

THE HOUSE-BOAT MYSTERY!

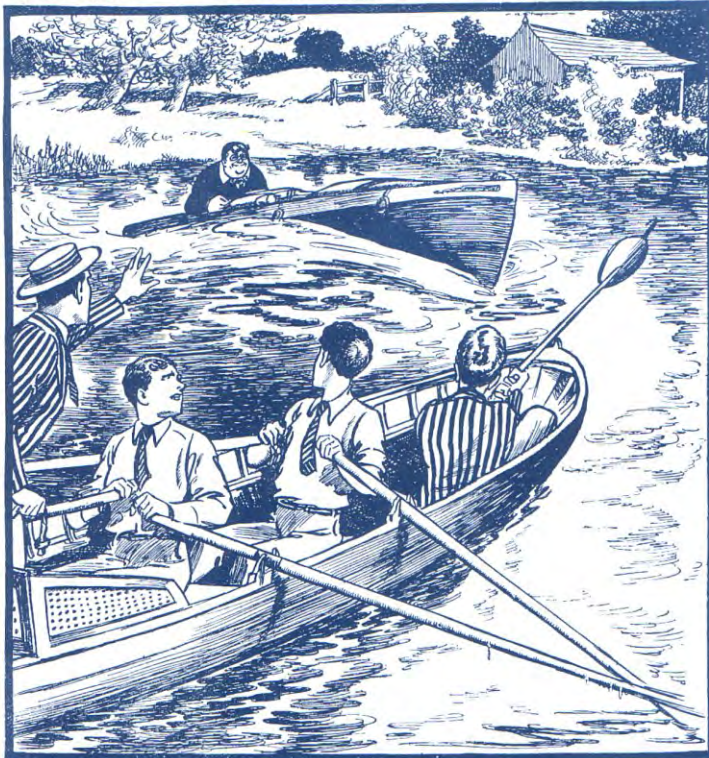
A Dramatic Long Complete Tale of Greyfriars School.



No. 698. Vol. XVIII.

SPECIAL "GREYFRIARS HERALD" SUPPLEMENT INSIDE!

June 25th, 1921.



BILLY BUNTER CREATES A STIR ON THE RIVER!

(An Amazing Incident from the Long Complete Story in this issue.)

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The Editor's Chat



Address all your letters to:
The Editor, "The Magnet Library,"
The Fleetway House, Farringdon St., London, E.C.4.
I am always pleased to hear from my chums.

FOR NEXT MONDAY!

In next Monday's programme we have a splendid long complete tale of Harry Wharton & Co., under the title of

"BUNTER THE BANDIT!"

By Frank Richards.

As you may guess from the title, Billy Bunter, the fat junior of Greyfriars, is a very prominent character in this grand yarn. Having read the daring exploits of an American bandit from a "blood and thunder," he decides to become a bandit himself, and follow in the footsteps of the Yankee highwayman. How he proceeds to do this and the amusing and amusing incidents which follow, you will read when you buy next week's issue. It will spoil the story for you if I tell you any more. But I will say this. You will be missing something great if you do not put in your order of the MAGNET to-day and be sure of your copy.

To follow this will be as usual four pages of splendid reading, in the shape of

THE "GREYFRIARS HERALD"

Harry Wharton and his chums have been hard at work on a new number, which they tell me is even better than those that have appeared in the old

paper. So far we have had some really grand "special" numbers of the "Herald." Well, next week's issue will be even greater.

THE "POPULAR"

Do you read the "Popular" every week? When I ask this question many of you I know will say "Yes." But if there are any of my chums who have not, or do not take it in regularly, I must tell you that you have certainly missed some great treats. A loyal reader writes to say that "without the MAGNET and the 'Popular' he would find life a very boring existence. I think he is right there. So I ask you to put in your order for this week's issue of our grand companion paper to-day, and you will not regret it.

POPLETS WANTED.

Most of my chums are brainy people, and there is a great chance for them in the little weekly competition which appears in the "Popular" every week. It is called the "Poplets" Competition, and I am offering ten prizes of five shillings each for ONE SENTENCE only. This competition is very successful, and if you have not tried your hand in it, I advise you to start to-day.

NOTICES.

Correspondence.

Miss Josephine Sowerby, 16, Coleridge Avenue, South Shields, Durham, wishes to thank readers who wrote to her, and to express her regret that she cannot reply individually to all.

Miss Joyce Saunders, Cherry Croft, Kingswood Common, Hoxley-on-Thames, wishes for correspondence with readers anywhere.

B. Thomas, 23, Park Villas, Chesham, Surrey, wishes to correspond with readers in the United Kingdom. Will Henry Mair, 145, Stockwell Street, Glasgow, write to this correspondent if he wishes to join the Boyes Amateur Magazines Society? Also, will any amateur actors drop a line as well?

Arthur Moore, Seend Villa, Staines Road, Plumstead, near Cape Town, South Africa, would like to correspond with readers anywhere.

Glen Clifford, 89, Cullinan Buildings, Johannesburg, Transvaal, South Africa, wishes to correspond with readers interested in stamps.

M. A. Betha, High School, Ondislaan, Cape Colony, South Africa, would be glad to correspond with readers anywhere.

A. Tobias, Imperial Cold Storage, Box 686, Cape Town, wishes to correspond with readers interested in stamps and in the old stories of the Companion Papers.

P. R. Trinder, 44, Goodbye Street, Gloucester, would like to hear from readers interested in foreign stamps.

Miss Prudence Taylor, Lamb Roe, Whitley, Blackburn, would like to correspond with readers in America, Australia, and at home.

Miscellaneous.

Alan S. Richards, 16, Upper Winchester Road, Rhyll, Gt. Gt. S.E. 6, is about to issue an amateur magazine, and would like to hear from prospective readers and contributors.

H. A. Reeves, 2, How Street, Stratford, E. 15, would like to hear from readers interested in amateur magazines, willing to contribute to the "Superior." All letters answered.

R. Garrard, 164, Boy Street, Norwich, wants readers for his amateur printed magazine, "The Boys' Companion."

F. A. Bottomly, 48, Downhill Park Road, Tottenham, N. 15, would like to hear from readers interested in his amateur magazine, "The Boys' World." Contributions invited.

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Your Editor.



The House-Boat Mystery!

A Magnificent Long Complete School Story, dealing with the Adventures of Harry Wharton & Co., the Chums of Greyfriars.

By FRANK RICHARDS.

THE FIRST CHAPTER.

Bunter's Plot.

"I SAY, Sammy—" There was a stealthy look on Billy Bunter's fat face as he came up to his minor, Sammy Bunter of the Second, in the Close at Greyfriars. "I say, Sammy," he muttered, blinking down at his minor, "do you want a jolly good feed?"

Sammy Bunter, who had been gloomily contemplating a plate of stale buns in the little tuckshop window, stared curiously at his major.

To the majority of juniors, such a question, asked immediately after a good dinner, would, perhaps, have not been superfluous. To Sammy Bunter it was. Before or after an ordinary meal he was always quite ready for a jolly good feed.

It was in fact a senseless question to Sammy, and he ignored it.

"What's the little game, Billy?" he demanded suspiciously, instead.

Billy Bunter glanced round cautiously. Very few fellows had yet come out from dinner, and the sunlit Close was practically deserted. The fat Removite grinned and began to whisper to his equally fat minor.

As his major stopped at last, Sammy Bunter shook his head slowly.

"Too risky, Billy," he said, rather scornfully. "I'll admit it's a good wheeze; but it's too jolly risky." If Wharton and his lot catch—

"It's not risky if we're slippery," Sammy whispered the tempter eagerly. "They'll not be out yet, and if we can only get the blessed grub to the wood shed—"

"How do you know they've ordered the grub?"

"Cause I heard 'em," chuckled Billy Bunter, nodding inside the tuckshop. "I heard 'em arranging the picnic in here before dinner, and I heard 'em order the stuff from Mrs. Mimble, and told her to have it all ready when they called this afternoon. Look here, Sammy, old chap, I must have you to help me carry the stuff—"

"All right!" said Sammy, his eyes gleaming greedily. "Holloes, though, remember!"

"Then stay here and keep easy!"

hissed the chief conspirator. "And when I come out with the stuff, grab all you can, and bolt for the woodshed."

And with that Billy Bunter rolled confidently into the school tuckshop. Mrs. Mimble, who was tidying the counter in preparation for the usual half-holiday rush, turned a cold, glassy eye upon him.

"Well, Master Bunter?"

"Is the stuff ready, Mrs. Mimble—the stuff Wharton ordered before dinner?"

"Yes; but—"

"I hope it is," said Bunter, "as we're all waiting to take it down to the boats. We want to get up the river early, Mrs. Mimble—"

"It's all ready, Master Bunter," said Mrs. Mimble, with a sniff. "But I'm not handin' it over to you, Master Bunter—not without Master Wharton's orders!"

Billy Bunter drew himself up with a great deal of dignity.

"Oh really, Mrs. Mimble! I hope you don't think I'm so dishonest as to call for the stuff without Wharton's authority?"

"Yes, I do, Master Bunter!"

"Then I'll soon settle your mind on that point, Mrs. Mimble," said Bunter, with quiet dignity.

And with that Billy Bunter rolled to the door and looked out into the Close. Save for Sammy Bunter, the Close was deserted; but Dame Mimble could scarcely see that from her position behind the counter. None the less, she was considerably surprised when Bunter called out:

"Just a minute, Wharton—"

There was a moment's pause, and then came an answering voice from somewhere round the corner, and it was undoubtedly Wharton speaking—or so thought Mrs. Mimble!

"Hallo, Billy! What's the matter?"

"Look here!" exclaimed Bunter indignantly to the invisible Wharton. "Mrs. Mimble won't hand the stuff over! She's an awfully suspicious person, Wharton. She thinks I'm trying to pinch your grub!"

"Oh, what rot!" laughed the voice; then, a little louder: "It's all right, Mrs. Mimble—hand him the stuff. You can trust Bunter!"

Mrs. Mimble sniffed again—possibly at

the assurance that she could "trust Bunter."

But apparently Wharton did trust him, and he had instructed her to hand the goods to him, and that was enough for Mrs. Mimble.

Without further ado, the school-shop dame laid a pile of paper bags and parcels on the little counter. She knew Wharton's voice well, and she naturally supposed he was busy chatting to his chums just round the corner. That she had been the victim of Billy Bunter's ventriloquism she certainly did not dream.

"There you are, Master Bunter," she said coldly, as Bunter rolled back to the counter. "That's the lot!"

Sniff!

Billy Bunter was just about to gather up the pile of comestibles when a pair of large spectacles, followed by a round, chubby face, popped round the doorpost.

"Look out, Billy! Cave!" it hissed frantically.

Sammy Bunter's face vanished, and then, to Mrs. Mimble's great surprise, Billy Bunter grabbed a double armful of bags and packages and bolted for the door.

He reached the door, and stopped there with a gasp of alarm. Sammy had vanished, but rapidly approaching the tuckshop, and scarcely six yards away, were Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bunter.

There was no time to escape. The rascally schemer stood rooted to the doorway, as Bob Cherry ran up the steps.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" he cried, eyeing the loaded Owl a trifle astounded.

"What the thump have you got there, Bunter? Been burghizing Mrs. Mimble's?"

Bunter mumbled some reply, and squeezed hurriedly past. But at that moment Harry Wharton's hand fell on his shoulder, and he was pulled up short.

"Not so fast, Bunter!" said Harry grimly, as he noticed the obvious guilt and confusion on Bunter's alarmed face. "Whose grub is this Bunter's trotting off with, Mrs. Mimble?"

"Why, yours, of course, Master Wharton!" replied the surprised dame. "You

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told me to hand it over to Master Bunter yourself—only a minute ago!"

"D—d—d!"

"Certainly, Master Wharton. I refused to give him the goods, so he called outside to you, and you shouted to me that it was all right!"

"Oh."

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry fairly gaped as they understood. Billy Bunter's grub-raiding tactics, and his veridical trappings, were too well-known in the Remove for them to fail to understand.

"Well, my hat!" breathed Bob Cherry. "You—you fat poacher, Bunter!"

"You—you fat fraud! You podgy burglar!" gasped Harry Wharton, shaking the alarmed Bunter wrathfully. "You've actually had the nerve to try to bone our grub!"

The junior captain wrenched the tuck from under Bunter's arm.

"I—I sus-sus-say, you know—"

"You podgy poacher!" gasped Bob. "You need a lesson. Hand me those jam-tarts, Harry!"

Harry Wharton handed them to him, and Bob Cherry gave them to Billy Bunter. He plastered his fat face and hair with them, finishing the job by stuffing a couple of the sticky messes down the back of Bunter's neck.

"Ow! Yooop! Oh dear! Beasts!" spluttered Bunter, clawing wildly at the sticky mess as Bob Cherry released him. "Rotters!"

Billy didn't wait for any more. He had had all he wanted of the delicacies—externally. He leaped to his feet with surprising agility, and scuttled across the Close at top speed. He reached the shelter of the Cloisters, to find his young brother skulking disconsolately there.

"Serves you right, Billy!" grinned that worthy unsympathetically. "I told you it was too jolly risky!"

"Oh dear!" gasped Billy Bunter, wiping the jam and flakes of pastry from his features dismally. "This is all your fault, Sammy, you rotter! If you'd shouted 'Cave!' sooner—"

"Rats! I'd barely time to get clear myself!" grunted Sammy. "It's your own blessed fault, and now we've had our trouble for nothing!"

"Have we?" snapped Bunter, as he took off his jammy spectacles, and polished them on his trousers. "You wait!"

And jamming his glasses firmly on his podgy nose, the Owl of the Remove glared viciously across at the tuckshop. Bunter could be surprisingly determined when he liked, and he was more determined than ever now, to have a share—internally this time—in the proposed picnic.

"What's the silly game this time?" grunted Sammy.

"You wait!" requested Billy again. "I'll show 'em!"

Sammy Bunter sniffed. "Come on, Sammy!" breathed Billy Bunter.

For a moment Bunter minor hesitated doubtfully, and then he followed his persistent major as that worthy scuttled indoors.

THE SECOND CHAPTER.

"There's Many a Slip—"

"IN here, Sammy!"

Billy Bunter stopped in the passage near to Mr. Quelch's study door, and pulled his minor into a deserted class-room opposite. After closing the door to within a couple of inches, Billy Bunter took up his position near to the water-cum-wait.

He had scarcely done so when the

tramp of feet was heard, and three juniors, wearing hoating blazers, came along chatting merrily. The three were Johnny Bull, Hurree Singh, and Frank Nugent. Johnny Bull carried a hand camera. The kiddie had been a recent birthday present, and the gift had made Johnny Bull an enthusiastic amateur photographer. But, beyond the camera, none of the three carried anything.

Billy Bunter blinked after them, puzzled.

"M—hat!" he murmured. "What's happened to the grub—and Wharton and Cherry? I wonder— Oh, I see! They've sent the others on ahead to get the blessed boat out! Oh, good!"

"Who was it, Billy? What are you mumbaling about?" whispered Sammy Bunter.

Billy Bunter gave a fat chuckle, but did not reply.

Sammy grunted. He was in the dark as to his major's plans, and naturally was feeling uneasy—especially after the first failure.

Several other fellows passed, and then Billy Bunter's eyes glimmered as Wharton and Cherry came along—Wharton carrying a bulky cricket-bag, while Bob Cherry carried a large parcel.

"Here they are, Sammy!" he hissed excitedly. "Get ready to jump out when I tell you!"

All unconscious they were watched, Wharton and Cherry hurried past. They reached the door of Mr. Quelch's room, and then a sharp, well-known voice rang out.

"Wharton! Cherry! Come here at once!"

It was Mr. Quelch's voice—so the two juniors imagined—and it seemed to come from beyond the closed door of his study.

Harry Wharton eyed his rhum in bewilderment as they stopped. He could not understand how Mr. Quelch knew they were passing just then.

"What rotten luck!" groaned Bob Cherry. "Wonder what the old senat wants?"

"Hope he isn't going to muck up our picnic!" said Harry. "We shall have to see, though!"

And, with a wry grimace, Harry Wharton lowered his cricket-bag gently to the linoleum, knocked at the door, and entered. Bob Cherry also placed the parcel on the floor, and followed his chum into Mr. Quelch's study.

From his hiding-place, Billy Bunter watched until the door had closed behind them. Then, with a fat chuckle, he dashed out. Save for themselves, the passage was deserted.

"Quick, Sammy!" he gasped. "Grab that parcel, and make for the woodshed!"

Even then, though he knew his brother was a skilful ventriloquist, the bewildered Sammy hardly grasped the meaning of it all. But he obeyed promptly, nevertheless. Grabbing the large parcel, he trotted after his brother, as that worthy staggered away at top speed with the precious cricket-bag.

"He, he, he!" chuckled Billy Bunter. "You didn't think I could work it, did you, Sammy? I've diddled 'em properly, and they'll never guess who's— Oh crumbs!"

Bunter paused, and nearly fell down the School House steps in his alarm. For, standing at the bottom of the stairs, chatting with Drake and Rodney of the Remove, were Johnny Bull, Hurree Singh, and Frank Nugent. It was too late to turn back, for the three juniors had already seen them.

"Hallo!" ejaculated Frank Nugent, as he spotted the bag. "Has the Bunter bird taken to cricket?"

"More likely to somebody's grub!"

grinned Johnny Bull. "This looks jolly suspicious, chaps!"

"The suspiciousfulness is truly terrific!" agreed Hurree Singh, the Indian junior. "Who's tuck have you got there, my esteemed Bunter?"

Bunter gasped—a gasp of relief. It was very evident that Wharton and Cherry had not yet told their chums of his earlier efforts to raid the grub. And while they plainly suspected he had raided somebody's grub, it was equally obvious they hadn't the faintest idea it was theirs.

"I—I say, you fellows, it—it's Coker's, you know," he stammered, on the spur of the moment. "He—he's invited me and Sammy to his picnic—"

"I can see Coker doing that!" sniffed Johnny Bull. "Why, you fat fibber—"

"Oh, really, Bull," protested Billy Bunter, gaining confidence. "Coker's not so stingy as some fellows, you know! He insisted upon me and Sammy joining the picnic to—to look after the grub. You—you see, Coker recognises my exceptional abilities as a cook—"

"While other fellows only recognise your exceptional abilities as a glutton!" added Johnny Bull pleasantly. "Well, my hat! Old Horace Coker's a more trusting sort of chap than I thought he was."

"Ha, ha! Yes!"

Billy Bunter gave the laughing juniors a lofty blink, and hurried on towards the Close with his minor and the grub. Both of the fat juniors were glancing behind them apprehensively.

But, as it happened, none of the group attempted to stay them. They knew that Coker and his studymates, Potter and Greene, had arranged a river picnic, and they concluded that if Coker & Co. were such asses as to trust the brothers Bunter, then it was their own funeral.

"Here, I say, Billy, where are you going?" panted Sammy. "What about the woodshed?"

"They'll anell a rat if we make for there, you silly chump!" said the crafty Owl. "We'll get out of gates and cut round by the playing-fields. And for goodness' sake buck up! Wharton and Cherry may rush out any minute!"

But Fate was against the brothers Bunter that afternoon.

Scarcely had they reached the gates when they heard hurried footsteps behind them. Glancing fearfully over his shoulder, Billy spotted Bull, Nugent and Hurree Singh hastening after them.

With gasps of alarm the grub-raiders quickened their pace. But Billy was hampered by the heavy cricket-bag, and the three juniors easily overtook them. Just, however, as the plotters were about to drop their booty and bolt for it, Johnny Bull's voice allayed their guilty fears.

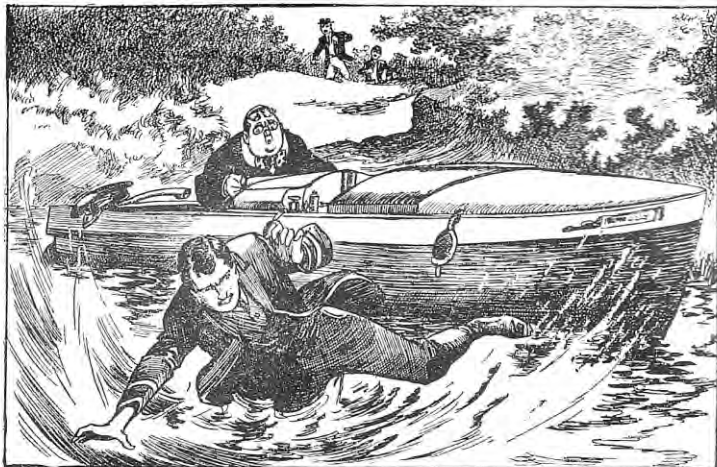
"Better buck up, Billy!" he called warningly. "Old Coker's been gone some minutes. He'll be in a waz if you keep him waiting!"

But, instead of "bucking up," Billy Bunter slackened his pace, hoping the three would go on ahead. But just as the crafty Owl was congratulating himself, his hopes were dashed to the ground.

The sight of the perspiring Owl struggling along with the heavy bag had aroused Frank Nugent's sympathy. He dropped behind, and turned a grinning face to the Bunters.

"Come along, Billy!" he grinned goodnaturedly. "I'll help you with the bag. Yank it over!"

Billy Bunter's face fell. But there was no help for it. With a reassuring blink at his alarmed and perplexed minor, he handed over the bag, and the two fat Bunters trotted after Frank Nugent as he shouldered it and hastened after his chums.



Without stopping to reflect, Billy Bunter dashed down the bank and made one flying, desperate leap for the motor-boat. He landed on board with a loud crash, and his head butted the engineer full in the back. With a gasping howl the fellow lurched headlong along the gunwale, and then took a header into the river. (See Chapter 4.)

But Billy Bunter was not out of the wood yet. The little party arrived at the boathouse on the bank, to find that Coker & Co. had gone—or, rather, were just going. Their boat was still visible some distance away, with the great Horace raising huge fountains of water as he tugged manfully at the sculls.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Johnny Bull. "Coker's going without you, Bunter—and the grub. What the thump—"

Bunter stopped helplessly.

"That—that's all right, you fellows," he said hastily. "Old Coker arranged that Sammy and I should follow with the grub in another boat. I say, you fellows might help me out with a boat?"

"Just like old Coker to bag two blessed boats for his picnic-party!" growled Johnny Bull.

"Oh, I don't wonder at that," grinned Nugent. "Blessed if I should feel safe in a boat with one Bunter, let alone two! But come on; we may as well help the fat frog while we're waiting for Harry and Bob. Wonder where the asses have got to?"

And the three members of the Famous Five very kindly helped the brother Bunter out with a boat, little dreaming as they did so that they were also helping the crafty Owl to get clear with the where-withal for their own picnic.

With no little trepidation Sammy Bunter seated himself in the stern and took on the rudder-lines. Billy Bunter chuckled softly to himself, and picked up the sculls as Frank Nugent pushed them off.

Billy Bunter's attempts at rowing alone were funny enough, but a combination, so to speak, of Billy's rowing and Sammy's steering was a sight for men and little fishes. It was a sight too good

to miss, and Johnny Bull was soon busy with his kodak.

Billy Bunter's first stroke almost capsize the boat, while Sammy's first pull at the rudder sent the boat barging into the bank again. But they got out into the stream at last, and then, amid the laughter and cheers of the spectators, they started off on a zigzag and decidedly wobbly course upstream.

"I—I say, Billy, we'll get it hot for this afterwards!" said Sammy apprehensively. "And where are you making for now, you mad ass?"

"The higher woodlands, of course! I don't see why I shouldn't have a picnic as well as other fellows. He, he, he!"

And Billy Bunter cackled between the grunts and gasps as he laboured at the sculls.

They reached the woods at last, and, hiding the boat beneath the foliage of an overhanging tree, jumped ashore. Then they dived into the trees with their plunder.

But "there's many a slip 'twixt cup and lip," a saying the truth of which the Bunter brothers were soon to discover.

It so happened that at that moment a boat swung round the bend coming down stream, and aboard it were Pansony, Vavasour, Gadsby, and Monson, the olds of Highcliffe School.

"Did my aged eyes deceive me?" asked Pansony, standing up in the boat and peering into the woods whence the Bunter brothers had disappeared, "or were those the Greynuts fat freaks I spotted just then?"

"They were, O captain," drawled Vavasour drowsily. "And they had got a bag and a dashed parcel, and that means—"

"Grub, by gad!" finished Pansony, with a chuckle. "This, my infants, is where we shine."

"Yes, rather!"

"Oh, absolutely!"

And as the boat touched the shore, the Highcliffe juniors sprang out and went after Bunter major and Bunter minor.

As it happened, they had not to go far. Feeling themselves safe enough with their boat hidden, Billy and Sammy had only tramped some fifty yards into the wood. Then in a grassy clearing they had squatted down to enjoy the good things they had so justly—or unjustly—earned.

Taking from the top of the bag a sheet of white linen accidentally introduced, Billy Bunter spread it out on the soft grass while his minor tore open the parcel. The afternoon was warm and sunny, but on the green grass beneath the shady trees it was good and pleasant. As he unpacked the bag, Billy's hot and perspiring face beamed like a harvest moon.

"This is topping—simply topping!" murmured the Owl. "He, he, he! This is where we smile, Sammy! I bet you never thought—Oh crumbs!"

Billy Bunter broke off with a startled jump at the sound of heavy feet crashing through the undergrowth. Then came a sudden rush of feet across the grass, and ere the alarmed brothers realised what had happened they were on their backs, blinking up at the grinning faces of Pansony & Co.

"Awfully good of you to come to your picnic, Bunter!" smiled Pansony. "I see we are just in time."

"You are correct!" raved Bunter, struggling desperately to gain his seat.

"May I take a seat for a moment, Gadsby?" Bunter's face requested Pansony.

Gadsby grinned and nodded. Billy Bunter huddled as the Highcliffe junior plumped himself upon his fat dimensions. Then Cyril Pansony tore the

tablecloth into strips, and the luckless Bunter brothers were tied back to back and dumped down on the grass.

Then, as Billy Hunter began to squeal for help, Ponsonby jammed the empty cricket-bag over the prisoners' heads, effectually bonneting them, and reducing Billy Bunter's shrill squeals to muffled wails.

What happened after that neither Billy or Sammy could see, but they could hear. And as they listened, helpless and almost weeping with rage, to the clanking of hungry jaws and the hilarious laughter of the raiders, their feelings were too deep for words.

To think that they had taken such risks, that they had had all their trouble for nothing—it was indeed unbearable.

And there was still the re-bonneting to be paid to Harry Wharton & Co.

THE THIRD CHAPTER.

A Terrible Discovery!

WHEN Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry entered Mr. Quelch's study they found the Remove-master hard at work on his famous "History of Greyfriars." Before him was a huge pile of manuscript, and he was thumping away on his typewriter at a terrific speed.

Harry Wharton ventured upon a discreet cough.

"Ahem!"

Mr. Quelch did not pause. He thumped away at the keys of his typewriter as though he owed each one a personal grudge. And it was only when he had ripped the sheet from the roller that he deigned to address the juniors.

"Well, Wharton?" he demanded sharply. "What is it? If you have any communication to make to me, kindly be as brief and explicit as possible. As you see, I am very busy. What do you wish to see me about?"

The juniors stared at Mr. Quelch. "N-nun-nothing, sir!" stammered Harry Wharton, in astonishment. "You—you—"

"What!" thundered Mr. Quelch. "You have dared to interrupt my literary labours, to waste my time, for—for nothing? Is this a stupid joke, Wharton?"

"N-nun-no, sir. You—you called us, sir."

"Nonsense!"

"But—but we heard you, sir. We were just passing the door when you ordered us to come in, sir."

"I certainly did nothing of the sort," said Mr. Quelch tartly. "Were you not a truthful boy, Wharton, I should feel called upon to punish you severely for attempting to deceive me with such a statement. As it is, I can only conclude that you were mistaken. Kindly leave the room!"

"Cer-certainly, sir!"

And, flustered and bewildered, the two juniors backed confusedly out of the study. Out in the passage they looked at each other.

"Well, my hat!" gasped Harry Wharton. "I'd swear I heard him call us. Old Quelch must be potty, Bob."

"No doubt about that. His blessed 'History of Greyfriars' must be sending him—"

Bob Cherry broke off, and his jaw dropped. His glance had fallen upon the spot where they had left the where-withal for the proposed picnic. In growing alarm he glanced this way and that way, but there was no sign of the bag or parcel.

"M-m-m-my hat! Why the grub's gone, Harry. What the thump—"

"Great Scott! So it has!" gasped THE MAGNET LIBRARY. No. 698.

Harry. "Who on earth can have taken it? I wonder—"

"Bunter!" yelled Bob Cherry suddenly.

"What?"

"It's Bunter!" yelled Bob Cherry. "He's spoofed us, after all. He must have sneaked us in and worked Quelch's voice with his dashed ventriloquism. And he's got the grub."

"Oh, help!"

For a brief moment the two chums stared at each other as the dreadful truth soaked in. Then they woke up and went in search of Bunter. For fully ten minutes they scoured the School House for Bunter. Then they ran across the quad, and after searching the cloisters they visited the woodshed—all in vain.

It was as the enraged juniors were returning from the woodshed that they met Drake and Rodney of the Remove, who were just wheeling their bicycles towards the gates.

"Have you seen that fat thief Bunter?" asked Harry Wharton, in a voice that thrilled with emotion.

Drake grinned as he noted the wrathful faces of Wharton and Cherry. Scarcely a day passed without somebody or other's looking for Bunter.

"He went out of gates with his minor some minutes ago. Going to the boathouse, I think," grinned Jack Drake.

"And Bull, Singh, and Nugent went with them," put in Rodney. "They caught the Bunters up at the gates, and I expect they went along to the river together."

"Oh!" ejaculated Wharton. "But—but were those fat frogs carrying anything?"

"Yes. A bag and a parcel. They said it was Coker's grub. Why, what's the matter?"

But Wharton and Cherry did not stay to answer that. They set off towards the gates at top speed. It was astonishing, and a trifle reassuring, to know that their three chums were with Bunter. But they knew the crafty Owl too much to place much reliance on that fact.

They arrived at the boathouse, breathless and panting, only to find their worst fears realised.

There were no signs of the bag and parcel, nor of the brothers Bunter. But Nugent and Hurree Singh were there, seated in the boat, grinning like Cheshire cats, whilst Johnny Bull was just taking a snapshot of them.

But the grins were fated to come off soon.

"Oh, here you are, you slackers!" called Franky Nugent, as Harry and Bob dashed up. "Where the thump have you been to? And my hat! Where's the grub—"

"Never mind us!" panted Harry Wharton, glaring round. "Where's that fat burglar Bunter? And where's our grub?"

"Bunter—grub? You mean Coker's grub?"

"I mean our grub!" howled Wharton wrathfully. "That fat thief's pinched our grub!"

"What?"

Bull almost dropped his camera, and the two in the boat stared, thunderstruck.

"What do you mean?" gasped Nugent, in sickening suspense. "Bunter only had—"

"I'll jolly soon tell you that!" said Bob Cherry.

And he quickly explained Bunter's little trick to the dismayed juniors.

"Oh help!" groaned Frank Nugent. "And we silly asses helped 'em to carry the stuff."

"And to get their dashed boat out!" groaned Johnny Bull.

"What?" shouted Bob Cherry. "Do you mean to say that you helped the fat rotters to get away?"

"Yes, but—"

"Well, you frazzled asses, you cock-brained idiots! You might have known it was our—"

"What! Were'n't you going to borrow Manly's picnic-basket—"

"Yes, but Manly had lent the dashed thing to Coker. So we had to pack the stuff in a cricket-bag and a parcel."

"Well, how the thump could we know that?" snapped Johnny Bull warmly. "It's all your fault, you blessed dummies!"

"Oh, shut up, for goodness' sake!" rapped out Harry Wharton. "What's the good of squabbling now? We've got to get hold of Bunter before he scoffs the blessed grub. Come on—quick!"

There was no more time wasted in words. Photography and the moot point as to whose fault it was were dropped in the general desire to regain the raided tuck, and to scalp Bunter, Nugent, Bull, and Singh especially wanted Bunter's scalp. It was had enough to know that Bunter had got the grub. But the thought that they had been so completely taken in, and had actually helped him to get clear, was doubly galling.

In less than a minute the boat had left the stage, and was sent racing over the shimmering Sark by two pairs of sturdy arms. For ten minutes Bull and Singh pulled away with savage energy at the sculls. And then quite suddenly they stopped pulling on hearing the sound of hilarious laughter from somewhere.

Next moment four juniors, wearing Highcliffe caps and cheerful grins, emerged suddenly from the thickly-wooded bank some distance ahead, and tumbled into a waiting boat.

"Highcliffe caps!" hissed Bob Cherry. "Wonder what mischief those rotters have been up to? Shall we stop and see, Harry?"

"No. Blow Ponsonby! We've no time to waste on those rotters now! Back up!"

The sculls dipped again, and as the Greyfriars boat passed them Ponsonby & Co. stopped laughing suddenly, and eyed Harry Wharton & Co. not a little apprehensively—a fact the significance of which did not dawn upon the Greyfriars juniors until later.

For another ten minutes Bull and Singh tugged away without a pause. It became increasingly plain that the crafty Owl had given them the slip.

"It's no good," said Harry Wharton, at last. "Bunter couldn't possibly have pulled up so far himself. The fat fraud must have hidden the boat along the bank somewhere."

The boat was turned, and Wharton and Cherry took a turn at the sculls. They pulled on steadily back again, with the others keeping a good look-out on either bank.

It was half-way back that Frank Nugent's keen eyes detected the stern of a boat peeping from beneath an overhanging tree. The boat was pulled in, and almost immediately Johnny Bull gave a triumphant shout as he pointed to the name on the prow.

"It's the Meteor—Bunter's boat! We're on the right track, chaps!"

"I'm blessed if I like this, though," confessed Harry Wharton, frowning, as he glanced around him. "If I'm not mistaken, this is the very spot we saw the Highcliffe cads board their boat;

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Bunter crouched down by the roots of the tree, and peered round the trunk. He was just in time to see the stranger thrust a small object wrapped in paper into the hole he had just made, and cover it over with soil again. There was something curious and suspicious about the fellow's movements. What was he hiding? (See Chapter 6.)

and they certainly looked as if they'd been up to something. I wonder if they run foul of Bunter?"

"Very likely," grinned Bob Cherry. "My hat! I'd sooner even Bunter had our grub than those rotters!"

"Same here! Anyway, we'll soon know," said Harry grimly. "I vote we spread out, though I don't suppose the fat dackers will have gone far. We'll be too late to save the grub, I'm afraid; but—Hullo! Who's this?"

Harry Wharton's eyes were fixed upon a trim little motor-boat coming at a spanking pace downstream. Even as he spoke, the motor-boat slackened speed, and came chug-chugging for the spot where the juniors were standing.

There were four people in the boat—two ladies, an elderly gentleman of decidedly military bearing, and the motor-driver, a clean-shaven, dark-featured man, and obviously a servant.

As the motor-boat neared the shore the driver shut off the engine, and as the boat gently grounded, held on to the bank with a bamboo, whilst the old gentleman assisted the ladies ashore.

"It's the chap who owns that topping houseboat up the river," whispered Harry Wharton. "Colonel Bland, I believe his name is. I remember him visiting the Head some time ago. I wonder what—Hullo! He's going to speak to us."

As the little party approached, the juniors they touched their caps respectfully.

"Ah! Grayfriars boys, I see!" said the old gentleman, glancing sharply at their caps. "Can you direct me to Popper Court, my boys? I believe there's a short cut through the woods somewhere near here."

"Certainly, sir," said Harry. "If you will keep straight along the towpath for about fifty yards you'll come to a stile

leading on to a path through the woods. Follow this up, and you'll come to a narrow lane that leads right up to the gates of Popper Court."

"Ah! Thanks, boys!"

And Colonel Bland passed on with the two ladies—obviously his wife and daughter—along the towpath.

The juniors plunged into the woods, and spread out, under Harry's direction, and began the search for Bunter. But scarcely had they been pressing on for three minutes, when a triumphant shout from Bob Cherry brought the others rushing up to him.

They found him standing on the edge of a clearing, gazing with goggling eyes at a curious scene—a scene which made the juniors gasp.

In the centre of the clearing were Billy Bunter and Sammy Bunter. They were tied back to back, with the cricket-bag still jammed over their heads, just as Possibility & Co. had left them. They looked for all the world like some queer, grotesque four-legged animal.

They were staggering and jangling about backwards and forwards in their wild efforts to free themselves, and the muffled remarks they were making reached the astounded watchers' ears.

"Yoonop! Stop pulling, Sammy, you see! You nearly had my ear off that time. Yow!"

"It's you that's pulling, Billy, you rotter! Ow! Yoonp! Stoppl! you see!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Angry as they were, the juniors could not restrain a shout of laughter as they gazed upon the ludicrous scene. And this shout, variously enough, brought about what the unlucky Bunter brothers had been attempting to accomplish.

As if the sudden yell told Bunter that retribution was at hand, he gave one terrific, desperate wrench, and snapped

the linen bonds that bound the brothers together.

The sudden, unexpected jerk pulled Sammy headlong on his back; but Billy kept his feet, and only stopping to wrench the bag from his head, he gave one wild blink round and dashed for safety.

He reached the trees in a couple of bounds, and then they heard him crashing through the undergrowth like an enraged elephant through an African jungle.

THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

Bunter at the Helm!

"AFTER him!" shouted Harry Wharton. "Never mind Sammy!"

Without bestowing a second glance upon Sammy Bunter, the five avengers set off in a yelling crowd after his major.

The Owl had a good start, and he was fully twenty yards ahead when he burst from the thick trees, breathless and panting. But, unfortunately for himself, he had emerged upon the towpath at some little distance from the boats, and he knew he could not hope to reach them before his pursuers were upon him. Already the crashing of their approach sounded close now, and Bunter shivered.

But even as he blinked wildly around him like a cornered rat, his eyes fell upon a desperate chance of escape.

Below him lay the motor-boat, the driver of which had only just succeeded in starting his engine again. He grasped the tiller and as the boat began to move, and as Bob Cherry and Harry Wharton at that moment dashed yelling from the woods, Billy Bunter hesitated no longer.

Without stopping to reflect he dashed

down the bank and made one flying, desperate leap for the boat.

It was quite a creditable jump for a fellow of Bunter's weight, and it landed the fat junior fairly and squarely in the stern. Unfortunately, however, the driver, who was just then stooping over the engine, happened to be in the way.

Bunter's round head butted the man's stooping form with all his weight behind the impact, and the result was only what might have been expected.

With a gasping howl, the fellow lurched headlong over the gunwale. For one brief second he hung there, and then, as the boat lurched under Bunter's sudden onslaught, he took a header into the river.

"Oh crumbs!"

Billy Bunter staggered to his feet, aghast at what he had done, just as an alarmed shout from Whorton reached his ears.

"Look out! Grab the tiller, Bunter, you idiot!"

Bunter gave one dazed blink round, and then he gave a gasp on realising that the uncontrolled motor-boat was racing for the opposite bank.

More by luck than anything else, the terrified fat youth swung the tiller the right way, and the boat swung round in the nick of time, and went flying across at a tangent to the other side.

Once again Bunter only staved off disaster by a miracle; and then the motor-boat was tearing on its erratic course upstream with the shouts of the infuriated man and the alarmed juniors ringing in his ears.

What happened after that seemed like a nightmare to Bunter.

The unhappy Owl hadn't the faintest idea how to stop the engine—even had he had the presence of mind to attempt to do so. And he had very little idea how to steer. Half a dozen times, at least, within the first hundred yards, the boat came within an ace of ramming the bank.

It was not, however, until the runaway motor-boat approached other craft that the real trouble began—as it very quickly did!

On swooping suddenly round a sharp bend, Bunter came upon a racing eight.

The long, slender boat was broadside on to the river when Temple of the Fourth spotted Bunter bearing down upon them.

"Look out! Slow down, you silly fool! Stop that dashed boat, Bunter!" he howled.

"I can-can!" wailed Bunter.

And Bunter didn't stop—he only wished he could. And as the startled skipper of the Fourth realised the truth he gave a frantic order to his men, and there was a ragged, frenzied splashing of oars as the crew strove to straighten the boat before Bunter arrived.

In this they were successful to some extent—sufficient to enable the motor-boat to get through, at least. But though the worst was avoided, it ended in disaster for Temple & Co., nevertheless.

The heavy swell of the motor-boat caught the light craft broadside on, swamping it in a flash, and next second the unlucky crew were struggling in the water amid a babel of frantic splashing, dismal gurgles, and furious yells and threats.

"Bunter, you fat, burbling chump, I'll—gurgles—gurgles—"

"Oh, you fat, raving freak—gurgles—gurgles—"

"Oh dear!" groaned Billy Bunter.

The fat junior dared not look round; but that was hardly necessary. The

splashes and gurgles and furious yells that rang out behind him told him what had happened. He knew the luckless oarsmen could all swim, and their plight caused him little concern. But what caused him great concern was the question of what his own plight would be when Temple & Co. got hold of him.

But the motor-boat was forging ahead, and Bunter had no time to dwell upon these dismal forebodings. He stuck desperately to the tiller, and very soon the howls and threats of the Upper Fourth juniors died away behind him.

But Bunter's adventures were not yet over. His next victim, as it happened, was Coker of the Fifth.

Coker & Co. had chosen a pleasant, grassy bank overlooking the river for their picnic, and the Fifth Formers were halfway through the good things Horace Coker had provided when it was discovered that a bag of apples had been left in the boat.

Thereupon the great Horace had gone down to the boat to fetch them—unfortunately for himself—at the very moment Bunter was passing.

Coker must have seen and heard the motor-boat coming, but if he did, he ignored it in his usual lordly way. He sprang into the boat and stepped from seat to seat, reached the stern, and groped for the apples. He got them, and was just stepping back across the rocking boat when at that identical moment Bunter came past.

The motor-boat came forging along, raising a swell like unto that of a torpedo-boat—a swell that the lordly Coker certainly never anticipated.

As the boat lifted high beneath him, Coker swayed desperately with one foot outstretched; then he stepped upon a seat which wasn't there, and sprawled head-long across the gunwale, scattering the apples broadcast across the face of the waters.

At that moment also the boat lurched violently again, and with a wild howl Coker followed the apples.

"Yarroug! Oh crumbs!"

Splash!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Potter and Greene, who had witnessed the accident, roared with laughter—they could not help it. But Coker didn't laugh—nor did Billy Bunter.

The fat junior risked a glance behind him, and as he saw the luckless Horace staggering ashore, dripping with water and covered in mud, and shaking a savage fist after him, he groaned again.

There was likely to be quite a heap of trouble waiting for Bunter when he returned to Greyfriars—though Bunter was beginning to wonder when he would get back.

For another five minutes the motor-boat held on its way regardless. By this time the stretch of river beyond Highcliffe School had been reached, and as Bunter blinked ahead he saw that, save for a large houseboat moored to the left bank, the shining stretch of river appeared to be deserted.

Owing to the crowded state of the river hitherto, the fat youth had not dared to risk neglecting his steering in an attempt to stop the engine; but now he felt that the time had come to make a desperate effort.

The Owl of the Remove released one hand from the tiller, and was just reaching over the engine when he jumped back, startled, as a loud shout reached his ears. He looked up suddenly to see that a sailing-boat had just moved into sight from beyond the houseboat.

The short-sighted Owl could not recognise its occupants, but the voice was

familiar, and his look of alarm changed to a wicked grin.

"My hat, it's Ponsonby and his lot!" he murmured, with a chuckle. "What a chance to get my own back! I'll give 'em the scare of their lives!"

And Billy Bunter steered straight for the sailing-boat which was now midway between the houseboat and the opposite shore.

He did not propose to run down the sailing-boat—seven Bunter had more sense than that. But he did intend to "cut it fine," and give the Highcliffe boys a scare.

There was still time for Ponsonby & Co. to get clear, but instead of pulling for safety, they jumped to their feet in the rocking boat, and began to yell and wave frantically to Bunter.

"Bunter, you fat fool—"

"Stop that dashed boat, Bunter!"

"Stop, you mad, mad!" howled Ponsonby, dancing about frantically. "You'll run us down, you—Oh, gad!"

Ponsonby broke off, his pasty face whiter still as the motor-boat tore up with a rush and a roar, and though Bunter had no intention of running them down, it was a close thing for all that.

The motor-boat swept past, missing the sailing-boat by a matter of inches. Fortunately, the prow of the sailing-boat met the wash, or it would certainly have been swamped. Even so, Ponsonby & Co. did not escape scot-free.

As the sailing-boat lifted high under the swell, the sudden lurch proved too much for Ponsonby's equilibrium. He lost his balance, tripped over a seat, and fell heavily against Gadsby, who, in his turn, clutched at Vavasour to save himself; but it was no good.

All three went down with a crash, bringing Mon-on with them, and next second the Highcliffians were mixed up in a struggling, yelling heap in the bottom of the wildly rocking boat.

It took them quite three minutes to sort themselves out, and by that time Billy Bunter had disappeared round a bend in the river ahead.

"Oh, gad! The little fat rad!" groaned Ponsonby, staggering to his feet and whooping his nose which had come into contact with Gadsby's boot. "I'll—I'll smash—I'll smother the fat rotter! Come on, you chaps—after the little lot!"

"But—but we'll never catch up—"

"Yes, we will. If that fat fool's got round that sharp bend safely, then I'm a Dutchman!" scowled Pon. "Tuck up, hang you!"

The others made no further demur; they wanted vengeance as badly as Pon did. In less than a minute they were pulling savagely in pursuit of Bunter. They reached the bend, and as they swept round it Ponsonby gave a shout of triumph.

The motor-boat had come to grief at last. Round the sharp bend the river broadened out, and was dotted with several small wooded islands. The spot was quite unfamiliar to Bunter, and though he had rounded the bend safely, it was only to run smack into the thick rushes of the first of the islands—as Ponsonby had guessed he would.

At the moment Bunter appeared to be attempting to stop the engine, which was still running. But as he heard Ponsonby's yell he blinked round in great alarm and sprang ashore. Then he scuttled into the trees.

But there was no escape for Bunter. The Highcliffe juniors roared ashore, and, in the twinkling of an eye, Bunter was captured, and what happened

(Continued on page 9.)

The Greyfriars HERALD

SUPPLEMENT No. 23

Week Ending April 27th, 1921



Assisted by BOB CHERRY (Fighting Editor),
VERNON-SMITH (Sports Editor), MARK
LINLEY, TOM BROWN, and FRANK NUAGENT.

Address all letters to HARRY WHARTON,
c/o The Magnet Library, The Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street, E.C. 4.

EDITORIAL.

By Harry Wharton.

After a fortnight's respite from literary work—the last two issues of the "Herald" having been edited by Lord Mauleverer and Bob Cherry respectively—I am back in harness again.

Several fellows in the Remove are quite indignant at not being allowed the privilege of editing this paper for one week only. Fishy wanted to supervise a special Yankee number, Givvy a special Scottish number, Micky Desmond a special Irish number, and Morgan, look you, a special Welsh number. Then there was Inly clamouring for permission to edit an Indian number, and Wun Lung wanted to astonish the natives by producing an issue in Chinese.

This is all very well, but I think we will stick to the British element. The fellows I have just mentioned will be able to contribute from time to time, so they have nothing to grumble about.

The issue which is now in your hands, is, as you will see, a Special Dormitory Number.

There is something of romance and adventure in connection with a dormitory. The word conjures up visions of pillow-fights, of midnight frosts, of fierce scraps by moonlight, and of nocturnal expeditions (don't take offence, Lord!).

Each dormitory at Greyfriars has its own particular history and traditions, and whole volumes could be written concerning the exciting scenes which have taken place in the Remove dorm, which is the rowdiest and jolliest dorm of all.

This being so, it is obvious that there is plenty of material for a Special Dormitory Number. For several days our staff has been busily engaged, and the fruits of their labours are now before you.

I am pleased to say that the popularity of our little supplement is still increasing. Billy Bunter is trying his hardest to cut us out with that precious "Weekly" of his, which appears every Friday in the "Popular." There is room for both supplements, and I'll wager the "Greyfriars Herald" won't be the first to chuck in its bid!

Once again I must thank the hundreds of clubs, of both sexes, who have sent me letters of appreciation and criticism. Would that they could all troop into Study No. 1 one after the other, and that I could shake them individually by the hand! But although this cannot be, I want them to feel that I am deeply grateful for their loyal support. An revoir until next week.

HARRY WHARTON.

The Pillow Fight!

By DICK PENFOLD.



Half a yard,
Half a yard—onward!

Marched the half-hundred,
"Kush them!" their leader cried.
"Scatter them, fur and wide!"

"Hals!" Coker's voice replied.

Into the rival dorm
Dashed the half-hundred!

Forward, the Night Brigade!
Was there a chap dismayed?

Even though many knew
Wharton had blundered.

Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,

Theirs to smite, hit and thigh.

Into the rival dorm
Dashed the half-hundred!

Pillows to right of them,

Pillows to left of them,

Coker behind them

Believed and thundered.

Blundered was there, as well,

Raising a warlike yell:

Then, with a groan, he fell,

Floundered down in anguish by!

Half the half-hundred!

When shall their glory fade?

Oh, the wild charge they made!

All the school wondered.

Quietly had heard each sound,

Stalked on the scene, and frowned.

Then gave them lines all round—

Each a half-hundred!

DORMITORY "DON'TS."

Compiled by George Wingate.

(Written at Greyfriars.)

DON'T go to bed with your trousers on
You're not DORIS, or Esquimaux!

DON'T sling your trousers carelessly over
the bedpost, so that the pockets disgorge
combs, buttons, tops, pen-knives, and other
unpleasantities.

DON'T talk, walk, or talk in your sleep.

DON'T make your neighbour an "apple-
pie" left, or you'll get your just "doctors"!

DON'T smuggle tuck-hampers into the
dormitory, or you will have to come up
before the Customs and Excise Officer (my-
self) in the morning!

DON'T choose bed-time as a convenient
hour to settle all your private quarrels. I
know you "don't mind a scrap"—but I do!

DON'T start snoring like a foghorn as soon
as I come in to extinguish the lights. I can
easily tell a genuine snore from an artificial
one. I wasn't born yesterday!

DON'T attempt to break bounds at night.
As you ought to be aware, it's a "rash"
proceeding to "break out."

DON'T stick a dummy figure in your bed
in the hope that I shall take it for you. No
dummy could be half so good as the average
Remove kid! (Specially our Wingate, old man;
that's a shaver! Bed?—E.E.)

DON'T observe any of these rules, and
you'll make a shrew acquaintance with my
ashplant!

THE MAGNET LIBRARY—No. 608

ESSAY ON A DORMITORY!

From the Leaky and
Ungifted Pen of

Nugent Minor.



A dormitory is a place in which we sleep at nites—when our skoolfellows will allow us.

A dormitory contains beds, although sum of us, who are of a naughtily-odd turn of mind, would prefer hammock, like they have on board ship.

A dormitory holds about forty fellows. The kaptin of the Form sleeps near the fireplace, because it's so nice and cozy; and the most unpopable fello has a bed over the door, so that he is maid to feel the draft.

A dormitory is a place wear we have grade fun—especially when there's a fire going. Then we fry herrings, chesnutty waddies, and other fish, and have what is known as a midnite feast.

A dormitory is a place wear we have pillow-fights. It is glorious to start sparring with pillows and bolsters in the middle of the nite.

A dormitory is a place wear kriminall offenders are brought to look. They are sometimes maid to run the gorthill, and sometimes they are test in blankets. Both these punishments are very unpleasant for the vicktim.

A dormitory is a place wear Summy Bunter becomes a champion weight-lifter. He snores so loud that he lifts the roof off!

A dormitory is a place which is vizzitized by gouts, speckters, fantoms, spooks, and other know-kunkin creatures. Groat! It makes my flesh creep to think about it!

A dormitory is a place wear we stay in bed 4 an hour after rising-bed, and if twice happens to wake, we get a 100 lines, a lecture, or sumn other form of corporal punishment.

A dormitory is a place wear we compose all our contributions to the "Gyrefriars Herald."

A dormitory is a place wear we settle all our arguements with bear bats.

A dormitory is a place wear apple-pie beds are maid by practical jokers.

A dormitory is a place from which we break bounds at nite whenever we feel so disposed.

A dormitory is a place wear we have strange dreams and hideous nightmares if we eat a huppy supper overnite.

A dormitory is a place—

(Dry up, young Nugent, for goodness' sake! You're getting on our nerves! By the way, here is an excellent conundrum for readers of the "Gyrefriars Herald.")

Why is a dormitory like a queer fish?

Because, according to Nugent minor, it's a place!

We advise Master Dicky, the next time he has an hour to spare in his "dormitory," to take lessons in spelling and English composition. He may then be able to compose an intelligent article.—Ed.

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 699.



By MONTY NEWLAND.

"Good night, kids!"

"Good night, Wingle!"

The captain of Gyrefriars put out the lights in the Remove dorm, and withdrew.

There was a brief interval of silence. Then Harry Wharton sat up in bed.

"The coast is clear now, you fellows," he said. "And we can get to business."

"Yes, rather!"

A buzz of excitement ran through the dormitory.

"I say, Wharton, you beast!" said Billy Bunter peevishly. "Why didn't you tell me you were going to have a dormitory feed?"

"Oh, I can tell," said Bunter. "You can't pull wool over my eyes, you know!"

"Well, as you're so cocksure that there's going to be a feed," said Bob Cherry, "I suppose you can tell us where the grub is!"

"It's stowed away somewhere," said the fat junior. "In Wharton's study, most likely."

"Try again, porpoise!"

"Under one of the beds!"

"Have another shot."

"Oh, I give it up!" growled Bunter.

"Well, the hamper, if you want to know, is down in the crypt."

"Groat! What a queer place to hide a tuck-hamper in!"

"I didn't say tuck-hamper," said Bob Cherry. "I merely said hamper."

"Well, it's the same thing, isn't it? Look here, who's going to fetch the hamper up to the dorm?"

"Don't all speak at once!" chuckled Spuff. Bunter was out of bed in a twinkling.

"I'll go and get it!" he said hastily.

The Owl of the Remove did not relish the prospect of descending into the dark crypt at that hour of the night. But he realized that if he went to fetch the hamper he would be able to enjoy a fine feed on his own before taking the hamper up to the dormitory.

Billy Bunter was not a hero, but he would have braved spooks, phantoms, and all the terrors of darkness for the sake of getting a feed.

Nobody stood in the way of Bunter's suggestion; so he dressed himself rapidly and hurried out of the dorm.

It was very dark out on the landing, and the risk he was running was considerable.

Mr. Quelch, the master of the Remove, frequently made a tour of the building before retiring to his study to burn the midnight oil, and if the rays of his electric-torch happened to fall upon Billy Bunter, there would be trouble.

Billy Bunter was trembling from head to foot with apprehension as he groped his way down the dark staircase.

All around him, as he went, lay dark, mysterious shadows, which caused a shudder to run through his fat frame, and made him almost regret having set out on such an enterprise.

Having reached the foot of the stairs without being intercepted by Mr. Quelch or the Gyrefriars ghost, Billy Bunter made his way along the corridor to the box-room. With some difficulty he squeezed his huge bulk through the key-room window and dropped down into the closet.

Now came the biggest ordeal of all. He had to move away the big stone over the crypt, and descend the iron ladder into the gloomy vaults.

For fully five minutes the fat junior hesitated.

Then he thought of the hamper, crammed with delicious tuck, which was concealed below.

Now that he had come so far, he could not go back to the dormitory empty-handed.

"What a beastly funk I am!" he muttered. "After all, there's nothing to be afraid of—only a few spiders and things."

With a great effort he succeeded in removing the stone. Then he struck a match, lighting the flame with his hand, and set foot on the topmost rung of the ladder.

Down he went, step by step, into the darkness.

The match he held burnt his fingers, and he was obliged to light another.

He was at the foot of the steps by this time, and as soon as he had lit the second match, he peered around him. Then he uttered an exclamation of joy.

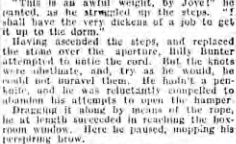
"Here it is!"

A large hamper, firmly secured with rope, lay on the damp floor. Billy Bunter lifted the hamper with some difficulty, and hauled it up the steps. He did not want to stay in the crypt a moment longer than necessary.

"This is an awful weight, by Jove!" he muttered, as he struggled up the steps. "I shall have the very dickens of a job to get it up to the dorm."

Having ascended the steps, and replaced the stone over the aperture, Bunter attempted to untie the rope. But the knots were obstinate, and, try as he would, he could not unravel them. He hadn't a pen-knife, and he was reluctantly compelled to abandon his attempts to open the hamper.

Drugging it along by means of the rope, he at length succeeded in reaching the key-room window. Here he paused, mopping his perspiring brow.



At the foot of the vaults steps
Bunter lit another match, and
peered round into the dark shadows.

"It needs a steam-engine to get this beastly thing through the window!" he muttered. "I can understand now why nobody else volunteered to collect the hamper."

After several unsuccessful attempts—for he was not a champion weight-lifter—Billy Bunter managed to heave the tuck-hamper through the window. Then he clambered through after it, dragged it along the passage, and commenced the tortuous ascent to the Remove dormitory.

Bump, bump!

The hamper bounced on every stair, until it finally rested on the top.

Only a few more yards now.

Pausing for a moment to regain his breath, Billy Bunter dragged the hamper into the dormitory.

To his surprise, all the fellows seemed to be asleep. Ah, then he realized that he had been absent a long time. Doubtless his school-fellows, weary of waiting for his return, had dozed off.

"Good!" murmured Billy Bunter. "I shall be able to have the feed all to myself!"

He groped his way towards Bob Cherry's bed, hidden in Bob's trouser-pocket, and produced a pen-knife, with which he severed the cord of the hamper. Then he eagerly lifted the lid and peered within.

"O-o-o-h!"

A hollow groan echoed through the dormitory, followed almost immediately by a yell of laughter, as the fellows, who had apparently been sleeping, sat up in bed.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter fairly collapsed. For the hamper, instead of being crammed with delicious tuck, contained nothing but sticks and stones!

The Owl of the Remove had had half an hour's hard labour for nothing. And as he sat on the floor, groaning and mopping his heated brow, peal after peal of laughter rang out from the noble army of leg-pullers!



A Midnight Comedy!

A Short Story in Five Spasms.

By S. Q. I. FIELD.

I.

"T-O-NIGHT'S the night!" said Bob Cherry, after Wingate had extinguished the lights in the Remove dorm. "I propose, gentle, that we raid the Fifth, and snipe them, hip and thigh with pillows. Then we'll deal with the Shell; and after that we'll turn our attention to the Upper Fourth!"

"Good wheeze!"

"Tumble out, everybody!"

We were filled with the lust of battle. Not for many moons had we been able to carry out a successful raid on our rivals, owing to the fact that Quelch, our Form-master, was generally on the prowl.

But Quelch was absent to-night. He was dining at Sir William Popper's place, and the baronet had begged him to stay the night. "Better lie low for a bit," said Harry Wharton, as some of us were in the act of turning out. "It's too early yet to set out on the giddy warpath! Leave it till midnight."

"I say, Wharton," piped the shrill voice of Billy Hunter. "You'd better make me your commander-in-chief. I'm a dab at organising pillow-fights!"

"Dry up, you're!"

"Go to sleep!"

"Guess I should make as good a general as anybody," remarked Fisher T. Fish. "What do you say, Wharton?"

"Rats!"

"Che, thence me lead army to victory," said Wan Lung.

But Wharton failed to be "sassy." He was determined that no one should out him from his position of leader.

Propping ourselves on the pillows, we waited with growing impatience for the midnight chimes to ring out. The first stroke of twelve would be the signal for hostilities to commence. And as the appointed hour drew near our hearts beat quickly at the prospect of raiding and conquering the rival Forms.

II.

Coker of the Fifth sat up in bed. "Prett, wou'd be back tonight, you fellows," he said. "He's at old Popper's place with the other masters. When the cat's away the mice will play!"

"We're not mice!" growled Blundell.

"Well, you're not, certainly," agreed Coker. "You remind me more of a rat!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here—" spluttered Blundell wrathfully.

"Pax!" said Potter. "I can see what Coker's driving at. He thinks it's time we put those cheeky Remove kids in their places. Isn't that so, Horace?"

"Yes," said Coker. "We're a glorious opportunity to-night, now that Prett's out of the way. I vote we visit the Remove dorm at midnight, and spring a surprise attack."

Coker's proposal was seconded and carried unanimously. It was arranged that at the first stroke of midnight Blundell should lead a big muster of Fifth-Formers to the attack. Chuckling softly to themselves at the thought of scoring off the Remove, the occupants of the Fifth Form dormitory sat up in bed to await the midnight chimes.

III.

"Shut up, Hoskins!"

"Smother him, somebody!"

Claude Hoskins, the musical genius of the Shell, was making night hideous by means of his mouth-organ.

The fact that Mr. Hacker was absent for the night had encouraged Hoskins to give his Form-fellows some unbridled entertainment. He was sitting up in bed, clutching the mouth-organ with his long, tapering fingers, and puffing out his cheeks as if he were about to burst.

"What on earth's he supposed to be playing?" growled Stewart.

"It's one of the Indian love-lyrics," said Rayner.

"It's 'Hilo, Britannia!'" said Churehill. "It's neither!" said Jackson. "It's 'Asleep in the Deep!'"

"Wish Hoskins was!" growled Hobson.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You silly chumps!" said Hoskins wrathfully, desisting from his exertions. "Not one of you seems to have an ear for music. I was playing 'Juggin' Along the Highway!'"

"Oh, my hat!"

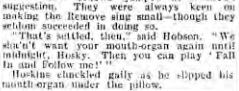
"Well, now that you've finished joggin' along the highway, we'll get to business," said Hobson. "What price a midnight raid on the Remove dorm?"

"Ripping!"

"The Shell fellows jumped at Hobson's suggestion. They were always keen on making the Remove sing small—though they seldom succeeded in doing so.

"That's settled, then," said Hobson. "We shouldn't want your mouth-organ again until midnight, Hosky. Then you can play 'Fall In and Follow me!'"

Hoskins chuckled gaily as he slipped his mouth-organ under the pillow.



"We promptly evacuated the landing, and then Smithy turned the hose full on the enemy."

"By my hindmost," he said, "we will even storm the Remove battlements at midnight!"

"Gladsome! Likewise effusive!" said Hobson. "Yea, verily, we will put you scurvy knaves to rout. Roll on, midnight!"

IV.

"Wake up, Dah! Tumble out, Fry!"

As he spoke, Temple of the Fourth tweaked the rather prominent nose of Dabney, and then the snub nasal-organ of Fry.

"Ow!"

"Yow!"

"Wharrer narrer?"

"Faint's time to get up yet!"

Temple chuckled.

"It's a quarter to twelve," he said. "And at midnight we're going to carry out a raid on the Remove stronghold, as per arrangement. Out you get!"

Very reluctantly—for they were heavy with sleep—Dabney and Fry crawled out from beneath the sheets.

Then the rest of the Fourth-Formers were roused. They turned out in their pyjamas, and armed themselves with bolsters, pillows, and other weapons of war.

"Jolly lousy that Capper's away for the night," said Temple. "The crust will be clear. We shall give those cheeky Remove lads a fearful drubbing!"

Dabney yawned portentously.

"Don't you think we'd better postpone this affair until to-morrow?" he said.

"To-morrow never comes," was Temple's rejoinder. "Don't be such a beastly slacker, Dah! This is the chance of a life-time, and we should be precious aces hot to take advantage of it!"

"What it would look up and strike twelve!" grumbled Fry.

Temple consulted his remarkable wrist watch. "It only wants a few moments now," he said. "Prepare to move off in columns of fours, as they say in the Army. And when you get to the Remove dorm, snipe and spare not!"

Whereupon Temple's followers gripped their pillows and bolsters tightly and awaited developments.

V.

Boom!

It was the first welcome stroke of midnight, sounding from the old clock-tower.

In four different dormitories at Greyfriars there were scenes of great animation.

Harry Wharton marshalled his followers and led them forth to the slaughter, little dreaming that the three rival dormitories had also planned a midnight raid.

Blundell led the armed forces of the Fifth. Hobson and Hoskins—the latter playing his mouth-organ—were at the head of the shell procession. And Cecil Reginald Temple took command of the Upper Fourth.

Harry Wharton stopped short suddenly in the darkness.

"Listen!" he muttered.

From the landing above came the strains of a mouth-organ. And the padding of slippers feet was plainly audible on the stairs.

"We halted in dismay on the lower landing."

"What had happened?"

"Seems as if everybody's up and doing," said Bob Cherry.

The next moment the landing became alive with figures.

Coker & Co., Hobson & Co., and Temple & Co. arrived on the scene almost simultaneously.

Astonished speculations were uttered on every side.

"Who, the lads are here!" exclaimed Coker. "Rush them!" roared Hobson.

"They've got three Forms up against them!" chuckled Temple. "They're caught like rats in a trap!"

But the Remove-formers—were certainly in a tight corner. But we had no thought of retreat. We lined up shoulder to shoulder, with our backs to the wall, and offered a stout resistance to the combined onslaughts of the Fifth, the Shell, and the Upper Fourth.

"Buff! Thud! Buff! Thud!"

A perfect pandemonium prevailed. Pillows and bolsters went whirling through the air, and shrill battle-cries arose, mingled with loud lamentations as the victims were bowled over.

Outnumbered as we were, it seemed inevitable that we should be overpowered. But we fought on gamely.

"Then, just as we were beginning to despair of being able to hold out much longer, Vermo-Smith, who had slipped quietly away when the fight started, reappeared on the staircase with a hose-pipe."

"Removites, stand clear!" he exclaimed, in ringing tones.

We promptly evacuated the landing, and then Smithy turned the hose pipe full on the enemy.

"Swift! Semanous!"

A wild stampede followed, in the course of which our adversaries were drenched to the skin. They retreated in wild disorder, leaving the Remove mariners of the situation—thanks to Smithy's foresight in procuring the hose.

We trooped back to bed in great spirits, with the satisfaction of having vanquished and overcome all our enemies.

"Did I call this yarn 'A Midnight Comedy'?" Well, it certainly was, so far as the Remove was concerned. But Coker, Hobson, and Temple were inclined to regard it as a midnight tragedy!

The House-Boat Mystery!

(Continued from page 2.)

afterwards was like a horrid nightmare to Bunter.

"The Hippodrome must have been the fat youth again and again. After that they rolled him in the mud, and left him howling and seething in every limb and looking a shocking sight."

But even that didn't satisfy Ponsombly & Co.

"And now, dear boys," grinned Ponsombly, "we'll leave Bunter to think over his sins in solitude, and we'll take the dashed motor-boat with us. We can run the blessed thing ashore somewhere."

And they did. The engine of the motor-boat was stopped, and the craft re-loaded. After this was done, she was tied behind the skiff. And then, with the motor-boat in tow, Ponsombly & Co. departed, yelling with laughter, and leaving the hapless Bunter, like Robinson Crusoe, stranded upon a desert island.

THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

In Chase of Bunter!

"H A, ha, ha!" As the runaway motor-launch, with Billy Bunter at the helm, shot away on its erratic course up-stream, Bob Cherry, Johnny Bull, Frank Nugent, and Hurree Singh doubled up and howled with laughter. The predicament Billy Bunter had got himself into, and the sight of his desperate attempts to keep the launch on a straight course, were certainly funny enough.

Harry Wharton, however, was not laughing; he was too concerned for Bunter's safety—and the safety of others—to laugh.

"The—er—the caving chump!" he gasped, watching the Owl's progress in great alarm. "He'll have a terrific smash-up before he gets— My hat! I'd forgotten that chap!"

Harry Wharton frowned as he noticed the plight of the unfortunate driver—though it was remarkable he had not sooner for the fellow's remarks, as he splashed and floundered towards the bank were loud and painful and free—too free by far for Harry Wharton & Co.

"Better help the chap out!" muttered Harry, frowning. "Hark at his language! It would serve the rotter right to help him out and chuck him in again."

The water was not deep hereabouts, and the man had suffered nothing more serious than a wetting. But he evidently looked upon that as serious enough, for his face was black with rage as he clutched at the bank above him.

Not very cheerfully, Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry gave him a hand. When the fellow stood at last on the towpath, drenched, muddy, and bedraggled, he turned upon the juniors with a torrent of savage imprecations.

"Here, that's enough!" snapped Harry Wharton, in disgust. "It wasn't our fault, what that fool did, and, in any case, there's no occasion for that rotten language."

"Language be hanged!" howled the man furiously. "What about my clothes? What about me? And what about that boat? Wouldn't you swear?"

"No, I wouldn't!" said Harry curtly. "I'm sorry for what's happened, and that fat villain deserves a jolly good hiding. But—"

"And he'll get a thunderin' good biding when I gets him, or my name's not

Pratt!" vowed the man, frowning. "Look here! He was with you, and you're partly to blame for it. You'd have to pull me up after that boat's bound in your boat—"

"That was thumping well won't!" said Johnny Bull bluntly.

"We certainly won't do anything of the sort!" added Harry. "If you'd taken the accident like a sport, and not done so much beastly swearing at us, we'd have really helped you. As it is—"

"You can go and eat coke!" finished Bob Cherry.

The man fairly spluttered with rage.

"I—I'll have the law on you for this, you—your little—"

He broke into a torrent of abuse, and Harry Wharton's brow darkened dangerously.

"Stop that!" he interrupted sharply. "You know jolly well this affair wasn't our fault, and if you don't chuck that swearing we'll throw you back into the river again!"

"Yes, rather!" "The best thing you can do," said Harry curtly, "is to root off home and get changed. You'll soon see something of your boat, I bet! That fat idiot can't have got far without coming a cropper."

For a moment the man glared, as if he contemplated assault and battery. But the grim looks of the juniors as they lined up made him think better of it. With a muttered imprecation he swung about, and squelched off along the towpath.

The juniors watched him go, grins. The man looked a dismal figure, and they could understand him being angry and upset. But they considered, and rightly, that it didn't excuse the man's insane fury, and certainly not his objectionable language.

"Well, what's to be done now?" asked Bob Cherry ruefully. "The blessed picnic's off, of course. When I get hold of that fat villain, I'll—I'll—"

"We'll smash him!" said Frank Nugent.

"Shall we chasefully go after the esteemed Bunter?" suggested Hurree Singh.

"I think we'd better," said Harry, frowning. "The afternoon's nipped up, in any case. I expect that fat rotter Sammy is half-way back to Greystones by now, so we'll just get the bag and start off. And if Bunter hasn't drowned himself—"

"We'll tie a rope round his fat neck and tow him back!" said Bob Cherry darkly.

Needless to say, Bob didn't mean that terrible threat—though, as might be expected, the Famous Five were not feeling kindly disposed to Bunter. Their looks as they tumbled into the boat a few seconds later boded ill for the unscrupulous Owl of the Remove.

The cricket-bag had been recovered—empty, of course—and, as they expected, Sammy Bunter had made good his escape. But they didn't care much about that. The villain of the piece was Billy Bunter, and all they wanted was to get their hands on him. Remembering the significant appearance of Ponsombly & Co. at that spot, they guessed what had happened to the raided grub, and they hoped also to see something of the Highcliffe cads.

Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry settled down to the sculls, and sent the boat chugging over the silted water. They had not been pulling long before they came upon Bunter's first victim, Temple & Co. Dalmey & Co. The Upper Fourth crew had by now righted their boat and brought it to the bank. And a bedraggled, miserable crew they looked.

The Famous Five stopped their boat and grinned across at them. They guessed what had happened, and decided

to have an opportunity to pull their rivals' legs.

"Hello, hello, hello!" called Bob Cherry. "Temple & Co. are affected again. What do you ladies caught?"

"I thought you'd be coming row," added Harry Wharton.

Captain Temple glared significantly at the grinning Removites.

"You—your usual! You—your cheeky faces!" he muttered. "I was—hanged! You know jolly well it was a real, it was that fat rotter Bunter. The mad fool swamped our boat— Here, stop that, Bull, you rotter!"

Temple's last words were lost out as Johnny Bull focused his gaze on the dismal group of carmen.

There was a soft click, and as he heard it the leader of the Upper Fourth gave a yell of wrath. To be photographed by their enemies in their present maddly and dishevelled state was the last straw.

Stepping and grabbing a handful of mud, he let fly at the amateur photographer. And as the rest of Temple's eight at once followed his example, Harry Wharton & Co. decided to move on.

Fortunately none of the missiles struck their mark, and a few tugs at the sculls sent the laughing Removites out of range of the angry Upper Fourth-Formers.

They had scarcely covered a hundred yards when they beheld the sudden figure of Horace Coker, trotting along the towpath towards them. But to all their kind inquiries the great Horace turned a deaf ear. He ambled on towards Greystones, his rugged face grim, his clothes clinging to him, and his boots squelching dully.

But they were soon to learn what had happened to Coker. A couple of minutes later they met Potter and Greene coming downstream. In his drenched state, Coker had decided, wisely, to return to Greystones on foot, and he had ordered his chums to pack up and follow in the boat.

From Potter and Greene the juniors learned what had happened, and they howled with laughter as they heard it.

"Well, my hat!" laughed Johnny Bull, as they passed on again. "What a thumping pity I wasn't there with my camera. But Bunter's piling up trouble for himself and no mistake."

"I shouldn't care to be in his shoes when Coker gets him," grinned Harry, turning his head. "But there's no sign of him ahead, so the fat frog can't have come to grief yet."

The juniors met several other craft, but beyond hearing plenty of abusive remarks concerning the fat youth, they learned nothing, nor did they see any traces of him.

At length they reached the houseboat, and then Harry called a halt, and glanced across at it, hoping to see either Pratt, the driver, or something of the motor-boat.

But of Pratt they could see nothing, and save for a dinghy tethered to the houseboat, there was no other craft near.

"Bunter must be like Charlie's Aunt—still running," chuckled Bob Cherry. "How far up is the Sark navigable, Harry?"

"I expect the fat ass daren't turn, and can't stop the engine," snarled Harry. "That means he'll keep on until the blessed petrol gives out."

The juniors pushed on until suddenly Frank Nugent, who was steering, gave an exclamation as a couple of boats swung into view round the bend ahead. Even at that distance they had no difficulty in making out the motor-boat.

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towed behind the rowing-boat, nor in recognising the crew of the latter.

"Ponsonby & Co.," guessed Harry Wharton. "My hat! What luck! We'll nab those rotters and Bunter. Bend to it, Bob!"

But Ponsonby had no intention of coming to grips with the redoubtable Famous Five; nor did Harry Wharton & Co. nab Bunter. Directly the High-cliff crew spotted the Greyfriars boat, they cut the motor-boat adrift, and, turning round, made off as fast as they could pull back the way they had come.

"Lot 'em go," snapped Harry. "We can deal with those rotters another time. It's Bunter we want now. I expect we'll find him trussed up in the motor-launch."

But Harry's expectations, of course, were not realised. They found the motor-boat empty. It was a disappointment for them, for they wanted Billy Bunter badly. But they concluded that Bunter had escaped, and returned by road to Greyfriars, and giving up the trail, they took the motor-boat in tow, and returned to the houseboat.

The houseboat was a roomy craft, and, from outside appearances, well-appointed and luxuriously furnished. With the bright sun shining on the windows, the stretch of river in front and the leafy woods rising behind, the scene made a pretty picture, and, at Johnny's Bull's request, the rowing-boat was stopped in midstream whilst he "snapped" it.

Just as he was focussing, however, Bob Cherry, with the object of killing two birds with one stone, sent a loud hail across to the houseboat.

"Pratt, ahoy!"

"You—you silly chump!" howled Johnny Bull, startled. "You nearly made me drop my blessed kodak overboard, selling like that. Keep quiet a sec!"

Bob Cherry grinned, and next second there was a click as the enthusiastic photographer snapped the houseboat. Then, as there came no response to Bob Cherry's hail, the motor-boat was towed to the houseboat and made fast.

As they came alongside, a maid-servant came upon deck and looked down at them in astonishment.

"We've brought your motor-boat back, miss," said Harry. "I don't think it's come to any harm."

"But—but where's Pratt? What's happened, sir?" asked the girl.

"Hasn't he told you? Hasn't Pratt come back?" queried Bob Cherry, astonished.

"Never seen him since he went off with the master and mistress. Perhaps he's in the tent yonder, though," said the girl, indicating a bell-tent just visible through the trees on shore. "He keeps his tools and things there. I'll run and see—"

"It doesn't matter. Here's the boat, and I dare say Pratt will tell you what's happened," grinned Harry. "Good-afternoon!"

And having made the boat fast alongside the dinghy, the juniors started to return. The picnic had been a wash-out, and William George Bunter had escaped them for the time being. But they believed they would find him when they got back to Greyfriars. And that thought, indeed, was their one solitary crumb of comfort.

THE SIXTH CHAPTER.

Out of the Frying-Pan!

"O! H! dear! What on earth am I to do?"

Thus Billy Bunter for the fiftieth time as he blinked hopelessly across the river from his island prison.

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The shadows of the early summer evening were lengthening over the water. Since Ponsonby & Co. had finally left Bunter stranded, the fat youth had not set eyes upon a soul—on towpath or river. And as the afternoon wore on, Billy Bunter had seen his chance of escape growing more and more remote; till now he felt that the position was hopeless.

To say that Billy Bunter was distracted would be putting the case mildly. The thought of spending a night alone on that deserted spot filled the fat junior with terror. Moreover, he was tired, muddy, wet, and, needless to say, hungry—fearfully hungry.

"Oh dear!" he groaned again, with a fearful glance into the dark trees behind him. "I'm famished! And I shall have to stay here all night. I wonder if they'll search for me—Hullo!"

Bunter gasped—a gasp of eager joy. From over the water came a distant sound—the splash of oars. Breathlessly Bunter waited and watched, and he almost danced with joy as a small boat, with a solitary occupant, swung into sight round the bend.

The boat was a dinghy, and its occupant a man. But it meant rescue—or so Bunter thought.

Billy Bunter had no need to shout, for the dinghy was obviously making for the island. And two seconds later Billy Bunter felt heartily thankful he had not made his presence known by shouting. When the man stopped rowing a few yards out, and turned his head, the Owl gave a startled gasp.

For the man was Pratt, the motor-boat driver, and the man he had sent into the river that afternoon. And very wisely Billy Bunter dodged back into the trees, and made himself small, as it were.

Next moment Pratt jumped ashore, and made straight for the spot where Bunter was hiding.

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Bunter. But the fellow evidently hadn't the slightest suspicion he was there, for he passed his hiding-place, and, to Bunter's astonishment, stopped a few yards deeper in the undergrowth and trees.

There seemed to be something curiously stealthy in the man's movements, to Bunter, who was a very suspicious fellow. What he was doing he could not guess; but he was exceedingly curious, and determined to find out.

He moved a few steps nearer with exceeding great caution, until he could see the man.

"M-mum-mum hat!" breathed Billy Bunter.

Pratt had been scraping a hollow in the soil beneath one of the roots of a tree. Even as Billy Bunter peeped round the trunk of the tree he was hiding behind, the man shoved a small object wrapped in paper into the hole and covered it with soil again. Then he straightened himself and moved on again—not back to his boat, but in the opposite direction.

Billy Bunter was more curious than ever now. But he had no need to follow the man further, for the belt of trees ended a few yards away, and the man's next movements were quite visible to the fat spy.

And to Bunter his movements seemed very curious at first. He seemed to be flinging into the river some weighted objects that were attached to the shore by string or cord.

For a moment Bunter watched, perplexed; and then suddenly the ample explanation dawned upon him.

"Oh crumbs! What an ass I am!" he murmured, in disgust. "He's only laying blessed night-lines! Brrr!"

But, though true enough, that did not, in Bunter's opinion, explain the mysterious package. Losing all interest now in the man's present occupation, he stepped up to the tree and, scraping the soil away, drew out the little package.

He was just about to tear off the wrapping when the remembrance of his own position and the splendid opportunity of escape the situation offered dawned upon him.

With a soft chuckle Billy Bunter examined the package into his trousers pocket, and covered the soil over the hole again.

"Findings—keepings," he murmured, "though I expect it's only a blessed rabbit snare or something. I shouldn't be surprised if that rotter's in league with beastly poachers or something. Anyway, I'm off."

And, with the stealth of a Red Indian, Billy Bunter lit lightly and circumspectly back towards the boat. He stepped into the waiting dinghy, and, grasping an oar, pushed off vigorously.

As the dinghy reached the centre of the stream, he dipped the sculls and gave one gentle pull that sent the boat sailing slowly to the opposite bank.

With a deep gasp of relief, Bunter jumped ashore, and, giving the dinghy a push, sent it drifting down stream. From the island came no sign or sound, and it was evident Pratt had not discovered what had happened.

With another fat chuckle, Billy Bunter turned his face towards Greyfriars, and started off at an ambling trot, forgetting in the joy of escape all about the mysterious package reposing in his pocket.

Billy Bunter was desperately tired, but he was more hungry than tired. He felt he had never been more hungry in his life before. And it was hunger, really, that made him come to a halt, when passing Colonel Bland's houseboat.

Though it was quite light, yet the houseboat was bright with Chinese lanterns. A glance through the lighted window of the saloon showed Bunter a table glittering with silver and glass—obviously laid for dinner.

But what really attracted Bunter was a delicious smell of cooking—of frizzling joints and newly-baked pastry.

"Oh, my hat!" breathed Billy Bunter, his eyes sparkling greedily. "I'm jolly well famished. I—I simply can't resist that. I wonder if—"

There was only one person in sight—a servant, and her back was to him. She was leaning over the far rails of the upper deck, idly scanning the lower reach of the river. And from this fact Bunter argued—and rightly, as it happened, that the maid was alone on the houseboat.

The sudden temptation was overwhelming—a temptation to which, in his famished state, Bunter easily succumbed.

Billy Bunter had been trotting along the grass bordering the towpath, so that his approach had not been heard by the servant. With one cautious blink round, and with his head thumping against his fat ribs, the unscrupulous Owl stepped on to the plank bridge and boarded the houseboat.

The delicious smell proceeded from a tiny window at the rear of the boat—evidently the kitchen. For a moment he stood listening, and then, as no sound came from the deck above, he stepped down into the saloon.

The whole place was white-enamelled and luxuriously furnished. It was also spotlessly clean—until Bunter entered, at any rate. Bunter knew there must be a way to the kitchen through the saloon, and he rolled across, leaving muddy footprints on the thick carpet.

On passing through he found himself

in a passage with white enamelled doors on either side. Bunter guessed these were bed-rooms, and made tracks for a door facing him at the end of the passage.

He reached the door, and as he pushed it open he sniffed with satisfaction. Even without a glance inside he knew from the warm air and appetising smell that he had reached the promised land.

Billy Bunter crept stealthily inside, and closed the door softly. Then he blinked eagerly around. The kitchen was quite tiny, and the air was hot and stifling. Opposite to him was a large oil-cooking stove, and it was from this that the heat and appetising smell proceeded.

Billy Bunter gazed reflectively at the cooking-stove for a moment, and then he shook his head sorrowfully. The stove was an elaborate affair, and he did not dare to risk making a clatter by tacking the oven door. But on top of the stove a large treacle tart was warming, and Billy Bunter decided to sample that.

The plate was hot—Billy soon discovered that—but the tart was nicely warm and deliciously crisp. It took Billy Bunter just sixty seconds to demolish it, and then he set to work on a dish of cold custard that rested on the dresser hard by.

After finishing that, Billy Bunter, now feeling much better, looked round him for fresh worlds to conquer.

But though there was plenty of crockery and shining kitchen utensils, there was nothing more eatable in sight. And then Billy Bunter spotted a small door leading off from the kitchen, and, guessing it was the pantry door, he pulled it open and squeezed his fat form inside.

It was a tiny place, and Billy could scarcely turn round between the shelves that lined the walls. A quick blink round showed Bunter that the two lower shelves held nothing but tinned goods and foodstuffs of no immediate use to him. But the first thing that attracted his attention on the top shelf above his head was a large piedish.

Whether it held a fruit-pie or a meat-pie Bunter could not see, but he hoped it was a rabbit-pie. As it turned out it was neither.

Billy Bunter kicked a small box into position, and, standing on this, he reached up eagerly for the piedish. Even then his fingers barely touched it, and it was in trying to pull it toward him that he discovered what the piedish really contained.

Under the pressure of his fat fingers the dish suddenly tipped up, and a stream of thick liquid, sticky and sweet-smelling, poured over Billy Bunter's face and hair and clothes. The piedish contained syrup—why, only the cook herself knew. But there it was, and there Bunter was, covered from head to foot in syrup as in a shimmering shroud.

At that very moment, also, another alarming mishap occurred.

The box on which Billy Bunter stood suddenly collapsed. As Bunter felt himself falling, he clutched desperately at the shelf facing him.

For one giddy second the shelf held under the terrific strain, and then it came away, and a shower of tinned stuff, potted stuff, and crockery rained round the luckless Bunter's head as the shelf and Bunter came down with a crash—a crash that sounded deafening in that confined space.

For one breathless instant Billy Bunter lay amidst the ruins, terrified and agitated at what he had done. Then he groaned as he heard a startled exclamation above, followed by the sound of hurrying footsteps on the deck.

He was caught red-handed, and he knew it.

He sat up, grunting and yawning desperately at the syrup on his hair and face. He was still dazed so when footsteps entered the kitchen, and next moment the scared face of the cook, Bunter guessed she was that—peered into the dark pantry.

It was only a glimpse of Bunter she got, but it was apparently enough for her. For, besides the syrup, the Owl had managed to upset a large paper bag of flour over his person, and in the dark pantry he must have looked a shocking sight. At all events, one glimpse of him was enough for the already scared cook.

With a shrill scream she jumped back, banging and locking the pantry door as she went. And next moment the unhappy Owl of the Remove found himself in darkness, and a prisoner.

He had jumped out of the frying pan into the fire with a vengeance.

THE SEVENTH CHAPTER.

More Trouble for Bunter!

"H AS Bunter come in yet, Teddy?"

Harry Wharton asked that question as he looked into Study No. 7 after tea. Peter Todd, who was helping Dutton to clear away the tea-things, turned an exasperated face to Harry Wharton and his chums in the doorway. As a matter of fact, since and during tea, there had been a constant stream of visitors to No. 7, inquiring after Billy Bunter.

Coker of the Fifth had been in half a dozen times, and Temple and several more of his ill-fated crew of Fourth-Formers had been in, and Peter Todd was getting fed up with it.

"No, I haven't, you silly blumps!" he answered. "I'm not his thumping sealer if I am his blessed studymate! What's he got for ass anyway?"

"I don't know," laughed Harry Wharton. "Any way, he's bound to be in for calisthenics, so we won't worry you again, Todd."

And with that Harry led the way out. But as it happened, they were both wrong there. Billy Bunter failed to answer his name at roll-call, and Mr. Quelch frowned, and marked him absent.

"Blessed if I can understand this!" muttered Harry Wharton, as he and Frank Nugent returned to Study No. 1 for prep. "I hope nothing really has happened to the fat idiot."

Despite his wrath and desire for vengeance on the unscrupulous Owl, Harry Wharton was beginning to feel not a little uneasy on Bunter's behalf.

The chums settled down to prep, and had scarcely been at work two minutes when Vernon-Smith looked in.

"Wanted at once in Quelch's study, Wharton, old top!" he announced briefly. "Somebody on the phone, I believe."

The Bognider (disappeared, and, with a surprised look at his chum, Harry proceeded to the Remove-master's study. He found Mr. Quelch seated at his desk, with the telephone receiver before him.

"Ah! One of the Highlife boys wishes to speak to you, Wharton?" he said sharply. "I do not approve by any means of boys using my phone. In this case, however, you may speak—in my presence, Wharton."

"Y-yes, sir,"

Wharton took up the receiver, and as he spoke the voice of Courtenay of the Fourth at Highlife answered him.



Harry Wharton dragged open the door and rushed in, followed by the rest. Seated amidst a pile of tinned foodstuffs and broken crockery was Billy Bunter. The fat youth's hair and face and clothes were coated in syrup and flour. "Bunter, you fat chump!" gasped Wharton. "You've been up to your old games again!" (See Chapter 7.)

"That you, Wharton? I say, do you happen to have lost that fat freak of yours—Bunter, I mean?"

"Bunter? Why, yes. He's certainly missing!" said Harry, in surprise.

"Why?"

"Then you'll find the fat merchant stranded on the first of these islands up the river—beyond our school, you know."

"What?"

"It's Pon's doing, of course," went on Frank Courtney. "They've marooned the fat clam there—just the sort of silly-ass trick they would do! Anyway, I just happened to overhear 'em chattering about it, so I thought it up to me to drop you the hint. All serene!"

"Great Scott! Thanks very much, Courtney!" gasped Harry, forgetting Mr. Quelch's presence in his astonishment. "Awfully decent of you!"

Harry replaced the revolver, and turned round to find Mr. Quelch's eyes fixed grimly upon him.

"I could not help hearing Bunter's name mentioned then, Wharton," he said. "Does that communication explain his absence?"

Wharton for the moment was silent. But he knew it would have to come out now.

"Yes, sir," he stammered. "He's—he's stranded on an island up the river, sir."

"What?"

The captain of the Remove explained the message, taking care not to mention names.

"Bless my soul!" ejaculated Mr. Quelch. "This—this is astounding—astounding! Who are the responsible boys, Wharton?"

Silence.

"I will not press that question," said Mr. Quelch, quietly. "However, Bunter must be rescued without delay. I think—yes, you had better take one or two of your Form-fellows, and bring the wretched boy back. I rely upon you, Wharton, to return immediately you have accomplished your task."

"Very good, sir!"

Wharton quitted the room, and went in search of his chums, who were only too glad of the chance to go. In a very few minutes the Famous Five were hurrying down to the boathouse, and within ten minutes of starting they were afloat, and pulling up the river in the cool of the evening.

They reached the island at last without adventure. The place seemed to be deserted. But as the juniors sprang ashore a figure emerged from the shadowy trees. To the boys' surprise, it was not Bunter, but Pratt, the driver.

"The man eyed the juniors in no less astonishment than they eyed him.

"My hat!" ejaculated Harry Wharton. "Are you stranded here, too, Pratt?"

"Yes; I was beginning to think it was a case of staying here all night," stammered the fellow, eyeing the juniors a trifle suspiciously. It seemed to them, "The—fact is, I came in the dinghy to lay night-lines. But my boat must have drifted while I was the other side of the island. Could you young gents row me across?"

Harry Wharton glanced sharply at the man. He appeared to be curiously agitated, and he wondered why.

"We came in search of a schoolfellow—the fat ass who sent you into the river, in fact," said Harry. "Is he on the island?"

"No, he certainly isn't!" was the savage reply. "There's nobody but me here!"

"Well, this beats me!" grumbled Bob Cherry. "Old Courtney isn't the sort

of fellow to pull our legs to this extent. And yet—"

There was nothing left to do but to return. Telling the man to jump in, Harry pushed the boat off. There was no sign of the dinghy, and the juniors agreed to drop Pratt off at the boathouse.

They reached it in a few minutes, and Pratt was just about to board her when a female figure came hurrying along the dyke. It was the cook. She was almost hysterical with excitement, and as she saw Pratt she gave a thankful gasp.

"Oh, I'm so thankful you've come, Pratt!" she gasped. "There—there's a desperate burglar in the pantry. I've locked him in. Do come and catch him, Pratt—quick!"

Pratt paled visibly. He did not seem at all keen.

"Per perhaps you young gents wouldn't mind lendin' a hand?" he stammered. "In case he turns nasty, we—"

"What ho!" said Bob Cherry.

The juniors leaped aboard the house-boat like a shot. They followed Pratt and the maid through the saloon and into the tiny kitchen. As they entered a dismal wail came from behind the locked pantry door.

"Oh dear! My—my back's broken, I think, and both my legs. Oh, help!"

"Bunter!" yelled Harry Wharton. "Great pip!"

He rushed to the door, and turning the key, dragged it open. And the sight thus revealed made the juniors gasp.

Seated amidst a pile of tinned and potted foodstuffs and broken crockery was Billy Bunter. The fat youth's hair and face and clothes were coated in syrup and flour. He looked a shocking sight.

"Bunter, you—you fat chump!" gasped Wharton, hauling the woebegone figure out into the open. "You've been up to your old games again."

"I—I say, you fellows," wailed Bunter. "I—I've had an awful time! I—I think I'm going to faint."

"Well, my only topper!" gasped Bob Cherry.

The juniors wanted to yell with laughter badly. But the luckless Owl looked such a pitiable object that they hadn't the heart to laugh at him. As for Pratt and the maid-servant, they could only stare. They did not seem to have grasped the situation.

But before anyone could speak again there was a tramp of feet on the deck, and the sound of voices.

"It's the master and missus back!" cried the girl. And she dashed out, eager to break the exciting news to her employers that a desperate burglar had been captured.

They heard the excited tones of the cook, the deep voices of Colonel Island, and the sharp, acid tones of Sir Hilton Popper. Then, even as footsteps were heard in the saloon, a way to save the situation and Bunter came to Bob Cherry.

It was just the sort of plan that appealed to Bob, and he acted upon it at once.

Pratt was standing in the open pantry, and with a bound Bob was upon him. Giving the startled man a sudden push, he sent him head-over-heels into the pantry.

Then he banged the door, locked it, and sprang across to a little back door that even Bunter had not noticed before, a door Bob had guessed led on to the deck of the houseboat.

"Quick!" gasped Bob. "Make for the blessed boat. Come on, Bunter!"

The juniors grasped Bob's plan in a flash. Though they felt little sympathy with Bunter, he was a Remove, and it was up to them to see him through if they could.

The astonished fat youth was bundled through the doorway out on to the deck. There was nobody on deck, and guessing all had descended into the saloon, they made a dash for the waiting boat.

One by one they tumbled over the rail into the rowing-boat, and in a couple of seconds two pairs of strong arms were sending the rowing-boat flying down the dusky river towards Greysfriars.

THE EIGHTH CHAPTER.

A Startling Surprise!

"HERE we are!"

Harry Wharton spoke in a tone of great relief as the boat touched the landing-stage.

Their expectations of being followed had not been realised, and they felt thankful for Bunter's sake. During the run to the boathouse Billy Bunter had told his fearful tale, and the Famous Five could not help feeling sorry for him. He had been through the mill without a doubt.

He was in such a state of collapse, indeed, that the juniors had to help him out of the boat.

"I think we're safe enough now," grinned Bob Cherry.

"Not so sure about that," said Harry Wharton, seriously. "If old Popper hears we're Greysfriars chaps, he'll kick up a fuss on his own. Remember Quelch sent us after Bunter, and if there's trouble he'll put two and two together. Anyway, we'd—What's that?"

As if to prove Harry Wharton's fears a significant sound came to the juniors' ears—the chug-chugging of a motor-boat engine.

With frantic haste the juniors hoisted the boat and locked the boathouse door. They had scarcely done so when a motor-boat ran gently to rest at the landing-stage, and to the juniors' dismay Sir Hilton Popper and Colonel Island jumped out, leaving Pratt in charge of the boat.

"Behind here—quick!" panted Harry Wharton.

The startled juniors slipped round the corner of the building, and the next moment Sir Hilton and the colonel strode past their hiding-place.

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"That's done it!" murmured Wharton. "As I feared, that old tyrant Sir Hilton has taken the matter in hand. I'm afraid you're in for it, Bunter. Only thing you can do is to own up, and tell the truth. The Head's a good sort, and he won't let old Popper have it all his own way. But come along now. You'll better get some of that muck off before seeing Quelch."

Billy Bunter groaned, and followed as they hurried after Sir Hilton and Colonel Bland. The gates were locked, but with many grumbles Gosling, the porter, let them through, and the juniors escorted the dismal Bunter to the bath-room.

They did not wish the unhappy Owl to strike any more trouble. Fortunately for him, however, Coker and the other fellows who were looking for Bunter were at prep, so that the kindly escort was scarcely necessary.

They left Bunter at the bath-room, and while his four chums returned to Study No. 1 Harry Wharton went to make his report to Mr. Quelch.

As it happened he was saved the trouble of reporting. As he was proceeding along the passage he met the Remove-master coming from the direction of the Head's study.

"Ah! You have returned then, Wharton?" exclaimed Mr. Quelch, giving the junior a grim look. "Where is Bunter?"

"He's in the bath-room, sir. He—he's hardly in a fit state to be seen yet." "From what I have just learned," said Mr. Quelch grimly, "I should imagine so. However, you will proceed to your study and remain there, Wharton, as you will probably be sent for shortly by Dr. Locke. I will see to Bunter."

"Y-yes, sir." Harry Wharton went to his study, frowning perplexedly. Mr. Quelch's manner seemed to be unusually grave, and he was feeling worried and uneasy. After explaining to Frank Nugent, he took out his books and commenced prep.

It was not, however, until some twenty minutes later that Wingate looked in with the expected summons from the Head.

"Head's study at once, Wharton!" he said briefly. "Get a move on, kid!"

"Right, Wingate." The captain of Greyfriars departed, and with a very grin at his chum Harry left the study. He found Dr. Locke at his desk, his kind old face grave and harassed. Seated in the room, also, were Sir Hilton Popper and Colonel Bland. And standing before the Head's desk was Bunter.

The fat junior looked a sorry sight. He had cleaned some of the mess from his clothes and person, but he still looked sticky and dishevelled. His fat face was almost green, and his knees were knocking together with fright. He looked, indeed, upon the verge of collapse.

"Wharton," began Dr. Locke sternly. "I have sent for you to substantiate various statements made by Bunter in regard to what took place up the river this afternoon. I may add that I am fully aware that you and other of your Form-fellows were instrumental in obtaining Bunter's escape from Colonel Bland's house-boat this evening. I may add, also, that I am not dealing in this case with Bunter's conduct in the kitchen or the house-boat, disgraceful as it was."

Dr. Locke paused, and Wharton looked the astonishment he felt.

"Unhappily, it is a much graver matter than that," proceeded the Head. "Immediately you and your Form-fellows left this evening, a valuable pearl necklace, the property of Mrs. Bland, was dis-

covered to be missing from her room on the house-boat. I—"

"From her dressing-table, begad!" sported Colonel Bland, his fierce moustache bristling. "It was there when we went to visit my old friend, Sir Hilton Popper, this afternoon. My wife remem—bered distinctly taking this thing out, intending to wear it this evening at dinner. Careless to leave it there, I grant—deuced careless. But that doesn't alter the case. The confounded thing had gone when we got back. It had been stolen, begad—stolen! And that young scoundrel—that young reprobate," stuttered the old gentleman, glaring at the unhappy Bunter, "is the thief! Ha!"

"I agree, my dear colonel," snapped Sir Hilton. "I know the young scoundrel well. As Dr. Locke is fully aware, the boy is untruthful and dishonest. But the young rascal must be forced to disgorge his plunder, and instantly expelled. As a governor of this school I shall insist upon that. The boy is undoubtedly the thief!"

"That," said Dr. Locke, a trifle tartly, "remains to be proved, sir. I am of the opinion that, beyond being discovered on the house-boat, there is not one little bit of evidence against the wretched boy. However, I shall be glad if you will kindly allow me to proceed with the task of questioning this boy."

"Huh!"

It was quite evident that the good old doctor did not see eye to eye with the two gentlemen. He turned to Wharton again as Sir Hilton subsided with a grunt.

"You will now see, Wharton," he said drily, "how vitally important it is for Bunter's sake that you should tell all you know, omitting nothing. You are required to relate what you saw of Bunter's movements this afternoon."

Harry Wharton was dumfounded. He stole a glance at the wretched Bunter. He did not know how much Bunter had told, but he realised it would be foolish and hopeless to keep anything back. And next moment he was telling all he knew.

As it happened, Bunter had realised the serious position he was in, and had made the best of it to tell the truth. In one respect, however, Bunter had unfortunately omitted one detail of his adventures—a very important detail.

He had omitted to relate Pratt the driver's strange conduct on the island. He had related how he had escaped while the man was laying night-lines. But the other incident—the hiding of the mysterious package under the root of the tree—he had told nothing.

As a matter of fact, in the rush and excitement of after events, he had completely forgotten about that little matter—had forgotten, indeed, that the package was in his trousers-pocket. But he was soon to be reminded in an extremely unpleasant manner.

"Ah, thank you, Wharton," said the Head, as the junior stopped at last. "Your story only confirms my belief that in this case Bunter is speaking the truth, and that the only evidence is the bare fact that he was discovered aboard the house-boat."

"And evidence enough, begad!" sneered the colonel. "My cook—who, I may state, has been with us for twelve years, and who is above suspicion—has assured me that not a soul boarded the house-boat from the time we left until she discovered this—this young scoundrel in the pantry."

"Evidence enough to hang a man!" chimed in Sir Hilton angrily. "But," he added, turning suddenly upon the shivering Bunter, "unless you wish the police brought into the matter, I advise you to

confess and to return the stolen article. Do you hear me?"

Bunter pumped at being thus addressed. And then an unexpected flash of spirit shone in his eyes.

"I don't care! I've told you I know nothing about the rotten thing!" he cried almost hoarsely. "It wasn't me. I've never seen it. I haven't got the beastly thing!"

"Bunter," said Dr. Locke sternly, "how dare—"

"You—you insolent young scamp!" gasped Sir Hilton Popper. "I shouldn't be surprised if you had it on your person now. By g-d, I shouldn't! Turn out your pockets, you young rascal, at once!"

Bunter obeyed mechanically. The Head did not move, though his anger was rising rapidly at the baronet's interference.

In grim silence he watched as Bunter fumbled in his left trousers-pocket and produced a broken penknife and a huge chunk of toffen with a piece of string adhering to it. There were several other strange exhibits also, but no pearl necklace.

Bunter stuffed the lot back again, and tried the right-hand pocket. He brought to light a handkerchief—a dingy, atrocious specimen that brought a deep frown to the Head's face. His next dive brought forth a small paper package, and as he drew it out, Billy Bunter started in sudden recollection.

"Ha!" exclaimed Sir Hilton Popper grimly. "What have we here?"

He stepped forward and took the thing from the flustered Bunter's hand. With almost childish eagerness he tore off the paper wrapping and disclosed to view a magnificent pearl necklace!

THE NINTH CHAPTER.

Saving Bunter!

THERE was a grim silence. Even Sir Hilton had scarcely expected the fat youth to have the stolen property upon him still. As for Dr. Locke and Wharton, they were dumfounded.

But perhaps the most astounded of all was William George Bunter himself. And, obtuse as he was, Bunter realised he was in a desperate hole.

Sir Hilton-Popper spoke first.

"Huh! I knew it—I knew it!" he stammered triumphantly. "The—the young rascal!"

"Begad!" ejaculated the colonel, his eyes hardening.

Dr. Locke sank back into his chair. It was a severe blow for the kindly old gentleman.

"Bunter!" he gasped. "Bunter! Wretched boy! How came that in your possession? Is it possible—?"

"I—I say, sir," stammered Bunter, "I found it, as-sir. Really I did!"

"What?" "Oh dear! I—I found it on the island, sir," gasped Bunter tearfully. "I—I only just remembered. I saw that man Pratt hide it under a tree, and—I took it to see what it was. I—I shoved it in my pocket, and forgot all about it until now. That awful villain Pratt must have taken it!"

Colonel Bland grew almost purple in the face with indignation.

"You—a abandoned young villain!" he spluttered. "After—after this you dare to attempt to throw your crime upon the shoulders of an innocent man! Begad, I was inclined to be merciful to the young rascal, doctor. But after this—"

The colonel paused, overcame, and at that moment Harry Wharton stepped forward.

(Continued on page 15.)

THE MAGNET LIBRARY.—No. 698.



All Boys and Girls Who Are Fond of Trekking and Camping Out Should Follow the Splendid Articles, By AN OLD HAND.

HOW TO BUILD A BIVOUAC.

IT may happen that you find yourself stranded out of doors without a tent, miles from anywhere. You never can tell. Your tent might get blown down and landy torn in a gale. What is to be done? Does the old hand get excited? Does he "go off the deep end" and get angry? Does he grouse, grumble, or complain? Does he—fiddlesticks!

He knows what to do and how to do it. What he does is to put up a temporary sheet, called a "bivouac." He gets two forked sticks, one long pole, some bits of stick for pegs, and, if he has got a ground-sheet, a blanket, or a big macintosh, he manages to rig up a shelter from sun, wind, and rain. The diagram (No. 1) shows you exactly how he does it. It is quite simple. You should try it when you are in camp. You never know when the ability to

summer's night you will camp outside your tent and do star-pitch.

HOW TO MAKE A SLEEPING-SACK.

You want two blankets. Sew up three sides. Leave one end open so that you can get into it. (See diagram No. 2.) That is one way, and it is simple. Another kind of sleeping-sack has a sort of flap, which you can peg out over your head. (See diagram No. 3.) I have used both kinds. The one with the flap is very useful if there is a wind, or if it comes on to rain. Of course, you can buy a sleeping-sack ready made, but I am taking it for granted that you are going to make your own kit as far as you can.

HOW NOT TO GET THE "JUMPS."

Many is the time I have taken people to the walls of a bedroom before, and likewise, many is the time they have got what I call "the jumps."

You see, out of doors sounds carry a long way, and with your ear close to the ground at night you may hear many a queer sound—a sudden squeak, a bark, a twitter, feet pattering along, paws scraping, a curious thumping. The old hand is used to all this, and it does not bother him. He knows these sounds to be the noises of the wood-folk—birds and animals.

But the newcomer in camp may find it difficult to get to sleep on the first night, and, also, he may fear. He may "get the wind up." I have seen big, strong men quite upset out of doors on a dark night. The thing to remember is that there is nothing to do you the least harm. Most wild creatures of the fields and woods are much more afraid of you. So there is no need to fear the curious noises of nighttime in camp. Some people fear a dark night, anyhow. But with a little practice in night-tramping across country you soon get over that. Darkness is quite harmless, and can do no harm to you or anyone else.

TAKE A CAMERA. IF YOU HAVE ONE.

If you have got a camera, take it with you to camp. It is very interesting to you and to your friends if you can keep a photographic record of your various tramps and camps. Really, posted in an album they will always remain with you as a faithful record of healthy holidays, and when the winter comes and you can camp

no more (unless you like winter camping!—I do), you can turn over your album and recall the summer days once more.

WHY CARRY A STAFF?

A rough ash-staff, with the bark left on it, is a useful thing to carry when on the trail. It is really more useful than an ordinary walking-stick, because a staff not only helps you along over rough ground, but also you can use it as a tent-pole; you can jump over a gate or a hedge with it; you can use it to reach anything out of arm's length. In a hundred and one different ways your staff will come in useful to you on the trail and in camp. A woodman's staff should be of rough, un-barked ash about five feet in length, and tapering to the end. You should slightly char the end of it in your camp-fire to harden the wood. Then it does not wear down and splays out when using it on the



Diagram No. 1.

rig up a "bivvy" may come in handy. The man who learns how to make things by making them is the man who wins out of doors. So set to work and have a shot at making a woodman's bivvy.

In building your bivvy always take care to have the back of it to the wind (see sketch). If it is cold at night light a small fire in front of the bivvy with a "night-log," which will go on burning for some time. This will keep you warm enough to sleep in comfort. Do not use the ground-sheet you are going to sleep on the back of the bivvy. Rather than do that do without a bivvy, and sleep right out in the open, finding a dell, ditch, or hedge to shelter you from the wind. If it rains all the time pack up and tramp on. Do not lie in the wet.

DOING "STAR-PITCH."

Doing "star-pitch" means stretching out of doors without any tent, but, or shelter of any kind whatever. In the summer months this is good sport, and, moreover, it means that you need not carry the weight of a tent with you. You want to be pretty certain that the weather is "set fair" before you try star-pitch for the first time in your life. The old hand often prefers star-pitch to a tent. You find a cosy spot, well sheltered from the wind by trees or rocks or some other obstacle, and spread your ground-sheet and get into your sleeping-sack. Look up at the stars for a moment and you'll get to understand the real joy of doing star-pitch. Then close your eyes and sail away to the land of Nod.

In the morning you will find your sleeping-sack all soaking wet with dew. Get up. Let your sack dry in the sun. Turn it inside out to air it. Wash, eat, pack up—and walk on. How is that for a life? No bother—no worry, as free as the birds. Once you are used to star-pitch you will never want to sleep inside a house again; and on a hot mid-



Diagram No. 2.

hard roads. Cut your initials or sign upon it so that you know it if it gets mixed up with other sticks.

WEATHER WISDOM IN CAMP.

It is most useful to be able to forecast the weather, and every old hand knows something of weather wisdom.

Here are a few old sayings on weather lore which are fairly reliable.

It will rain if:

The scarlet pimpernel closes its petals, spiders strengthen their webs, birds fly low, fish swim near the surface, stars twinkle, trout leap high, a slack rope tightens, you can see a large circle round the moon, you see rainbows in the morning, bats speak on the wing, the convolvulus closes its petals, the moon rises large and red, sheep turn their tails to the wind, rabbits feed in numbers on sunny afternoon (look out for wet night), you see low clouds moving quickly, smoke beats downwards, sun rises red.

"Red morning, shepherd's warning;
Red night, shepherd's delight."

If you can see a pale yellow or greenish sunset.

It will be fine if:

There is a heavy morning fog or mist, there is a south wind (brings heat), there is dew on grass at night.

"When the dew is on the grass,
Rain will never come to pass."

If you see birds flying high, spiders' webs on bushes or stable fields, each web covered with dew-drops, there are cowboys across the road from tree to tree, there is a clear, red sky (not clouds) at night.

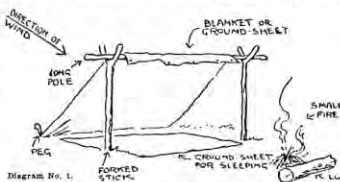


Diagram No. 3.

The House-Boat Mystery!

(Continued from page 13.)

"Excuse me, sir," he said quietly, "but may I ask, Colonel Bland—"

"What is it, boy?" barked the colonel.

"It is useless pleading for your school-fellow, my lad. I have made up my mind—"

"It's not that, sir," said Harry respectfully; "but I feel it my duty to point out something which has just occurred to me. Bunter was not the only person who boarded the house-boat this afternoon—that is, if Pratt has his quarters on board—"

"Yes, he has!" snapped the colonel irritably. "Formerly he slept in a tent on shore; but recently—three days ago, in fact—I made room for him aboard the boat. But—but confound it, boy, what the—"

"Then, how and where did he change his clothes this afternoon if he never went on board?" asked Harry quietly.

"He had been in the river, and I noticed myself that he had a different suit on tonight."

"Begad!"

The colonel gave a start, and Dr. Locke straightened himself abruptly. Sir Hilton Popper, however, gave an impatient snort. He had already settled in his own mind that Bunter was the thief.

"Stuff and nonsense!" he snapped. "I attach not the slightest importance to such a trivial point. Huh!"

"And I, on the contrary," said Dr. Locke quietly, "think it is an extremely important point—especially in view of Bunter's statement regarding this man."

Sir Hilton. I confess that I myself have little faith in Bunter's story; and the evidence against him now is overwhelming. But, at the same time, in strict justice to the boy, his story concerning Pratt should be investigated. The man should be given an opportunity of explaining the point raised by Wharton."

Colonel Bland gnawed his moustache fiercely. But he was a kindly man at heart, despite his blunt manner. Moreover, he was a lover of justice.

"Ha! Hm! Very well, Dr. Locke!" he growled grudgingly. "The man is to be at the boathouse now, and if you wish to send for him I will raise no objections. But I promise you that he will speedily explain the matter to our entire satisfaction."

"It is a ridiculous waste of time!" said Sir Hilton bitterly.

The Head turned to Harry Wharton.

"Wharton, you will proceed with all speed to the boathouse. Bring the man Pratt back with you, and kindly refrain from making any statement regarding the case to him."

"Yes, sir."

Harry Wharton left the study, and for some moments there was a silence. Then Dr. Locke began to cross-examine the unhappy Owl of the Remove again. But Bunter could only persist fearfully in his story; and the Head had brought nothing fresh to light by the time Wharton returned, twenty minutes later.

As he entered the room with Pratt at his heels, the Head gave the man a sharp glance. The fellow's face was pale, and he twiddled his cap between his fingers nervously as he glanced round the assembly uneasily.

"Ah, thank you, Wharton!" said the Head. "You may go now, my boy!"

Harry Wharton gave the Owl a com-

placating glance, and left the room. His face decided. In his own mind he felt convinced that Bunter was innocent of the charge, despite the overwhelming evidence against him; and despite his knowledge of the substantial truth with known statements—and large doses of honesty.

Harry proceeded to Study No. 1, and there he found his four schoolmates grouped round the table, gazing over some photographic films. Sir de Harry's entrance they welcomed with eagerly.

"Well, what's happened?" is the chatter coming down," asked Bob Cherry.

"Yes, my poor old Bunter, I'm afraid," answered Harry gravely. "He's done it this time, and no mistake!"

And he related the full story to his astounded schoolmates. He had scarcely finished when Johnny Bull gave a sudden start, and, picking out a film from those on the table, he handed it to Harry Wharton, his eyes gleaming excitedly.

"Look at that, Harry," he said quietly. "It's the snap of the house-boat I took this afternoon. I've worked like a nigger to get a few printed off, and I'm glad I did now. If that doesn't prove your point—that that chap Pratt's a liar—nothing will! Look there—that window!"

Harry took the photo wonderingly. For a moment he gazed at it, and then quite suddenly he gave a violent start. The photo had come out splendidly, and did Johnny Bull credit. It showed every detail of the house-boat; it did more than that. It showed a face at one of the windows—a startled face, tiny, but clear and unmistakable. It was the face of Pratt, the motor-driver.

"Well, my only topper!" breathed Harry Wharton. "What a jolly queer (Continued on next page.)"

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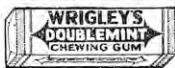
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The House-Boat Mystery!

(Continued from page 15.)

thing! Then—then that rotter was on board when we took the motor-boat back, after all! I can see it all now. He must have heard you shout, Bob, and glanced through the window just the identical second Johnny snapped. The Head must see it!"

And, without further ado, he hurried out of the study. He was knocking at the Head's door a moment later, and almost before Dr. Locke's voice was heard, he had entered the room.

The motor-boat driver was still standing before the desk, and Dr. Locke had evidently been questioning him.

"Well, Wharton, what is it?" demanded the Head, looking round with a touch of annoyance. "If you wish—"

"It's most important, sir," said Harry eagerly. "Excuse me, sir, but does Pratt still persist in stating that he did not board the house-boat this afternoon?"

"Yes, my lad, he does!" snorted Colonel Bland, before anyone else could answer. "As I expected, my man has given an entirely satisfactory explanation. Though he took up his quarters on the boat three days ago, he did not move all his belongings, and he, therefore, changed his clothes in the tent, and declares he did not set foot on the house-boat. Ha!"

"If Pratt states that," said Harry, clearly and distinctly, "then he is not speaking the truth!"

"What," exploded the colonel, "do you mean, sir?"

For answer, the junior stepped forward, and placed the film on the desk before the Head.

"Bull took that snapshot at four o'clock this afternoon, sir," he said quietly. "It explains itself."

The Head took up the film, and, adjusting his pince-nez, he peered closely at it. For a moment he studied it, and then, quite suddenly, he started, and without a word handed it to the irate and astonished colonel. There was no need to speak; as Wharton had said, it explained itself.

It took the colonel a little longer to discover the significance of the photo; but, when he did, the result was explosive. His eyes nearly started from his head, and his face flushed red with rage.

"You—you scoundrel! You—you scoundrel!" he stuttered, shaking his fist at the startled Pratt. "You—you've deceived me—you've lied to me! This is your face at the window—the window of my wife's room! And the dressing-table upon which the necklace was left is exactly below the window! Degrad! Explain that, you rascal, if you can!"

Pratt took the photo flung at him with hands that trembled. As his eyes fell upon it he staggered back, his face ashen.

"I—I—I deny it! It's a lie—a trick!" he panted. "Those young hounds—"

Pratt's lips quivered, and he gave a hunted look round. But the game was up, and he knew it. A glance at the colonel's determined face decided him.

"I—I own up!" he muttered sullenly, almost in a whisper. "I—I confess, sir!"

And he did. In hoarse, low tones, he told how, on reaching the house-boat, he had hurried straight to his quarters, and changed. It was when passing the window of Mrs. Bland's room afterwards that he had seen the pearl necklace on the dressing-table, and had succumbed to the sudden temptation to steal it. The cook had been busy in the kitchen at the moment he boarded the boat, and he had taken good care she did not see him leave it. Watching his chance, he had carried his sudden clothes to the tent, thus covering up his tracks. Afterwards, he had become afraid of the necklace being found on him, and, when visiting the island to set his night-lines, he had conceived the idea of hiding it there.

"And it was you who suggested that this—this unfortunate boy, Bunter, had stolen it!" exclaimed Colonel Bland, when the man's mumbling confession was ended. "You—you contemptible scamp! I will not prosecute—much as you deserve it! Go! And if you are not gone, bag and baggage, when I reach the house-boat, I will have you arrested! I will, begad!"

Without raising his head, the man slunk to the door, and went out. As the door closed upon him, Dr. Locke rose to his feet, and shook hands warmly with Harry Wharton.

"But for you, Wharton," he exclaimed thankfully, "this matter might never have been cleared up! A great injustice would undoubtedly have been done. You have saved your school-fellow, Bunter, from expulsion!"

"Undoubtedly, doctor—undoubtedly!" said Colonel Bland, shaking hands warmly with the blushing Harry Wharton. "You're a fine fellow, Horton—Wharton—what's your name! I should like to see you again, begad! Come to tea some time—come to-morrow, and bring your chums—the young rascals! Ha!"

Then Dr. Locke turned to Billy Bunter, whose fat face wore an expression of smug satisfaction.

"As for you, Bunter," he said, in a tone which made Bunter jump, "you may congratulate yourself upon a very narrow escape! Despite your innocence upon the more serious charge, you seem to have acted throughout in a questionable and scandalous manner! But for the fact that you have already suffered considerably, I would administer the flogging you so richly deserve! As it is, you are rated for a fortnight! You may go!"

Billy Bunter assumed a deeply-injured expression.

"But—but, I s-sus-say, sir," he stammered, "how can I take advantage of Colonel Bland's invite to tea with him when I'm gated?"

"Bless my soul!" gasped the Head. "Bunter, you stupid boy, you know perfectly well that you were not included in Colonel Bland's invitation!"

"Ha, ha! Let him come, doctor—let the rascal come!" chuckled the colonel. "All's well that ends well! He raided my pantry, and made a ghastly mess! But I forgive him—freely, begad!"

"Very well—if you desire it," said the Head, smiling grimly. "You may go, then, Bunter!"

And Bunter, needless to state, did go!

But Billy Bunter's troubles were not yet over.

A few minutes later, Harry Wharton was relating what had happened in Study No. 1, when a sudden commotion, followed by a series of ear-splitting shrieks, was heard in the passage outside. Rushing out in alarm, the Famous Five were just in time to see the fat figure of Billy Bunter dash past with a burly Fifth-Former in hot pursuit.

It was Horace Coker. Undoubtedly, Billy Bunter's troubles were not yet over!

THE END.

(See my "Chat" for further particulars about next week's grand story.)



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