



BILLY BUNTER'S MASTERSTROKE!

THE FIRST CHAPTER

RIVER PIRATES!

"A DINGHY from the boat-house——"

"Good!"

"A dip when we get up river——"

"Hear, hear!"

"Then a picnic on Popper's Island to wind up the afternoon," said Harry Wharton of the Greyfriars Remove. "How does that fit in?"

"Fine!"

"Just the right weather for it!"

"I say, you fellows——"

A fat face adorned by a large pair of spectacles showed itself round the door of Study No. 1, where the Famous Five had assembled, and a groan went up from the chums of the Remove.

By FRANK RICHARDS

When Billy Bunter, the fat and fatuous tuck-raider of Greyfriars, was guest of honour at a feed!

"I knew it couldn't happen!" remarked Bob Cherry. "For a moment, I thought we'd used the word 'picnic' without Bunter hearing; but I knew it was impossible, really!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beasts!" sniffed Bunter; then, in an altered tone, he went on: "Look here, if you chaps want someone to see you through over this picnic, then I'm your man!"

"Thanks; but we don't!"

"If you want someone to carry the tuck hamper or help with the rowing, or do the cooking when you get to Popper's Island——"

"Not a chance, old fat bean!"

"Ready, everybody?" asked Wharton.

"Ready, aye, ready!"

"Give me a hand with this hamper, then, Franky. Stand clear, Bunter!"

"Certainly, old chap!" said Bunter, obligingly. "Then it's settled that I'm coming?"

"You can come if you can keep up with us, old Barrel," said Bob Cherry, closing one eye at the rest of the Co. "We're rather in a hurry, though."

Bunter grinned.

"If it's a question of putting a jerk into it, I fancy I can give you fellows one or two pointers. I can hurry all right!"

"Good! This way, old bean! Take his other arm, Johnny!"

"Pleasure!" grinned Johnny Bull. "Kim on, Fatty!"

"I'll show you men how to walk!" smiled Bunter. "When it comes to walking, I pride myself on—whooop! Wharrer you doing?"

It seemed to Bunter that an earthquake, a cyclone and a hurricane all rolled into one had suddenly struck him. All the pride he might previously have felt in his powers of walking vanished in one fell swoop as Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull rushed him out of Study No. 1. He yelled as they rushed through the doorway, puffed as they rushed him down the stairs and panted painfully as they rushed him out into the quad. By the time they had reached the gates, it seemed to Bunter that the last gasp of air had been bumped out of his fat carcase.

He collapsed on the grass patch outside Gosling's lodge, moaning feebly. Bob Cherry looked down on his prostrate body apparently in great surprise.

"Hurry up, Bunty, old bean. We haven't started yet, you know!"

"Beast!" moaned Bunter.

"Thought you said you were a walker," Bob remarked. "Why, you've dropped out just as we were getting into our strides!"

"Here are Wharton and Nugent," grinned Johnny Bull. "Coming, Bunter?"

"Ow! Beast!"

"That's his way of saying 'no thanks'!" chuckled Harry Wharton.

"This way, kids!"

"Good-bye, Bunter!"

"Race you down to the boathouse, Fatty!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But Bunter made no response. For once in his loquacious life, Bunter found it literally beyond him to utter a syllable!

And the Famous Five went their way rejoicing.

"And that's that!" said Frank Nugent, as they walked down the leafy lane leading to the school boathouse. "With Bunter out of it, the day ought to be a great success. Just right for a swim, anyway!"

"The rightfulness is terrific," smiled Hurree Singh, in his own peculiar brand of English. "The heat joyfully reminds me of a mid-winter's day in my native Bhanipur!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

They came in sight of the boathouse, and Bob Cherry pointed through the trees to a small motor-launch that was speeding along through the glistening waters of the Sark.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Pon's doing the grand!" he remarked.

"Rowing's too much like work for his nibs," growled Johnny Bull, with a look of disfavour at the elegant Ponsonby and his followers from Highcliffe who occupied the motor-launch. "I suppose the rotters are going up-river for one of their little gambling afternoons."



By the time Bob Cherry and Johnny Bull had rushed Bunter down to the gates, it seemed to the Owl that the last gasp of air had been bumped out of his fat carcase. He collapsed on the grass, gasping feebly. "Hurry up, Bunt, old bean!" said Bob Cherry. "We haven't started yet."

"In that boat they'll travel a lot farther than us, so we're not likely to run into them," said Wharton thankfully. "Here's the dinghy, chaps!"

The Famous Five climbed down into the roomy dinghy they had reserved for the afternoon, feeling rather relieved at the thought that the unsavoury presence of Pon and his friends was not likely to mar their excursion.

As things turned out, however, Wharton's prognostication proved to be far from correct. Though the Famous Five reached Pepper's Island without a further sight of the Highcliffe juniors, they were destined to see quite a lot of them before the

afternoon was over—much more than they wanted to see, in fact.

Reaching the Island, they moored their boat to the bank, deposited their picnic hamper in a place of safety under the trees, then changed into bathing kit and had their promised swim.

It was a hot July day and the cool waters of the Sark proved more than usually attractive. The result was that the Famous Five stayed in much longer than was usually the case and swam a considerable distance from the Island.

It was when they were returning that Bob Cherry, well ahead of the rest, gave a sudden shout.

"Highcliffe cads! Hurry up!"

"What the dickens——"

"They're on the Island, raiding our tuck!" panted Bob Cherry, as he struck out again. "Must have landed on the other side! Hurry!"

"Oh, my hat!"

The chums of the Remove needed no second bidding. Five lithe bodies fairly streaked towards the Island.

Meanwhile, on the rising ground over the spot where the Famous Five had moored their dinghy, Ponsonby, Vavasour, Gadsby and Monson of Highcliffe watched the efforts of the swimmers with mocking smiles on their faces.

THE SECOND CHAPTER

TURNING THE TABLES!

"WELCOME!"

The greeting was Ponsonby's. The leader of the Highcliffe black-sheep seemed to be pleased with himself. He was standing at the water's edge waiting for the swimmers to arrive. For unknown reasons, he carried in his right hand a coil of rope with a big loop at the end of it; and, strangely enough, the other members of his party were similarly equipped.

"Welcome!" called out Ponsonby again as the Famous Five drew nearer. "Always a pleasure to meet our young friends, isn't it, you men?"

"Oh, rather!"

"After all, they can't help their faces," drawled Vavasour. "And their bad manners are hardly their own fault, since they've been brought up in a casual ward like Greyfriars!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Highcliffians were evidently in fine fettle. The Famous Five couldn't help wondering why, for the prospect of a fight usually had the reverse of a stimulating effect on Pon & Co.

They soon learned.

As they entered shallow water and started scrambling to their feet, Ponsonby & Co. sprang into sudden activity. Four lengths of rope were raised and flung outwards, uncoiling in the air as they went, and four looped ends descended over the shoulders of Wharton, Nugent, Cherry and Bull respectively.

Wharton uttered a shout.

"Slip 'em before they pull, or——"

But the warning was already too late. Pon & Co., having successfully lassoed their old rivals, were tugging at their ends of the ropes with vicious force. The ropes tightened sharply around their victims, and in a matter of seconds Wharton and Cherry and Nugent and Bull were being dragged willy-nilly out of the water, their arms in each case pinned to their sides! Too late, the Famous Five realised that Pon & Co. must have been preparing this little surprise for some time. The skill with which they had wielded their ropes was a sure indication that they had had considerable practice in the art of lassoing prior to "springing" it on the Greyfriars picnickers.

Hurree Singh, the only member of the Co. to escape, came splashing out of the water, his eyes gleaming with the light of battle. But the Highcliffians were prepared to deal with the odd man of the party—in their own inimitable way. As the dusky nabob reached terra firma and made a rush at Ponsonby, Vavasour jumped forward suddenly and put his foot out, tripping him up. Hurree Singh pitched forward helplessly, and a second later Ponsonby and Gadsby were bending over him, knotting his hands and feet together with the ends of their rope.

The battle was not altogether over

yet, for the lassoed juniors still had the use of their legs, and once on land they struggled desperately to get loose. But the dice were loaded against them now, and, struggle as they might, they could not avert defeat. Soon they were lying on the grass, trussed up like chickens, with the victorious Highcliffians grinning down on them in great glee.

"Neat job, what?" remarked Pon, quite proudly. "Hope you're nice and comfy, Wharton?"

"You—you——"

"'Fraid we can't spare time to stay and dry you," said Pon, regretfully. "Still, if you all move together, you'll be able to shuffle along to that patch of sunshine. The water will simply steam off you then, I fancy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"An' now for the hamper!" grinned Pon. "Give me a hand, Vav., will you? Gad! It's heavy!"

Vav. gave his leader a hand with pleasure and the helpless Greyfriars juniors had the mortification of watching their picnic hamper carried off through the trees to the Highcliffians' motor launch.

The Famous Five looked at each other ruefully when their captors had gone.

"Well, this is a go!" remarked Bob Cherry. "Dunno how you chaps are placed, but I feel as if it'll take two or three hours at least to get out of this little lot!"

"Same here!"

"The samefulness is terrific!"

"If only we could spot a Greyfriars man," sighed Wharton; then he stopped, with a gasp.

As if in answer to his wish, a fat figure emerged from a clump of bushes near the juniors and the unmistakable snigger of William George

Bunter of the Greyfriars Remove sounded across the intervening distance.

"Bunter!" gasped Frank Nugent.

"He, he, he!"

"Bunter! Dear old, splendid old Bunter!" almost wept Bob Cherry. "I didn't think it was possible to enjoy the sight of Bunter, but this jolly well proves that it is!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Hurry up, old fat man, and cut us loose before these Highcliffe bounders get away!" said Wharton.

Bunter rolled over, opening a pocket knife as he did so.

"He, he, he! I say, you fellows, you can always rely on me to get you out of a jam, you know! I followed you up on the towpath and punted across from the bank opposite and——"

"Hurry, you chump! And not so much noise, or Pon and the rest'll hear you!"

"Oh, crikey! I—I say, you fellows, did you hear something rustling back there? D—do you think it may be——"

"Hurry, you fat freak!" shouted Wharton, throwing caution to the winds as the rustling sound grew louder, indicating without a doubt that Pon & Co. had heard Bunter and were returning at the double. "If you don't slash this rope, I'll——"

"Collar him!" rang out a voice from the rear. An instant later, the Highcliffians burst into view and made a dash for the panicky Porpoise.

Bunter made a desperate effort to cut Wharton loose, but fear made his hand unsteady and he only succeeded in giving the Remove leader a jab in the wrist which drew a fiendish howl from him.

A moment later, Pon & Co. were upon him, and Bunter was being

pummelled and bumped and rolled over, as a preliminary to being tied up like the rest!

"There!" panted Ponsonby, having superintended these proceedings and seen that his followers had made a good job of it. "Just as well I happened to hear this prize porker's grunts in time! Rub his face in that mud pool, Vav., just to teach him not to run up against us again!"

"Pleasure, dear man!" smiled Vav.

"Look here, you beast——"

"Over this way, Fatty!"

The grinning Vav. seized Bunter by the scruff of the neck and made to turn him over with a view to carrying out Pon's order.

But before he could do so, an interruption came—an interruption of a totally unexpected kind.

"Vavasour—boy! What in the world are you doing?"

It was the voice of Dr. Voysey, the headmaster of Highcliffe!

"The Head!" gasped the startled Highcliffians.

Vavasour dropped Bunter as though he had suddenly become red-hot.

"I have been watching your movements for the last five minutes," came Dr. Voysey's voice, apparently from the river bank opposite Popper's Island. "I am amazed that Highcliffe boys should lend themselves to such acts of hooliganism as I have witnessed. Release those boys at once and return to the school immediately!"

"Interferin' old pig!" said Pon, between his set teeth.

"You hear me, Ponsonby?"

"Oh! Yes, sir!"

"At once, I say!"

"Better get a move on!" said Vavasour, anxiously. "The old hunk sounds ratty!"

There was nothing else for Pon & Co. to do. Dr. Voysey of Highcliffe was not exactly an awe-inspiring headmaster, and Pon & Co. took a good many liberties with him at times; but he had been known to "cut up rough" on occasions, and Pon & Co. were not prepared to encourage him to do so now. Reluctantly, they produced pocket-knives and set about releasing their grinning prisoners.

"Now return to Highcliffe and await me in my study!" rapped out the seemingly irate Dr. Voysey. "I intend to punish you very severely for this outrageous conduct!"

"Oh, gad!"

"Which only goes to prove that even Beaks have their uses at times," said Bob Cherry, sotto voce. "Cheer up, you chaps! You all need hardening, and a whacking all round ought to help quite a lot!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Pon & Co. tramped off to their launch with feelings that were too deep for words. If looks could have killed, the Greyfriars juniors would all have expired then and there. Fortunately, they survived the homicidal expressions of the Highcliffians without any difficulty!

Pon & Co's footsteps died away and the Famous Five, who were still wet from their dip in the Sark, looked around for their towels.

"So much for that!" commented Johnny Bull. "The only drawback I can see is that old Voysey came along before Vavasour had time to rub Bunter's face in the mud!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Beast!" snorted Bunter. "If that's all the gratitude you've got for a chap, Bull, I'll take jolly good care not to go to all this trouble to rescue you another time!"

"Eh?"

"Rescue us?" grinned Bob Cherry. "Why, you fat duffer, you muffed it completely and got into exactly the same mess as the rest of us! If it hadn't been for the Head coming along just then——"

"He, he he!"

"What's the joke, Bunty?"

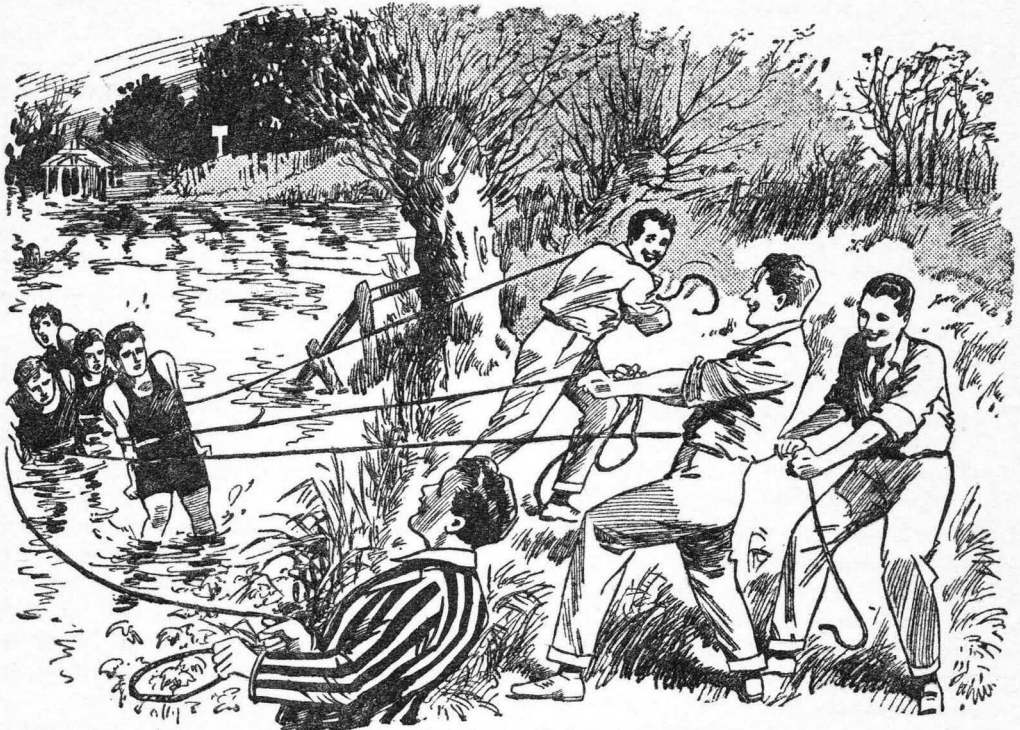
"He, he he! Nothing much—only that their Head didn't come along at all!"

"Great pip!"

"So that's it, is it?" shouted Johnny Bull. "But the fathead's calmly spoiling the joke by allowing those rotters to get away!"

"Oh, my hat! And that's not the only thing!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Come to think about it, they're making a getaway with our picnic hamper!"

"After them!" Wharton said.



Pon & Co., having successfully lassoed four of the Famous Five, tugged at the ropes with vicious force, and, willy-nilly, their prisoners were dragged out of the water. Too late the Greyfriars juniors realised that their rivals had been preparing this surprise for them!

"What the thump——"

"Oh, my sainted aunt!" gasped Wharton, suddenly. "Why didn't we think of it before? Of course it wasn't Dr. Voysey! It was Bunter!"

"Bunter?"

"My hat! Of course!" grinned Nugent. "Bunter doing a spot of ventriloquism!"

"If you fellows'll stop to listen——" began Bunter.

But the Famous Five had no time to stop to listen to Bunter. Without waiting to finish their towelling operations, they tore across Pepper's Island on the track of their late captors!

THE THIRD CHAPTER

THANKS TO BUNTER!

"Too late!"

Johnny Bull uttered the words disgustedly, as they reached the other side of the Island. They had arrived just in time to see Ponsonby's motor-launch moving away from the place where it had been moored. It was gathering speed as it went and the chums of the Remove could see at a glance that they could never hope to reach it by swimming after it.

"There she goes—with our tuck aboard!" groaned Nugent. "Looks like Pon's win, after all!"

"That silly fat cuckoo——"

"That footling fat ass——"

"Why in the name of goodness didn't he tell us in time for us to rag those rotters and get our hamper back?" demanded Bob Cherry. "Of course, he started well; he got us released."

"What's the good of starting well when the whole thing's ruined at the finish?" snorted Johnny Bull. "We could probably have got free ourselves in half an hour without Bunter's help. My idea is that he ought to be jolly well bumped!"

"Hear, hear!"

"The bumpfulness seems the esteemed and proper caper!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! Here he is, still grinning as though he's done something clever!" Bob remarked. "Completely satisfied, Bunty?"

"He, he, he! Yes, rather—here, what are you doing, you beasts?"

"Bumping you!" answered Johnny Bull, though strictly speaking the answer was by that time unnecessary. "Give him six, chaps! Here's one!"

"Whooop! You fearful rotters——"

"This'll teach you to lose our tuck

hamper to Highcliffe rotters!" panted Johnny Bull. "Up with him again, chaps!"

"Yaroooh! Half a minute!" shrieked Bunter. "Lemme alone, you idiots! The tuck isn't lost at all!"

"What?"

The Famous Five paused, with their fat burden in mid-air.

"Lemme down, I tell you!" hooted Bunter. "D'you think for a moment I'd let those rotters get away with Greyfriars' tuck? D'you think I've gone potty?"

Bunter's captors lowered him slowly again.

"If this is a trick——" said Wharton darkly.

"Of course it's a trick!" snorted Johnny Bull. "If you look at the launch, you can still see our tuck hamper dumped near where Monson's sitting.

"He, he, he! I say, you are fat-heads, you know!" grinned Bunter. "The hamper's there all right, I know. But as it happens, there's no tuck inside it!"

"What!"

"You see, I happened to come along just when Ponsonby and his pals were taking up their positions," explained Bunter. "Seeing them, I guessed they were after the hamper, and, while they were busy waiting for you to put your silly heads in their lassoes, I opened the hamper and took everything out and hid it in the bushes, then filled it with stones and clods of earth so they wouldn't guess it had been emptied!"

The Famous Five gazed at Bunter almost incredulously.

"Then—then the tuck's still here?" asked Wharton.

"Every bit of it—safe and sound under those bushes where I was hiding!" grinned Bunter. "Look

for yourselves, if you don't believe me ! ”

There was a rush for the bushes.

And after that, a shout of satisfaction.

The tuck, with the exception of a few trifles to which Bunter had helped himself during his period of waiting, was intact.

“ Bunter, old fat bean, you're a jewel ! ” said Wharton, admiringly. “ Fair's fair, you chaps. It's not often he shines ; but this time he really is a jewel, isn't he ? ”

“ What-ho ! ”

“ Umpteen carat and stamped in every link or whatever it is ! ” grinned Bob Cherry. “ And now that we've time to think about it, Bunter was right, too, in letting Pon & Co. go scot free and in ignorance of the fact that the chap they imagined to be their dear Head was Bunter himself. Imagine their faces as they take up their giddy vigil in Dr. Voysey's study ! ”

“ Ha, ha, ha ! ”

“ Imagine their apologies when he walks in, ” chuckled Nugent. “ And imagine them kicking themselves when he asks them what they're talking about ! ”

“ Ha, ha, ha ! ”

“ Gentlemen, chaps and fellows ! I think we're all willing to agree that Bunter has done really well this time, ” smiled Wharton. “ He has regained our liberty for us and saved our feed ! ”

“ Hear, hear ! ”

“ And that being so he deserves all the rewards that can be heaped on him ! Gentlemen, I suggest that the least we can do is to make him our guest of honour for the rest of the afternoon ! ”

And the suggestion was hailed with enthusiastic acclamation — even by Johnny Bull !

THE END

Songs of the Seasons.



THE mellow time of autumn comes
With gifts of golden grain,
Of apples, berries, pears and plums
To fill the barns again ;
The green that in the springtime shone
Has deepened and grown old,
The summer tints have come and gone,
Now all is red and gold.

The hues of red and gold adorn
The leaves that wither soon,
And gold the field of ripened corn,
And red the harvest moon ;
The breezes still in kindly style
Blow soft on dying flowers,
And still the sun looks down to smile
On summer's fading hours.

But there's a glimmer in our eyes,
A glow upon our skins.
What matter if the summer dies
When football time begins ?
King Cricket slowly steals away
And hangs his ancient head,
His time is done, he's had his day,
And football reigns instead !

So autumn air is very fair,
But not for Mr. Pheasant,
And partridges and grouse declare
The autumn's most unpleasant ;
The crackle of the guns they hear,
Which makes them very nettled ;
They squawk, “ We'd best get out of here,
The outlook's most unsettled ! ”

The winter term has now begun,
We settle down to work,
With visions bright of games and fun
In days of chill and murk ;
The evenings, too, close in apace,
The hours of night are long ;
But we are merry and will face
The prospect with a song.

But autumn's trees are laden down
With ripe and luscious fruit,
And farmers, with their pitchforks, frown
In case you're after loot,
So though the leaves so sadly fall,
The flowers die out of sight,
The autumn we may rightly call
A season of delight.

GREYFRIARS DOWN THE AGES!



THE ARREST OF THE ROYALIST HEADMASTER OF GREYFRIARS

QUEEN ELIZABETH VISITS GREYFRIARS



DR WISEHEAD 1693-1724



THE SCHOOLBOY CHAMPION PUGILIST



A GREAT ATTRACTION OVER 100 YEARS AGO.



NOW SOME BOYS ARRIVED AT SCHOOL IN 1730.



— AND THE REASON OTHERS DID NOT IN 1307

The Holiday Annual artist spent a week-end at Greyfriars as a guest of Mr. Quelch, the Remove master, who is compiling a 'History of Greyfriars.' These pictures were drawn from some of the elaborate notes Mr. Quelch had made.