesitation in "squealing" to the authorities about his former life in Brass Alley and in the reformatory school, facts which Jack himself had carefully concealed to get himself accepted in the Royal Navy.

To an extent he retained the feeling he had had in the Thunderous when the boilers threatened to explode under their feet at any moment. At any time Lew Bonner might appear again, and, out of vengeance, drop the bombshell of that former life in the reformatory which would bring about his immediate discharge from the Service he had grown to love.

The Team for the Regatta!

"**L**EAVE it to me!" boasted Busky Smith. "The other chaps in the swimming race won't see me for foam!"

It was three weeks since the episode of the Thunderous, and Busky was cock-a-hoop once more. To-day the juniors of the Rampant—the New Entries and Preliminaries—had leave to attend a regatta at Sandcliff, down the coast, where they were to meet in various aquatic events, rivals from a school of the "landlubberly" variety.

The event to which Busky Smith referred, as a number of the Navy boys were on their way by charabanc, was the hundred yards' swimming race.

Never in the history of the Sandcliff Regatta, during which H.M.S. Rampant met Sandcliff Towers, a local school, in a number of events, had this race ever been won by a Rampant boy. Winning points for the aquatic sports had always gone to Sandcliff Towers, except in the year before, when the rival establishments were level. It yet remained for the juniors of the Rampant to register their first victory over Sandcliff.

"Tar me, Busky," said Ginger Jones, eyeing the cad contemptuously, "if you could swim as well as you can talk, you'd look like a giddy torpedo slippin' through the

water! It wouldn't surprise me that Jack here licks you!"

"What's that?" hooted Busky. "You mean this weed, Jack Gilbert? Don't make me laugh, 'cause I cut my lip shaving yesterday."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared the boys.

This pet delusion of Busky that hair was beginning to grow upon his upper lip and chin was always good enough for a laugh.

Jack, and Ginger as well, were entered for the important hundred yards' swimming race, which was believed by Petty Officer Teak, who had charge of the party and was in the front seat of the charabanc, next to the driver, to be the key event of the pro-

There had been a Court of Inquiry about the episode of the target-ship, and Jack had been officially commended for a very gallant action in sending the semaphore signal. The newspapers had made mention of the affair, and, while mainly applauding him, had referred also to the calm courage of the others, including Clement Smith, "hero of the Porthaven ferry disaster."

As usual, Busky had thrown his weight about, and when, goaded beyond endurance, Ginger had hotly described him as a snivelling funk, the cad had calmly retorted that it was just what he had expected—trust a beastly little Cockney to stick up for a pal, no matter how many lies he had to tell to



The joy and laughter died on Jack's lips as he marched along the pier with the lads of the Rampant, and the shadow of a great fear came over his face. Approaching immediately in front of him was the one man who knew the secret of his former life—Lew Bonner, his uncle!

gramme, so far as the rival schools were concerned. Whichever side scored the heavier points in that event, he believed, would be the winner of this year's meeting.

Hitherto, Busky had shown himself the best swimmer among the Preliminaries in the swimming baths of the Rampant, but both Jack and Ginger as well had come on strongly of late.

Even during the three weeks since the Thunderous affair, a great change had come over young Jack Gilbert, so that he could hardly be recognised as the same boy who had joined up fresh from his life in the sordid surroundings of Brass Alley. In some respects his early days as a Preliminary had been among the happiest of his life.

do it! "Luckily," Busky had said, "he could afford to let Jack and Ginger tell all the beastly lies they liked; it would hurt them more than it would him."

And Busky got away with it! Whereas none of the boys liked him, they remembered the affair of the ferry and his reputed courage on that occasion. In fact, more than one said that they thought it was pretty rotten of Ginger to try and run down a chap who, on his own statement, had been looking after and protecting his petty officer.

However, if Busky's prestige remained about the same, Jack had certainly increased his. Even Barney Morland's solicitors had written to congratulate him, and in the end

it would be they who would decide whether the £2,000 left by the old man should go to him or his rival.

"It seems to me," growled Busky in surly mood, when the laughter occasioned by his remark about shaving had died down, "that there's two or three of you chaps who ought to have been included in the swimming team to meet Sandcliff Towers before Jack Gilbert and Ginger Jones. I don't want to say anything against the P.O. perched up there in front of the charabanc, but I thought, at the time he included these two chaps, that it was the worst bit of rotten favouritism I ever came across. If you can tell me anything more horrible, I'd like to know it."

"Well, your face when seen in that cheap magnifying shaving-mirror you bought," suggested Jack, with a grin.

Busky sat fuming among the laughing juniors.

"That's it, try and laugh it off, you low worm!" he blustered. "You're pretty good at sneaking into the favour of your betters, Jack Gilbert! Crumbs! It used to sicken me the way you sponged on my Uncle Barney and—"

"That's enough," interposed Jack, and there was the ring of steel in his voice. "Leave that name out of it. Pipe down!"

His rival read the danger signal in his eyes and the tone of his voice, and, while permitting himself a sneer, was wise enough to "clew up."

The charabanc, with its load of Navy boys, bowled along the coastal road, with a view spread out to port of the English Channel, placid and smiling in the bright sunshine. On the outskirts of Sandcliff was the school known as Sandcliff Towers, which took as boarders boys up to the age of sixteen years, and, in recent years, had constituted itself one of the chief sporting foes of the junior section of H.M.S. Rampant.

"It's a funny thing, mateys," remarked Ginger, as they passed within sight of the school, "that it costs the chaps no end to go to that school and, pink me, they're not so well off as we are who get ninepence a day!"

Actually, there was a deal of truth in what he said. In H.M.S. Rampant there were schoolmasters and a chaplain who instructed the boys in a variety of the usual school subjects. In addition, they were taught squad drill and something of rifle shooting, gunnery, seamanship, boat work, and signals. And Rampant was exceptionally well-found in the possession of a splendid parade ground, gym, swimming bath, playing fields, and open-air pool for sailing and boat-pulling exercises.

The grub was better if anything than that dished out in the expensive Sandcliff Towers, so all the boys selected to row and swim for the Rampant were fighting fit.

The pretty seaport of Sandcliff was gay with flags, and the bay to the west of the pier alive with boats of every description.

Jack, Ginger and the other boys in the charge of Petty-Officer Teak dismounted from the charabanc at the pier entrance and went on to the pier itself to watch the first events of the regatta in which they themselves had no part.

"I've got a feeling this is going to be a great day for the Rampant and for us, Jack!" exulted Ginger. "And what a celebration to-night in the canteen when we've lowered the colours of those uppity kids from the Towers!"

Jack, marching along the pier through the crowd with his mates, felt as though he were treading on air. What a difference this life from Brass Alley and the old days in the reformatory! He, too, had a feeling that this was to be a red-letter day—as indeed it was to be in more ways than one.

"Aye, Ginger," piped Jack, laughing in sheer joy of life, "we'll put a spike in the guns of Sandcliff Towers! We'll jolly well show 'em what the Navy can do and—"

And then the joy and laughter died on his lips, and the shadow of a great fear came over his face. Approaching immediately in front of him in company with another was the one man who knew the secret of his former life and had the power to make use of it—Lew Bonner, his uncle!

For Regatta Honours!

"O H, my aunt!"

The face of Boy Jack Gilbert, of H.M.S. Rampant, paled as he gasped out the remark and attempted to sidle behind his "raggie," Ginger Jones.

"What's up?" inquired Ginger, looking sharply at him.

Jack averted his head to avoid being seen by the man approaching among the throng on Sandcliff Pier.

"Oh, my aunt!" groaned Jack again. "It's my uncle!"

"Your uncle or your aunt?" queried Ginger. "I didn't know you had either, chum?"

From the corner of his eye, Jack saw the hateful face of Lew Bonner turn toward the squad of Rampant boys, under Petty-Officer Teak, who were marching out to the pier-end to take part in various regatta events. He glimpsed the man's expression change suddenly and a startled, inquiring look appeared in place of the mirthless smile. It was as though Lew Bonner was puzzled momentarily; he drew a hand across his eyes, screwed his neck round, and took another hard look at the Navy boys; then addressed some remark to the man who was with him.

"What the thump's the matter with you, raggie?" inquired Ginger. "Anyone would think you'd seen a giddy spook!"

He repeated his remark and gripped Jack's arm before his chum took any notice

of him. Then, looking straight ahead up toward the end of the pier, Jack responded in a voice dull and dead compared with that vibrant note of joy which had been in it when, a few minutes earlier, he had been discussing the coming aquatic contests against Sandcliff Towers' school with his pal.

"I have seen a spook, Ginger," he said wearily—"one that's haunted me ever since the first day I drifted aboard the Rampant. My hat! I'd give anything to know if I was recognised; this suspense is getting me down!"

Busky Smith and the other fellows who had come over from Porthaven to meet the Sandcliff schoolboys were talking eagerly together and taking no notice of the two "raggies."

"Can't you trust me yet, Jack, old man?" queried Ginger, a trifle reproachfully. "I spotted long since that there was somethin' between you and that rotter, Busky Smith, that you've never let on about. What's this here other secret that's biting you?"

Jack hesitated and, for the first time, glanced back to ascertain that his dissolute uncle had been lost in the crowd.

"Get it off your chest, old son!" Ginger urged. "Pink me, I don't want to pry into your affairs, but I was thinking that for your own sake you might find it 'ud make things easier."

Hitherto, Jack had kept the secret of his

earlier life locked within his own heart, but now, as never before, he felt the need of a confidant. Well, he knew he could trust the little Cockney, who in those early days as a New Entry had proved his loyal and faithful chum.

In undertones, as they marched along the pier in rear of the others of the Rampant party, he told Ginger of those dead days he had tried to bury for ever—the days when he had lived with his uncle and guardian, the despicable Lew Bonner, in Brass Alley. He told how Bonner had tried to bring him up to help in his burglarious exploits, and how, when he had been too young to understand the real meaning of the life into which he had drifted, he had been plucked out of Bonner's hands by the police and side-tracked into a reformatory. No doubt, the authorities had meant it for the best, but the reformatory years galled Jack's soul as much as the sordid existence in Brass Alley itself.

In spite of the bright sunshine, the waving flags, the laughter of the holiday crowd, there was a depth of sadness in Jack's voice and moisture in the eyes of little Ginger. The red-haired boy himself also had early tasted the iron of life, and he felt closer drawn than ever to Jack in a bond of sympathy.

"My one great pal," concluded Jack, "was dear old Barney Morland, the uncle of

(Continued on next page.)

DEADWOOD DICK and the DEADWOOD COACH!

Did you know the great Deadwood Dick is reported still to be living? You know the "inside" story of the old Deadwood Coach? There never has been a vehicle with a history more vivid than that of the famous gold-dust carrying stage coach that ran the gauntlet of bandits in the Wild West! Read Buck McClintoch's story in this week's



Buck McClintoch,
who writes in
"Modern Boy"
this week.

MODERN BOY

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(Continued from previous page.)

that chap Busky Smith. He was a second father to me, and many a time made me think things were worth while after all when I felt so beastly down in the dumps that I could have chucked my hand in. Aye, it was dear old Barney who first got me keen about the Navy and taught me swimming in the Thameside Road baths. But when I came to Porthaven I thought I'd done with Uncle Lew for ever, and now once more he's turned up, and a word from him about that reformatory would scupper me completely so far's the Navy's concerned. As you know, Ginger, they don't have chaps out of the reformatory in the Service."

Ginger forced a smile.

"Seems to me, raggie," he said, to cheer up his chum, "you're taking things a bit for granted. In the first place, it's a cert your blessed uncle didn't recognise you, or else he'd have come across to you. Even if he had, he probably wouldn't give you away. In the Navy they wouldn't take any notice of one of those what-you-may-call-'em letters—unsigned things, you know—and the beastly crook for his own sake wouldn't dare to come into the open. Forget him, raggie! I've got a feeling that Uncle Lew's gone for good this time, and you can set your mind to lickin' the cheeky kids of Sandcliff Towers in the water sports this afternoon—which is somethin' a jolly sight more important."

Greatly cheered, Jack followed the excellent advice and put his uncle to the back-ground of his mind. From the end of the pier, he and the other Rampant boys watched some of the yacht racing and various sports open to the Sandcliff holiday-makers.

Then, while a band of the Royal Marines at the pier-head broke into the exuberant strains of "A Life On The Ocean Wave," the young bluejackets trooped down some steps and into a Rampant cutter which had been towed over by a naval picket-boat that morning.

Petty Officer Teak took the tiller, and the lads pulled away for their first encounter with their rivals of Sandcliff Towers!

The cutter race proved keenly fought, and, to a thunder of cheers from the spectators on the pier, and in a long lane of boats, the young sailors came away to win from a stalwart crew of the Sandcliff schoolboys.

This counted four points, and the Rampant lads were right on their mettle after this encouraging start. In the relay swimming race, neither Jack, Ginger, nor Busky took any part, and it was fought out between four other Rampant boys and four fellows from the Towers. This race was won by the "landlubbers," and the points were even on the two events.

In all there were five events, and the cock-fighting on rafts provided another set-back for the Navy lads.

In this, Busky, the beefiest of the bunch who took part, reached the final, only to be

defeated by Teddy Roscoe, crack athlete and swimmer of the rival school.

Now the Towers was ahead by four points, but Ginger won the diving competition and so gained four points for the Navy. In this event, however, two points were awarded to the runner-up, and, as this was a Sandcliff boy, the total scores now stood eight points to the Rampant, and ten to the local school. In the last event—the 100 yards' swim—four points would be awarded to the winner, and two for second place. Thus Rampant must win and gain second place as well to top the Sandcliff total for the series; to win the swimming race and let a Sandcliff boy finish second would mean that the total points would be level.

All then depended on the final event of the water-sports between the Rampant and Sandcliff School!

The Fifth Event!

BY this time the excitement was intense everywhere, for the annual rivalry between the naval school of Porthaven and the local establishment "for the sons of gentlemen" had "caught on" with the holiday-makers. Local residents, of course, sided with Sandcliff, and the naval and Marine ratings who had come over to Sandcliff for the afternoon yelled for the boys in the blue-ribbed vests. Holiday-makers, too, took sides and yelled as lustily as the rest.

The hulk of an old schooner anchored in Sandcliff Bay was used as a dressing-room for the boys, and would also be the starting-point for the 100 yards' swim with which the programme of five events would be wound up.

Cheer upon cheer rent the air as six Navy boys, including Jack, Ginger and Busky, and half a dozen Sandcliff lads, led by the redoubtable Teddy Roscoe, trooped up on deck for the start of the all important swimming race.

The old hulk was minus rails, and the dozen stalwart lads lined the edge of the deck ready for the take-off. It was to be a scratch race, and the regatta official who acted as starter gave them brief instructions.

"I shall say 'Are you ready?' my lads," he advised, "and then fire a pistol shot."

A confident smile flickered at Busky's lips, but most of the others looked a trifle nervous, realising the issue at stake. All crouched, quivering and eager as water-spaniels, their eyes upon the sparkling blue of the sea. They stood alternately, a boy from the Rampant, then a junior from Sandcliff Towers, and so on. The former had navy-blue swimming costumes, and the latter smart, white-topped costumes, bearing the Towers' crest in crimson on the left side of the chest. Then—

"Are you ready?" demanded the starter. There was a breathless moment, followed by a stunning report.

Crack!

A dozen lithe young bodies leaped outward from the deck of the old hulk like torpedoes

from a battery of tubes. A simultaneous splash marked their clean-cut entry into the sea, and then the blue water was churned into foam as the swimmers tore along toward the large raft, a hundred yards distant, occupied by the judges, Petty-officer Teak and two or three others.

"C'mon, Rampant!" bawled Teak. "Full steam ahead, and steer a straight course!"

In the first fifteen yards, Teddy Roscoe slashed his way into the lead, and the school supporters howled their exultation upon the sea-breeze.

From among a welter of foam, Jack glimpsed the Sandeliff crack forge to the front, and burying his face deeper in the sea, he flailed his arms and drove his feet like a gunboat's propeller in hot pursuit of him.

"Come away with it, Jack Gilbert!" roared Teak. "Shiver me, he's got the land-lubbers cold!"

"Jack! Jack!" howled a number of blue-jackets and Marines, catching up the name. "Oh, stick it, matey!"

Nor were the Sandeliff juniors among the regatta throng any the less ardent in support of their own champion.

"Keep it going, Teddy!"

"What are you resting for?"

"My giddy aunt, he's coming away with it again!"

At fifty yards, Jack was leading with Busky, who had steered a bad course, on his left and a trifle behind, and to the right of him Teddy Roscoe and Ginger Jones were swimming level and rather more to the rear.

"Fine work, Jack Gilbert!" bellowed Teak from the raft ahead. "Come along with him, Boy Busky Smith!"

The naval ratings among the regatta crowd yelled the names in chorus.

"Good old Jack!"

"Busky! Busky!"

His nickname, exuberantly hurled upon the sea-air, was heard by Busky above the vicious splash of swiftly-moving hands and feet in the water about him. There flashed through his mind the terms of Uncle Barney's will—how that sport, beside other things, was to be taken into account in the final decision as to whether he or Jack Gilbert received the legacy. What a feather in his cap to lick his rival here, in this, the most important water-event of the year!

Not a jot cared Busky about the fellows of his rival school; it was Jack—Jack Gilbert he was out to lick! At all costs he must win!

Strive as he might, though, he could not get on terms with his personal rival, who, using a powerful crawl stroke, was swimming as he had never done before!

Twenty-five yards to go!

The yelling of the regatta crowd beat in Busky's ears like summer thunder. His mind seethed with a fierce hatred of Jack as his own most desperate efforts failed to bring him level. And then, in a sudden furore of rage, he swung yet more over to the right, out of his course, and, as though by accident,

(Continued on page 44.)



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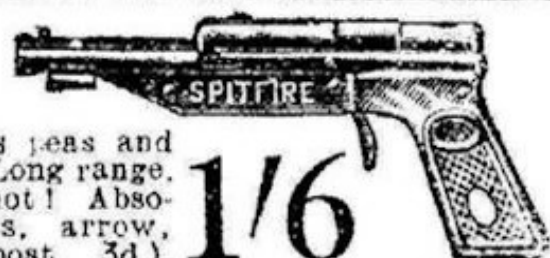
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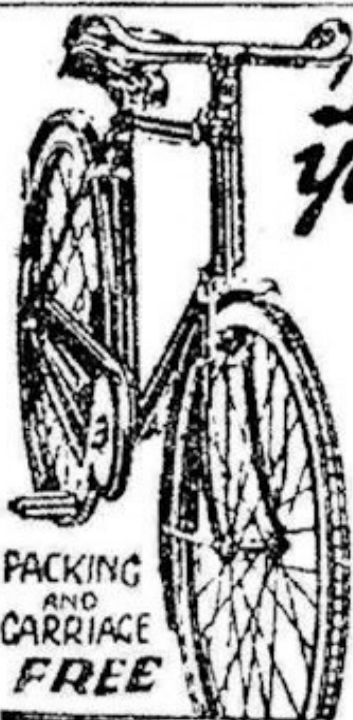
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All applications for Advertisements spaces in this publication should be addressed to the Advertisement Manager, "The Nelson Lee Library," The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street London, E.C.4.

HOW TO JOIN THE LEAGUE

ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE APPLICATION FORM No. 107.

SECTION

A

READER'S APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP.

I desire to become enrolled as a Member of THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE, and to qualify for all such benefits and privileges as are offered to Members of the League. I hereby declare that I have introduced "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY" and THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE to one new reader, whose signature to certify this appears on second form attached hereto. Will you, therefore, kindly forward me Certificate of Enrolment with the Membership Number assigned to me, and Membership Badge.

SECTION

B

MEMBER'S APPLICATION FOR MEDAL AWARDS.

I, Member No..... (give Membership No.), hereby declare that I have introduced one more new reader, whose signature to certify this appears on second form attached hereto. This makes me (state number of introductions up to date) introductions to my credit.

SECTION

C

NEW READER'S DECLARATION.

I hereby declare that I have been introduced by (give name of Introducer) to this issue of "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY."

(FULL NAME).....

(ADDRESS).....

INSTRUCTIONS.

INSTRUCTIONS.—Reader Applying for Membership. Cut out TWO complete Application Forms from Two copies of this week's issue of THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY. On one of the forms leave in Section A, crossing out Sections B and C. Then write clearly your full name and address at bottom of form. The second form is for your new reader, who fills in Section C, crosses out Sections A and B, and writes his name and address at bottom of form. Both forms are then pinned together, and sent to the Chief Officer, The St. Frank's League, c/o THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4.

Member Applying for Bronze Medal: It will be necessary for you to obtain six new readers for this award. For each new reader TWO complete forms, bearing the same number, are needed. On one of the forms fill in Section B, crossing out Sections A and C, and write your name and address at bottom of form. The other form is for your new reader, who fills in Section C, crosses out Sections A and B, and writes his

name and address at the bottom of the form. Now pin both forms together and send them to the Chief Officer, as above. One new reader will then be registered against your name, and when six new readers have been registered, you will be sent the St. Frank's League bronze medal. There is nothing to prevent you from sending in forms for two or more new readers at once, providing that each pair of forms bears the same date and number.

Bronze medallists wishing to qualify for the silver medals can apply in the same way as for the bronze medal, filling in Section B. Every introduction they make will be credited to them, so that when they have secured the requisite number of readers they can exchange their bronze medal for a silver one.

These Application Forms can be posted for $\frac{1}{2}$ d., providing the envelope is not sealed and no letter is enclosed.

A FEW OF THE ADVANTAGES OF JOINING THE LEAGUE.

You can write to fellow members living at home or in the most distant outposts of the Empire.

You are offered free advice on choosing a trade or calling, and on emigration to the colonies and dependencies.

If you want to form a sports or social club, you can do so amongst local members of the League.

You are offered free hints on holidays, whether walking, biking, or camping.

You can qualify for the various awards by promoting the growth of the League.

If you want help or information on any subject, you will find the Chief Officer ever ready to assist you.

NOTICE.

The St. Frank's League has now attained such proportions that we are compelled to discontinue the offer of gold medals in connection therewith. The silver and bronze medals will still be available, however, as heretofore, to those who qualify for them in accordance with the rules.

The ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE CORNER!



*The Chief Officer Chats
with his Chums.*

*Here's his address if you want to
write to him: The Chief Officer, The
Nelson Lee Library, Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.*

Concerning Cricket!

CRICKET secretaries, forward!
That is to say, those cricket secre-
taries living in the West London
area.

I have had a letter from H. Dunsford, who is secretary of the Bedford Cricket Club. This club has embarked upon its first season, and the enterprising secretary is all out to make it a really successful season with a full fixture list. The age of its members varies between fifteen and sixteen; home and away matches are required.

How about it, you chaps? There must be umpteen clubs in this district who want fixtures, and here's an excellent chance to fill in those gaps in the fixture list. Secretaries interested should write to H. Dunsford, 5, Shirley Road, London, W.4.

They can be assured of an enjoyable game—and also they'll have the opportunity of meeting some fellow Nelson-Lecites!

For Cyclists!

Cycling enthusiasts in North London will be pleased to learn that A. H. Porter, himself a keen cyclist and reader of the Old

Paper, hopes to form a cycling club in his district. Will all of you who are interested please write to him, as soon as possible, at 130, Myddleton Road, Bowes Park, N.22?

A Live Wire Club!

Charles R. Watson, who receives a prize as the sender of this week's winning letter, tells me that the English and Colonial Correspondence Club, of which he is the energetic secretary, is going great guns. Only a few months back a notice appeared in the Old Paper concerning this club, and apparently the response made by readers was "wonderful," as my correspondent puts it. The membership was almost doubled, and now numbers nearly a hundred.

Jolly good going, that! But Charles R. Watson is not content with nearly a hundred. He wants

to see the membership increased to over a hundred, and then to run into hundreds.

Readers who are contemplating joining a live wire correspondence club should drop a line now to Charles R. Watson, 61, Clarence Road, London, E.16. He will be only too pleased to send you full particulars of membership, etc.

THE CHIEF OFFICER.

THIS WEEK'S WINNING LETTER

"DEAR EDITOR.—I suppose there are still a few people who say that the N.L.L. does its youthful readers harm. Just ask these people to communicate with me and I will prove to them that they're wrong! The president of my club, the English and Colonial Correspondence Club (of which I am secretary) is Major Jackson, who has been connected with charitable institutions and young men's clubs for over forty years. Before he became president he wanted to know if the club was a bona fide one, and asked if it had its own official organ. I told him that we had a small magazine and that I tried to get the members to buy the NELSON LEE every week. I showed him a copy of the Old Paper, and he immediately condemned it as "silly, idiotic trash!" Well, of course, I wasn't standing for that, and I got him to promise me that he would read a copy. On the following day, when my chum and I called upon him, we were told that he really oughtn't to be disturbed. We found him sitting in an easy chair reading—and enjoying—the NELSON LEE LIBRARY! As he is now secretary of a big hospital in the East End, he told me he was ordering about two dozen N.L.'s each week to be delivered in the men's ward!

Your devoted reader,

(Signed) "CHARLES R. WATSON."

(For this letter, Charles R. Watson, of London, will receive a useful leather pocket wallet)

All members of the St. Frank's League are invited to send to the Chief Officer letters of interest concerning the League. The most interesting will be published week by week, and the senders will receive pocket wallets or penknives. If you don't belong to the League fill in the entry form which appears on the opposite page and become a member immediately.

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED

Jack Nelson, 48, Uphill Park Road, Weston-super-Mare, has N.L.L.'s for sale, 51-96, new series, also 4,000 cigarette cards and a model railway, gauge "0."

Wm. Kitchen, 33, South Avenue, Buxton, Derbyshire, would like to correspond with readers about sports; he wants to hear, too, from readers in Japan and China.

F. A. Jiggins, Rayne, Nr. Braintree, Essex, offers N.L.L. new series from No. 50.

F. Clark, 61, Church Street, St. Peter's, Broadstairs, Kent, has N.L.L. from No. 41 old series to date.

Joseph Levens, 103, Chester Street, Brampton, Chesterfield, Derbyshire, offers N.L.L. new series.

Frank R. Dayman, 10, Ellesmere Avenue, Miramar, Wellington, New Zealand, wants to hear from readers in England interested in rugger and the Australian tour; also with photographic hobbyists, and postcard collectors.

Philip W. Evans, 14, Foden Street, Walsall, Staffs, has N.L.L. new series. On offer.

S. Roy Newton, 64, Paterson Road, Norwich, wants readers to join his correspondence club; he intends to establish branches in Egypt and China.

G. A. Kent, Burseeden Bridge, Southampton, offers N.L.L. old series.

W. Snowden, 6, Coopers Terrace, Christ Church Road, Doncaster, wants correspondents anywhere.

R. W. Spears, Woodbury, Fairview Way, Edgware, Middlesex, wants to hear from coin collectors.

Jack Burgoyne, Jun., 108, Heald Grove, Rusholme, Manchester, wants back numbers of the N.L.L. old series.

Arthur Roberts, 35, Westmoreland Street, Crosshill, Glasgow, has N.L.L. old and new series, for sale.

J. Dodd, 12, Bright Street, Crewe, wants Schoolboy Magician series; also wishes for a correspondent in India.

RIVALS OF THE RAMPANT!

(Continued from page 41.)

slammed his right arm down over one of Jack's kicking legs.

Immediately Jack emitted a gurgle of distress, and half a pint of the English Channel cataracted down his throat. For a brief moment the propeller-like movements of his feet ceased, and then he got into vigorous action again.

As he lashed his way forward, kicking vigorously, one of his heels smote hard against some more or less solid object. It was Busky's nose!

"Ouch!" gulped the ead, and imbibed deeply of the salty sea.

It had all happened in a second and a fraction, but time enough for both Ginger Jones and Teddy Roscoe to tear their way into the lead.

"The clumsy lubber!" hooted Petty-officer Teak, dancing with chagrin on the raft. "Fairly sunk our chances he has—the big lobster!"

At first it looked as though Ginger might win and Teddy Roscoe take second place. But Ginger happened to glance round and see Busky get that belt on the nose from Jack's heel, and suddenly laughing, reduced the quantity of water in Sandeliff Bay by yet another half-pint! As a result, Teddy Roscoe, the schoolboy crack, shot into the lead.

The Rampant task seemed hopeless. To win they would have to take both first and second places, and there was a strong possibility that they would not get either because another Sandeliff boy was practically on terms with Jack a little behind the leaders.

Digging his face deep into the water, Jack held his breath and tore through the water in a final do-or-die spurt, his feet churning up a white wake astern of him!

(Will Jack be able to pull off a sensational victory in spite of Busky's fouling tactics? See next week's gripping installment, *chums!*)

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