

Starring Harry Wharton & Co., and Billy Bunter in—

RUCTIONS ON THE RIVER!

By
FRANK RICHARDS



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*Billy Bunter's
Own Paper* 2^d

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 STOP
PRESS
NEWS

SENTENCED TO THE STEWPOT!

An "egg-citing" story of schoolboy adventure on a cannibal island, starring Jack Jolly & Co. of St. Sam's and their funny headmaster Dr. Birchermall.

By DICKY NUGENT

Ratter-tat-bang-bang!
"Trot in, fathead!" mermered Dr. Birchermall sleepily.

And Jack Jolly & Co. chuckled. The chums of the St. Sam's Fourth were finding preshus little to chuckle about now that they were the prisoners of a tribe of savages on a troppical island. But the Head's little mistake struck them as commical.

"He fancies he's back at St. Sam's," grinned Frank Fearless. "Wouldn't he give something to be back there in reality?"

"Ha, ha! Yes, rather!"
The juniors' larfter woke up Dr. Birchermall with a start.

"Bless my sole!" he gasped. "For a moment I thought I was in my study again, and that somebody had just knocked on the door! But all the time I find I am lying—"

"You usually are, sir, aren't you?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"
"Lying on the beach of this beestly island!" finished the Head, with a glare at the yewmorous Fearless. "What's that drumming sound, boys—the sound I mistook for someone knocking on my study door?"

"It's the cannibals over there, sir, doing their war-dance," replied Jolly, frowning, as he gazed at the natives who were dancing round a big fire on the sandy beach. "What you can hear is the beating of their tom-toms."

The Head shuddered. "This beats the hand!" he groaned. "I suppose they are going to perform some weerd, barbarick rites to selly-brate our capture!"

Hymer Kerr, whose flight from England with Mr. Fearless' stolen plans had led them all to their present plite, larfed grimly.

"We shall soon know all about it," he said. "Here they come!"

A crowd of natives came prancing towards them, headed by a grinning savage who wore a chef's hat and a white apron, and carried a big soup ladle in his hand. Dr. Birchermall brightened up at the site of him, and of the big black pot which the natives were carrying in their midst.

"Perhaps they're not such a bad lot of fellows, after all," he said hoapfully. "It certainly looks as if they are bringing us some soup. If they are, I, for one, can do justiss to it!"

"Same here!"
The procession stopped before the prisoners, and the monotonous beating

of the tom-toms ceased. Dr. Birchermall put on a nervuss and ingratiating smile as the island chef paused in front of him.

"G-g-good afternoon!" he stammered. "Nice weather we're having lately, aren't we? Er—isn't it getting rather near dinner-time?"

The islander showed his teeth in a broad grin.

"Soon at um dinner," he chuckled, in pigeon English. "Muchee soup, plenty good!"

"Ripping!" said the Head, his mouth fairly watering. "The sooner I get mine, the better. I'm famished!"

The savage, looked serprized.

"No can do," he said. "Plenty good soup for us fellers, what you tink?"

Dr. Birchermall frowned.

"Look here, don't be greedy and skoff the lot yourselves, you know. Surely you can spare some for me! I'm starving, I tell you!"

"No savvy. You makee soup."

"Me make the soup?" It was the Head's turn to look serprized now. "But I'm a complete dud at cooking. I can't make soup for toffy!"

The chef grinned more broadly than ever.

"No savvy. Us fellers boil um pot, you make soup plenty good. What you tink?"

"He duzzent mean he wants you to make the soup, sir," eggspained Fearless, as the Head stared blankly at the white-capped savage. "HE MEANS HE WANTS TO MAKE YOU INTO SOUP!"

A garstly pallor spread over the Head's dial at these words. He gave a yell of protest.



"Yarooooo! Lemme alone, you black rotters! I refuse to be made into soup! Help!"

"Keep a stiff upper lip, sir," said Jack Jolly. "We'll do our best to save you. I beleeve I'm working my bonds loose now."

"Good old Jolly!" breathed Fearless. "Try not to get into such a stew, sir. We'll get you out of it somehow or other, depend on it! Keep cool!"

"A fat lot of good it is telling me to keep cool when I'm going to be stewed!" hooted the Head, as the islanders seazed him and lifted him into the pot. "Help!"

"Don't worrit, sir," grinned Pete

Leary, the leader of the mutineers from the Mary Ann. "It'll be hours afore they start cookin' yer; an' a lot can 'appen in that time. Did you say you're breakin' loose, young feller?"

"Yes, rather! I've got my hands free now," panted Jolly. "In a few minnits I can release the rest of you, and we can put up a fight for it."

Pete Leary's cunning, crafty eyes travelled across the bay to the Mary Ann and the Saucy Sal, which were both at anchor off the shore.

"I know a much better plan nor that," he grinned. "Now we're in this pickle there's no 'arm in a-tellin' yer that all the blokes as disappeared from the Mary Ann are locked up in the 'old!"

"My hat!"

"If you can sneak down to the water unseen an' swim across to the ship you can release 'em all," went on Pete Leary. "There's arms an' ammunition on board, an' if they make up a rescue party an' arm themselves proper they can beat these here natives easy!"

"Few!"

"It's a risky bizziness, old chap," mermered Frank Fearless. "The sea is simply swarming with sharks."

Jolly's eyes flashed. "So much the better!" he said. "A scrap or two with sharks will relevee the monotony of the long swim!"

"Good old Jolly!"

Two minnits later, while the natives were bizzily parading up and down the beach, carrying Dr. Birchermall in the stewpot on their brawny shoulders, Jack Jolly slipped down to the water's edge.

He gave a last look back before plunging into the sea. The prisoners were all tied up, so no hands were waved in farewell; but to make up for that there were plenty of waving palms.

Splash!
Without making the slitest sound, Jolly entered the water. Soon he was swimming out into the bay with the speed of a torpedo!

Shark after shark attacked the indomitable kaptin of the St. Sam's Fourth in the course of that fateful swim. But Jack Jolly was as slippery as an eel, and each time one of the monsters opened its grate jaws it was only to find that its intended pray had eluded it! Twice he had to stop to drive back too attentive attackers. A vicious kick on the snout sent one spinning back into the ocean depths, and a terrifick punch on the head rendered another horse de combat.

It was the first time on record, Jolly reflected wimsically, that a St. Sam's fellow had administered the knock-out to a man-eating shark!

The neat hull of the Mary Ann loomed up before him at last, and Jolly headed for the rope-ladder that still dangled in the water where the islanders had left it.

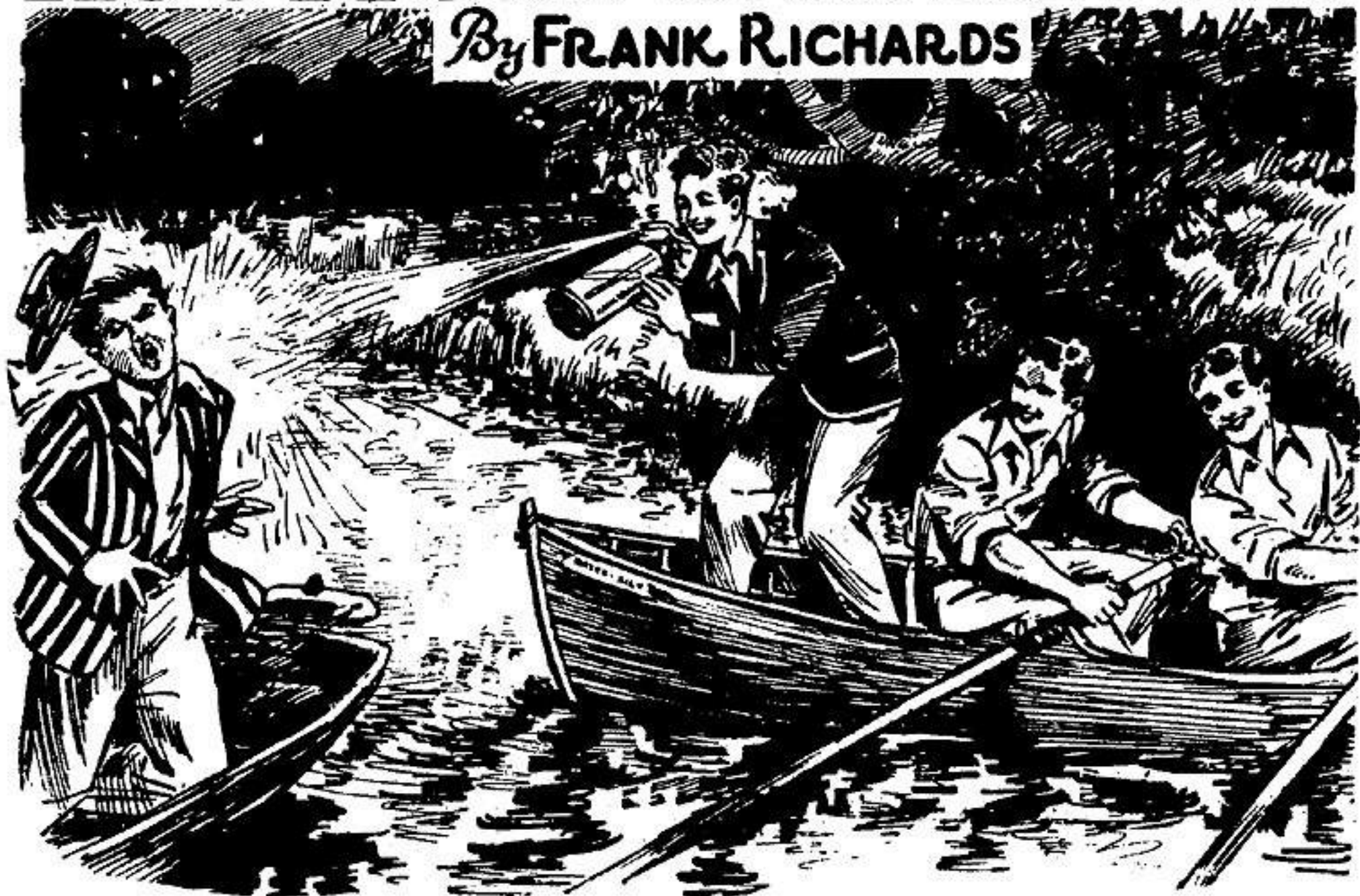
Meanwhile, on the island, the Head was yelling for help ever more loudly as he felt himself jolted about in the stewpot and heard the tom-toms beating more and more furiously.

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THE CHUMS OF GREYFRIARS FLOAT INTO MYSTERY, FUN AND
EXCITEMENT ON OLD FATHER THAMES!

RUCTIONS *on the* RIVER!

By FRANK RICHARDS



Morning On The River!

BILLY BUNTER stirred in his sleep.

He did not wake.

Rolled up in blankets and rugs, on the boat *Water-Lily*, moored to a bunch of willows on the banks of the Thames, the Owl of the Remove was sleeping as soundly as if he had been in bed in the dormitory at Greyfriars School.

It was a bright August morning.

Five fellows had turned out of the tent ashore. They had not dressed yet—and they had towels over their arms. Harry Wharton & Co. were going to begin the day by a dip in the river.

First, however, they called Bunter. Bunter was not likely to want a dip in the river. Had it been suggested that Billy Bunter should take a bath, he would have replied reproachfully that he thought it was a holiday!

But there was no reason why Bunter should not begin getting breakfast while the other fellows had their dip.

That would save time and enable the Greyfriars party to make an earlier start up the river. So they called Bunter! They called him singly, and they called him all together! They called him long, and they called him loud. But answer there came none. Bunter slept on!

"Bunter!" shouted Harry Wharton. "Wake up!"

"Turn out, you fat slacker!" hooted Johnny Bull.

Bob Cherry opened fire with the soda syphon—and Ponsonby got the benefit of it!

"Show a leg, Bunter!" howled Frank Nugent.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry, in a voice that might have awakened all late sleepers between Kingston and Sunbury. "Get a move on, Bunter! Bunter! Bunt! Bunt!"

"The snoozefulness is terrific!" remarked Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh, with a dusky grin.

"Bunter!" roared all the five together.

Snore!

"I'll wake him!" said Bob. He jumped into the boat.

The *Water-Lily* rocked at her moorings as he landed, and the fat figure in the blankets rolled a little. But Bunter did not wake. He gave a grunt, and settled down again to snore.

Bob leaned over him with a cheery grin on his face. He put his mouth about an inch from a fat ear, collected all his energy, and bawled.

Stentor, of ancient times, might have envied that bawl! It might have awakened the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus all at once. It even awakened Billy Bunter!

"Bunter!" bawled Bob in that fat ear.

Bunter's snore changed into a startled gasp! His eyes opened and he started up in alarm.

Crack!

A bullet head established contact with a nose!

Perhaps Bob had not expected Bunter to awaken so suddenly! At all events, he did not withdraw his head in time! That bullet head smote his nose like a mallet; and Bob gave another roar—this time expressive of anguish. He stumbled and sat down in the *Water-Lily*, clasping both hands to his nose.

"Oh!" roared Bob. "Ow! Oooh! My boko! Ow!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" came from the bank. Four members of the Co. seemed amused.

Billy Bunter, with his head emerging from the blankets, like that of a tortoise from its shell, blinked round him and rubbed a fat head with a fat hand.

"Ow!" he gasped. "I say, you fellows, wharrer marrer? I've banged my head on something!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You blithering owl, it was my nose!" howled Bob Cherry. "You've knocked it right through to the back of my head!"

"Eh!" Bunter groped for his spectacles, jammed them on his little fat nose, and blinked at Bob. "Serve you right! Wharrer you waking a

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fellow up for? Think I'm going to get up early in the hole?"

"It's seven o'clock, Bunter!" called out Harry Wharton.

Bunter gave him a withering glare.

"Seven o'clock!" he howled. "Think I'm going to get up at seven o'clock? You can call me again at half-past nine, if you like."

Bob Cherry scrambled to his feet.

He had a pain in his nose. He felt as if it had been driven in, like a nail.

Billy Bunter settled down again to sleep. Bunter was good for at least two hours more. If Harry Wharton & Co. fancied that Billy Bunter had joined the river party with any idea of getting up early in the morning, the sooner they realised that that was a mistake, the better. Billy Bunter settled down for another two hours of repose.

He remained in happy repose not for two hours, but for two seconds! At the end of that brief space of time he was aroused again—by Bob's grasp dragging the blankets away.

"Beast!" roared Bunter, sitting up. "Gimme those blankets!"

"Turn out!" hooted Bob.

"Shan't!" howled Bunter.

"We're starting under an hour, Bunter!" said Harry Wharton. "Don't you want any brekker before we go?"

"You can start in two hours!" said Bunter warmly. "I don't mind having my breakfast in the boat, if you fellows get it all ready before you start. I never was a fellow to give trouble. I can sit in the boat and eat my brekker. That will be all right!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Mind how you cook the bacon and sosses, though!" said Bunter. "Don't burn them to cinders—and don't leave them underdone, either! You know how I like them—no need for me to keep on telling you all over again. And mind you cook enough!"

"Oh! Is that all?" gasped the captain of the Greyfriars Remove.

"Say, six rashers and a dozen sausages," said Bunter. "I like toast, too—make plenty of toast."

"Anything else?" grinned Frank Nugent.

"Well, put the butter on thick!" said Bunter. "I like it thick—and I don't want any of your stinginess with the grub!"

"Get on with it!" said Johnny Bull. "You've only got to give your orders, you know!"

"Well, open a fresh jar of jam," said Bunter. "I finished the one that was in the boat last night. I suppose you've got a tablespoon? I like a tablespoon for jam."

"Can't you think of anything else?"

"Well, if I do, I'll mention it later!" said Bunter. "I want to go to sleep now! Gimme those blankets, Cherry!"

"Here they come!" answered Bob.

He gathered blankets and rugs into a bundle, swung that bundle high into the air, and landed it on the

Owl of the Remove with a terrific whop.

There was a loud yell under the bundle.

"Yaroooh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you silly chump, wharrer you up to?" shrieked Bunter. "I say! Ow! Ow!"

Bob gathered the bundle again.

"Still want the blankets?" he asked.

"Eh? Yes, you fathead!"

Whop!

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow! Beast! Will you stoppit?" howled Billy Bunter. "Will you stop playing the goat, you blithering chump? How's a fellow to get to sleep?"

"The howfulness is terrific!" chortled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Are you turning out now?" roared Bob.

"No!" roared back Bunter.

"Where's the boathook?" gasped Bob. "I'll puncture him!" Bob Cherry sorted out the boathook. "Now, you fat fraud, turn out and get brekker while we're having a dip! Jump for it!"

"Shan't!" yelled Bunter. "If you think that I'm going to slave at cooking for a lot of lazy slackers, I can jolly well say plainly to begin with I—Yoo-hoo-hoooooop! Keep that boathook away, you beast!"

One poke from the boathook caused William George Bunter to bound up! Another caused him to bound out of the boat. A third sent him scuttling up the bank, yelling on his top note.

Bob threw down the boathook and jumped out of the boat.

"Come on!" he said. "Get busy, Bunter! If you haven't got brekker ready when we come back, we'll make you wash!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the Famous Five went off for their dip, leaving Billy Bunter glaring after them with a glare that almost cracked his spectacles.

Bunter Gets Breakfast!

"ERE, you!" Billy Bunter blinked round peevishly.

Left alone in the camp of the Greyfriars boating party, Bunter was not busy at getting breakfast.

He was too deeply indignant even to think of such a proceeding.

Bunter had joined the Famous Five for that trip on the Thames with some misgivings. He had had a sort of premonition that they might want to make him work!

Mr. Quelch, the Remove master, found it hard enough to make Bunter work at school. Any fellow who fancied that he was going to make Bunter work in the holidays was likely to find that he had a still harder job in hand.

It was said of old that it is wise to resist the beginnings! Bunter was going to resist the beginnings!

If he got breakfast once, he might be expected to get it again! If he started washing up, he might be expected to go on washing up! If he pulled an oar in the boat, they would

always be wanting him to pull! If he took a turn with the towrope, there would be more and more turns to follow.

Obviously, this sort of thing had to be squashed at the start, if Bunter was going to enjoy the river trip at all!

So Bunter, far from getting breakfast, sat on a camp-stool, and, having found a bunch of bananas among the stores, proceeded to demolish the same—as a snack to last him till the breakfast was prepared by other hands.

The Famous Five were out of sight along the winding bank.

Bunter did not return to the boat and the blankets. He did not want to be rooted out again with first-aid from a boathook. But he wasn't going to cook the breakfast! Not Bunter! At the very start of the Thames trip, he was going to put his foot down on that sort of thing! Then they would know where they stood!

He was negotiating his seventh banana, when a voice fell on his ears, and he blinked round at a man, who came slouching along the bank, and stopped when he saw the camp.

The man addressed Bunter, not in agreeable tones!

Bunter blinked at him far from agreeably, too! Bunter was not in a good temper! A fellow rooted out of bed at seven in the morning, and expected to work, could hardly be in a good temper.

Bunter gave that man a contemptuous blink.

He did not like his looks.

The man was not elegant to look at. He wore an old jacket that had been made for a much bigger man, and that flapped about his thighs. To set that right, however, he had a pair of trousers that had been made for a smaller man, and that hardly reached his boots.

His boots caught the eye—one of them being a tan boot in fairly good condition, the other an old black leather boot that had seen its best days long ago. A green-spotted muffler was wrapped under an unshaven chin; and a tousled head was surmounted by an old fur cap that looked like an exceedingly mangy cat.

Altogether, the man was not a pleasure to the eye; he was rather a blot on the landscape.

He stood and looked over the camp, glanced at the moored boat, glanced round as if to ascertain whether anyone else was about, and then fixed a pair of fishy eyes on the fat Owl of Greyfriars.

"Ere, you!" he said. "All on your own, what?"

"Yes!" rapped Bunter. "And I don't want company!"

It was not a polite reply; but Bunter was not feeling polite. He was peeved. He had turned out early; he was, of course, hungry, and there seemed to be nothing to eat, except bananas, unless he cooked something. Bunter had no politeness to waste on that dilapidated tramp.

Having made that answer, Bunter turned his back to the man in the

fur cap, and resumed chewing bananas.

He supposed that the man would slouch on his way. But that supposition proved unfounded. The man stepped behind him as he sat on the camp-stool, and shot out a boot!

Billy Bunter gave a startled howl, and pitched forward, rolling over, camp-stool and all.

"Oh!" he gasped, as he rolled. "Gurrgh!"

He sat up, gurgling. A section of banana seemed to have slipped down the wrong way, as Bunter received that sudden jolt.

The man in the fur cap stared down at him and grinned.

"'Ave another?" he inquired.

"Gooooorroogh!"

The man in the fur cap picked up the camp-stool, set it up, and sat down on it!

Bunter, still gurgling, watched that cool proceeding in indignation and surprise. He staggered to his feet.

"Urrgh! Look here, that's my—gurrgh—camp-stool!" he gasped. "Look here, you jolly well—gurrgh!—gerroff my camp-stool, see?"

"Push me off of it!" invited the man in the fur cap.

Billy Bunter would gladly have pushed him off the camp-stool and rolled him in the Thames afterwards. But he decided not to attempt to do so.

It dawned on Bunter that the man in the fur cap was one of the ruffians who haunt the river in the summer, rather like lions seeking what they may devour. It was an early hour—nobody was likely to be about yet; and coming on a solitary schoolboy in a camp, all on his own, was pie to the man in the fur cap. He grinned at the dismayed Owl of the Remove.

"Can't say a civil good-morning to a bloke, hay?" he asked.

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "Yes! Certainly! Good-morning!"

"I been wondering," went on the man in the fur cap, "where I was going to get a bite of breakfast. This 'ere is luck! You going to give a bloke breakfast?"

"I—I—no—you see—" stammered Bunter.

"You'd rather I chucked you into the water?" asked the man in the fur cap. "I'd do it as soon as look at you!"

"Oh! No! I—I mean—"

"You can 'and me them bananas! I'll go on with them bananas, while you get a man a spot of breakfast! I got a good appetite!" said the man in the fur cap agreeably. "I'm a good-tempered cove when I get enough! When I don't, I get rorty! And if Alf 'Opkins gets rorty, you'll know it!"

"Oh lor!" gasped Bunter. "You—you see, there—there's nothing cooked—"

"I'll wait while you cook something!" said Mr. Hopkins. "I'm a reasonable bloke, I 'ope! I don't expect you to 'ave it all ready, seeing as you never knowed I was dropping in to breakfast! But don't waste

time! I get rorty if I see a lazy young slacker wasting time!"

"I—I—"

"You getting down to it?" asked Mr. Hopkins, with such a threatening glare that Bunter decided to get down to it at once.

"Oh! Yes!" he gasped.

And he got down to it. The kick that had lifted him from the camp-stool was enough for Bunter! He did not want to sample it a second time.

"Better 'urry up!" advised the man in the fur cap. "I shall want something as soon as I've finished these bananas. And if it ain't ready, I'll tell you, in a friendly way, that I'm sorry for you."

Billy Bunter breathed hard with indignation and fury! But he did not waste time.

He had declined, as a matter of principle, to get breakfast ready for the river party! But he had no choice about getting breakfast ready for the gentleman in the fur cap.

The hapless fat Owl cast a longing blink along the river. He would have been glad to see the Famous Five coming back.

But they had hardly started their dip yet; they were not likely to reappear very soon. Bunter wondered whether they were within hearing of a yell for help. But, after another blink at Mr. Hopkins' stubbly face, he decided not to make the experiment.

With deep feelings, he sorted out the methylated stove and cooking utensils. He sorted out the provisions he had been so determined not to cook. An appetising odour of frying bacon and sausages spread over the bank of the Thames, and over the meadow where the Greyfriars tent was pitched.

Mr. Hopkins smacked his lips in appreciation.

He had spent the night, probably, under a hedge or a haystack. Breakfast had been a doubtful proposition. There was no doubt that this was a lucky encounter for Mr. Hopkins.

"Prime!" said Mr. Hopkins, as Bunter placed a large plate on his knees, fairly loaded with rashers and sausages. "Get on with another lot, while I scoff this 'ere, fatty!"

It was clear that Mr. Hopkins had turned out that morning with a good appetite. Indeed, he seemed almost able to rival Billy Bunter.

"I—I—I say—" stammered Bunter.

"Don't you jaw—you jest get on!" said the man in the fur cap. "If you waste time jawing, I shall fetch you a clip!"

With deeper feelings still, Billy Bunter set to work again.

While Alf Hopkins demolished the first consignment, the fat Owl prepared a second extensive lot, which was fortunately ready by the time Mr. Hopkins was ready for it.

Harry Wharton & Co. had laid in stores on a fairly good scale. But Mr. Hopkins' breakfast disposed of the greater part of the supply of bacon and sausages, and made a deep inroad into the bread and the butter.

"Prime!" said the man in the fur cap again. "Anything to foller?"

"Oh! No!" gasped Bunter.

"P'raps you could find something," suggested Mr. Hopkins genially, "seeing as I'm going to bang them spees through your fat 'ead if you don't!"

Billy Bunter promptly found something! He found a pot of jam, and a cake, and a bag of biscuits.

Mr. Hopkins gave him a cheery nod, and disposed of the pot of jam, the cake, and the biscuits.

"I've still got a bit of room!" he said.

Billy Bunter found a pineapple. Mr. Hopkins disposed of the pineapple. By that time even the hungry Mr. Hopkins seemed to be satisfied.

He rose from the camp-stool.

He seemed to be prepared to go on his way after that excellent breakfast. But he was not quite finished yet. He sorted over the camp, and packed into his pockets all that he could find remaining of the provisions—a proceeding that Billy Bunter watched in utter dismay. There was hardly enough left for Bunter's breakfast—without counting the other fellows. The other fellows, of course, did not matter; Bunter mattered a whole lot.

"I—I—" stammered Bunter.

"You 'old your jaw!" said Mr. Hopkins.

The pockets of his ancient jacket bulged out, almost like panniers, when he had finished stowing away his plunder. Then he fixed a fishy eye on Bunter.

"Afore I 'ook it," he said, "mebbe you could 'elp an honest man on his way with a spot of cash?"

"Oh, no!" gasped Bunter. "You see, I—I left all—all my banknotes at home when I started on this trip!"

"Make it 'arf-a-crown!" suggested Mr. Hopkins.

"I—I left all my change at home."

"I'm sorry for that!" said Mr. Hopkins regretfully. "You're going to get 'urt, you are!"

"I—I say, you—you keep off!" gasped Bunter. "I—I'll give you all the money I've got!"

"I ain't asking you to give me more'n that!" said Mr. Hopkins. "I'm a reasonable bloke, I 'ope! Shell out!"

He held out a hand much in need of a wash.

Billy Bunter, in the lowest of spirits, sorted out his stock of wealth. He placed two pennies and a half-penny in that horny hand.

The man in the fur cap stared at it.

"Wot's that?" he asked unpleasantly.

"That's all I've got!" explained Bunter.

"My eye!" said Mr. Hopkins. "You got a boat, and you got a tent, and you got blankets and such—and you only got tuppence-a-penny! You can tell that to the marines!"

"You—you see—"

"I'm going to see, and you can lay to that!" said Mr. Hopkins.

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And he did—promptly.

But Bunter's pockets, to his utter disgust, yielded up nothing more in the way of coin of the realm. Other pockets in the Greyfriars party were better provided, but the Famous Five had taken their clothes with them, and no other pockets were available.

"Well, my eye!" said the man in the fur cap.

He was disappointed. He was evidently not the kind of man to bear disappointment with patient philosophy. He was very bad-tempered about it. He revealed the same by smacking Bunter's head with a mighty smack, and as the fat Owl yelled and tottered, he shot out a foot which thudded on tight trousers and landed Bunter on his hands and knees in the grass.

"Ow!" roared Bunter.

Mr. Hopkins slouched away down the river.

Billy Bunter picked himself up, blinked at the man in the fur cap as he disappeared, and sat down on the camp-stool again.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

Bunter was not enjoying his first morning on the river!

Short Commons!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry.

Fresh and bright, the Famous Five came back from their dip. They trooped back into camp, Bob's powerful voice hailing Bunter as they came.

Bunter blinked at them.

Alfred Hopkins had been gone ten minutes. For ten minutes, Billy Bunter had been sitting on the camp-stool, wondering what he was going to have for breakfast.

Except for a reserve supply of canned goods, packed in the stern locker of the Water-Lily, there was hardly a spot of food left—the whole supply had departed with Mr. Hopkins—inside that frowsy gentleman or in his baggy pockets!

"Well, where's brekker?" asked Bob.

Snort from Johnny Bull.

"Did you think that fat, lazy frowster would really stir a stump?" he asked.

"The stirfulness of the esteemed stump was not terrifically probable!" chuckled Hurree Jamsat Ram Singh.

Harry Wharton laughed.

"All serene!" he said. "We'll get the brekker—and Bunter can wash up! Let's get going—I'm jolly hungry!"

"Same here!" agreed Bob. "You get a jolly good appetite on the river. What price sosses and bacon?"

"What-ho!"

Probably no member of the Famous Five had really expected Bunter to turn to and do a spot of work. They knew him too well. So the fact that breakfast showed no sign of getting ready did not worry them very much, but they were keen to get going; an early morning dip had improved appetites already good.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo! The fat porker has cooked his own brekker,

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it seems!" said Bob, picking up the frying-pan. "Couldn't you cook the lot while you were about it, lazy-bones?"

"I did, or nearly all the lot!" groaned Bunter.

"Where is it, then?"

"Look here, where's the grub?" exclaimed Johnny Bull testily. "This hamper's empty! Not a single rasher left—not a soss, that I can see! That fat cormorant hasn't parked the lot, I suppose?"

"Oh, my hat! Even Bunter couldn't!" exclaimed Bob.

"Where's the grub, Bunter?" demanded Harry Wharton.

The Famous Five eyed Bunter with deep suspicion. Obviously, he had been cooking. The frying-pan reeked with grease—the provisions were gone; there was an ocean of crumbs all round the camp-stool on which he sat, and there was crockery lying round that had evidently been used.

That Bunter had cooked his own breakfast and wolfed the same was probable. If he had used up the total supply of foodstuffs for that purpose, there was likely to be stormy weather.

"A tramp came along and wolfed the lot!" said Bunter bitterly. "I'm hungry—starving! I don't expect you fellows to care—I know you too well! If I faint, or anything, a fat lot you'll care!"

"A tramp?" repeated Harry Wharton. "What tramp?"

"A frowsy beast in a fur cap! He said his name was Hopkins! He made me cook a lot of grub for him, and parked the rest in his pockets!" groaned Bunter. "Then he robbed me of all my money!"

"The three farthings?" asked Johnny Bull sarcastically.

"Beast! It was twopence-ha'penny—I mean, it was twenty-seven-and-six—that is, about three pounds!" yapped Bunter. "I only had about three pounds with me, having left my money at home!"

"Where's the grub?" roared Johnny.

"I've told you!" howled Bunter. "That beast wolfed it!"

"Yes, I can guess that a beast wolfed it!" hooted Johnny. "But his name wasn't Hopkins—his name was Bunter!"

"Oh, really, Bull——"

"Chuck it, Bunter!" said Bob. "If this is a joke, you've pushed it far enough! Trot out the grub—we're all sharp set!"

"There isn't any left!" howled Bunter. "If you fellows hadn't cleared off——"

"Hand over the grub, fathead!" said Frank Nugent.

"Has that podgy pirate really scoffed the whole lot?" asked Bob Cherry. "Hasn't he even left us a crust of bread, or a spot of butter?"

"I tell you a tramp——" shrieked Bunter.

"Gammon!" hooted Johnny Bull. "If you tell us any more whoppers about a tramp, I'll boot you!"

"That tramp——"

"Was there really a tramp?" asked Harry Wharton doubtfully. "I—I suppose a tramp might have turned up—lots along the river in August."

"There wasn't a tramp!" said Johnny Bull decidedly. "Bunter says there was—that's proof!"

"Beast!" roared Bunter.

"Well, if a tramp scoffed the tuck, why didn't you stop him?" demanded Johnny. "Mean to say you let a tramp clear the place out, and never lifted a finger?"

"He—he was too strong for me! I—I fought like a lion!" said Bunter.

"I—I stood up to him—I've got pluck, I hope! I—I knocked him down twice, which was more than you fellows could have done—a hulking ruffian six feet high!"

"Yes, I can see you knocking down a tramp six feet high!" growled Johnny Bull.

"You'd have seen it if you'd been here! But—but he had a stick—a tremendous big cudgel! I'm covered with bruises!" hooted Bunter.

"Let's see some of the bruises!"

"Oh! I—I mean, I'm not exactly covered with bruises, but—but I—I feel as if I was! I—I put up no end of a scrap! But—but he got the upper hand with—with that bludgeon! I did my best! No fellow can do more than his best! I'd like to see any of you chaps put up the fight I did!"

"I suppose Bunter couldn't tackle a tramp," said Bob. "But he could have called to us—we weren't far away! Why didn't you call, Bunter?"

"He would have stopped me fast enough if I had, you silly fathead. Think I was going to have the brute pitching into me?"

"You've just told us you were pitching into him!"

"Oh! I—I mean——"

"Where's that grub?" roared Johnny Bull. "If you've scoffed the lot, you cannibal, I'm going to boot you!"

The Famous Five were getting exasperated. They were all hungry, and they wanted their breakfast. And they did not believe in that tramp. That tramp seemed to them nothing more than camouflage for a fat and greedy Owl who had scoffed the whole supply of foodstuffs. Though, really, where even Billy Bunter had parked such a cargo was rather a mystery.

Had Bunter contented himself with a plain, unvarnished tale he might have been believed—suspicious as the circumstances were. But his description of his battle with the tramp cast doubt on the whole story.

"He's scoffed it," said Bob—"that's plain enough. We might have guessed what would happen when we left Bunter alone with the grub. We shall have to open a can of beef and make that do till we can do some shopping. Better boot him or he'll be at it again when we take our eyes off him next time."

"Beast!" roared Bunter. "I tell you——"

"Boot him!"

"I say, you fellows——"

"Oh, give him the benefit of the doubt!" said Harry Wharton. "After all, there might have been a tramp! I'll get a can of beef out of the locker—look for the can-opener, Bunter."

Harry Wharton stepped into the



Johnny Bull brought the chopper down on the edge of the tin instead of the centre, and the tin flew up and landed on Hurree Singh's chin!

Water-Lily. Bob Cherry sorted out knives and forks, Nugent sorted out plates, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh washed the teapot in the river, Johnny Bull hunted for the tea caddy.

Billy Bunter remained on the camp-stool, and was still on the camp-stool when everything was ready but the can-opener.

Bunter did not see why he should look for can-openers. Everybody else was doing something else, but, so far as Bunter could see, there was no reason why somebody shouldn't find the can-opener after he had done something else.

"Here we are," said Harry cheerfully. "We can make a brekker of sorts on this. Where's the can-opener, Bunter?"

Bunter blinked at him.

"How should I know?" he asked.

"Haven't you looked for it, fat-head?"

"If you think I'm going to look for everything, you may as well understand, to begin with, that I'm not," said Bunter, quietly but firmly. "If you fellows fancy you've got me on this trip to do all the work, and be a sort of slave, you had better forget it."

The Famous Five gazed at Bunter. He sat tight on the camp-stool, and gazed back. Then Johnny Bull stepped behind him and drew back his foot.

"Yaroooh!" roared Bunter.

For the second time that morning Billy Bunter flew off the camp-stool, under the propulsion of a boot.

He rolled in the grass and roared.

"Good egg!" said Bob Cherry

heartily. "That's the stuff to give the troops! Come on—all boot him together."

"Hear, hear!"

"Keep there, Bunter. Now, when I say three, all of you land out!" said Bob. "One—two— Where are you going, Bunter?"

Bunter did not explain where he was going—he just went. He flew across the meadow, and the Famous Five, grinning, proceeded to look for the can-opener.

Tough!

"**W**HERE'S that can-opener?" "Where the thump is that can-opener?"

"Didn't you put it in the hamper?"

"Didn't you?"

"Oh crumbs! Blow it!"

Five hungry fellows searched for the can-opener—in vain. They hunted here, they rooted there, they turned everything out, and turned it out again. All sorts and conditions of things came to light—except a can-opener.

On the grass lay a tin of corned beef, ready to be opened. It was not the sort of breakfast that the Greyfriars fellows would have chosen, but it was a case of any port in a storm. They were all hungry, and there was nothing else.

Whether Bunter had scoffed the foodstuffs, or whether a tramp had scoffed them, the Famous Five were reduced to canned food—and canned food, in addition to its many other disadvantages, required a can-opener. There was a roomy locker in the

stern of the Water-Lily; and all the juniors had agreed that it was a jolly good idea to pack it with a reserve of canned foods, not for consumption when they could get anything better, but as a stand-by for an emergency when better things might be unobtainable.

The emergency had arisen sooner than expected—on the first morning of the voyage up the Thames! There was plenty of canned stuff to meet the emergency—canned beef, canned sardines, canned salmon. But there was no can-opener! That small but important article seemed to have been overlooked! Fellows could not think of everything—and it seemed that no fellow had thought of the can-opener.

"I thought Frank had put it in the hamper," said Harry Wharton.

"I thought somebody had put it in the bag," said Nugent.

"I'm sure we had one—almost sure—" said Bob.

"Might have shoved it in the locker, along with the tins! Good place for it, really! Better look."

"I'll look," said Harry.

He jumped into the boat again and opened the locker under the stern seat. He dragged out tin after tin, all shapes and sizes, till the locker was empty. He groped in every corner of that locker!

Then he hurled the tins back, shut the locker, and stepped on shore.

Five hungry schoolboys gazed at the unopened tin, and gazed at one another.

They really were fearfully hungry by this time. The kettle was singing

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on the stove, and Frank Nugent made the tea. But, really, it was something more solid than tea that they wanted.

"Where's Bunter?" growled Johnny Bull.

"We can't eat Bunter," said Bob. "We haven't come down to that, old bean!"

"I want to boot him!"

Johnny Bull glared round. Far across the meadow a fat figure was sitting on a fence, the sunlight reflected on a big pair of spectacles. Bunter was out of reach of a boot!

"Look here, we can get that can open somehow," said Bob. "Where there's a will, there's a way. I've got a pocket-knife."

"Mind your fingers!"

Bob opened his pocket-knife and jabbed at the beef tin. He jabbed and jabbed and jabbed. He made quite an intricate pattern of scratches on the tin, but he did not penetrate it.

Suddenly a yell rang along the banks of the Thames such as might have been heard in the ancient days, when Julius Cæsar and his Romans arrived there and were met by the Ancient Britons.

"Anything the matter?" asked Harry.

"Anything up, Bob?"

"Oh, no!" howled Bob. "Only the blessed knife closed on my beastly hand and jolly nearly cut off nine or ten fingers—that's all! Nothing much! Yarrah! Ow! Yow!"

Bob hurled the knife into the grass and sucked his hand frantically. He grabbed out a handkerchief and dabbed it, and the handkerchief was spotted with red. His friends waited as patiently as they could for that performance to be over. But Bob seemed tired of trying to open that tin with a pocket-knife.

"Getting on with it?" asked Johnny at last.

"Idiot!" was Bob's reply.

"Eh? What are you calling a fellow names for?" asked Johnny, in surprise.

"Fathead!"

"Look here——"

"Chump!"

"I'll try the boathook," said Harry, and he lifted the boathook out of the boat. "Too jolly dangerous using a pocket-knife on a can."

For several minutes the Co. watched the captain of the Remove as he jabbed and hewed at that beef tin with the boathook. The boathook was quite a useful implement in its own line of business, but it did not prove very useful as a can-opener.

After five minutes of it Harry Wharton hurled the boathook back into the boat with a crash. A dented and scratched tin lay at the feet of the exasperated five—still unopened.

"What about the axe?" asked Nugent hopefully. "We've got an axe."

"Try it, if you like," said Harry.

"I'm fed-up with that tin! I've a jolly good mind to walk across that field with it, and bang it on Bunter's head. That's what I want to do with it!"

"Well, that won't get us any brekker," said Johnny Bull. "I fancy

I can split the beastly thing with the chopper—I'll try!"

Johnny Bull took the chopper. He placed the tin in position for a good swipe and wielded the chopper with both hands.

His friends stood round and watched hopefully.

Johnny Bull brought the chopper down with a smite that might have divided that obstinate tin in two had it struck in the centre, as Johnny intended.

Unfortunately, the swipe landed near the edge of the tin. Instead of splitting the tin it tipped it. That tin flew off the earth like a tipcat. It shot away like a bullet—Johnny did not know where, till a frantic yell from Hurree Jamset Ram Singh apprised him that it had landed on a dusky chin.

"Yoo-hoo-hoo-hoop!" roared the Nabob of Bhanipur, jumping clear of Middlesex, and claspings two dusky hands to a dusky chin. "Whoo-hoo-hoooh! Ow! Wow!"

The tin dropped to the earth. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh roared. Johnny Bull blinked at him.

"Did it hit you?" he asked.

"Sounds as if it did," grinned Nugent. "If you're going to play tipcat with that tin, old man, I'll take a back seat."

"I'll have another go."

Four fellows hastily backed out of range—Bob Cherry sucking his fingers, and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh rubbing his chin.

Johnny had a clear field and no favour when he swiped again.

Down came the chopper, again aimed at the centre of the tin—and again missing the centre. Again the tin flew like a tipcat.

This time there were no casualties among the Greyfriars fellows. The tin flew in the other direction.

Splash!

"Oh, my hat!"

Still unopened, the beef-tin dropped into the Thames and disappeared under the surface of that river.

Johnny Bull gazed at the widening circles on the river where it had disappeared, and breathed hard.

He threw down the chopper. Johnny's determined attempt to open that tin was the last. There was no getting at that tin again, unless the river party dived for it.

"Blow!" said Johnny, in a deep voice.

"Plenty more in the locker if you'd like to try again," said Harry.

"You can leave them in the locker so far as I'm concerned," said Johnny, breathing hard. "There's a kind of beef-tin that has an opener stuck on it. We ought to have got that kind."

"Who got those tins?" asked Nugent.

"Johnny did," answered Harry, with a chuckle.

"Oh!"

"Well, if I got the tins I didn't get the can-opener, and I didn't forget to pack it!" roared Johnny Bull. "One of you silly owls did that!"

"I'm pretty sure we had one!" said Harry.

"Fat lot of good being pretty sure we had one when we haven't one and

can't get a tin open for brekker!" roared Johnny Bull.

"I believe there was one in the hamper——"

"Lot of good believing there was one in the hamper when there isn't one in the hamper now."

"Don't get shirty, old chap!"

"Who's getting shirty?"

"Oh, nobody—but anybody coming along might fancy that you were, old bean," said Harry. "Look here, we had to sort out the hamper when the tomatoes got upset after we started—the can-opener may have dropped somewhere in the boat——"

"I've looked through the boat from end to end," said Nugent.

"Well, so have I—but I thought——"

"You thought!" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "Gammon! Don't pile it on like that!"

"My dear chap, don't get stuffy——"

"Who's getting stuffy?"

"Well, keep your temper!"

"Who's not keeping his temper?"

"Look here, you ass——"

"Oh rats!"

Johnny Bull drove his hand deep into his pockets, and stalked away. For a fellow who was not getting shirty, or stuffy, or losing his temper, he looked rather excited.

But he came to a sudden halt. He turned back towards his friends, with quite an extraordinary expression on his face. His hand came out of his pocket—with something in it. It was a folding can-opener.

The Co. gazed at it.

"I remember now, I picked it up in the boat yesterday, and put it in my pocket so that it shouldn't get lost," stammered Johnny.

His friends gazed at him. They gazed at the can-opener and gazed at Johnny again. Their gaze was quite expressive. Then Bob Cherry burst into a chuckle.

"Johnny's the careful man in this party," he said. "We shan't lose anything with Johnny about. Trot out another tin, Wharton."

And another tin was trotted out, and—with the aid of the can-opener—opened in a jiffy. And five famished schoolboys, at long last, had a breakfast—of sorts.

Bunter Knows How!

"WHAT'S the odds, so long as you're 'appy?" said Bob Cherry.

Johnny Bull and Harry Wharton were towing. Bob Cherry was steering the Water-Lily clear of the bank.

Brilliant sunshine poured down on the Thames. Boats and skiffs seemed innumerable. Launches and punts were numerous. White flannels shimmered in the sunshine; blazers of all hues gave many touches of colour; the Thames seemed to be quite thickly populated. Molesey Lock had been packed, and the Water-Lily had taken some time getting through. Shining river and green woods and meadows and blue skies made an attractive picture.

Little mishaps were bound to happen on a camping and boating

trip. But, as Bob remarked, what was the odds?

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh rubbed a dusky chin, where he had a twinge reminiscent of a whizzing beef-tin, and nodded.

"The oddfulness is not terrific, so long as the happiness is preposterous," he agreed.

"This trip on the Thames was a ripping stunt," said Frank Nugent. "We're going to have a jolly good time."

"What-ho" said Bob. "Hallo, hallo, hallo! Enjoying life, Bunter?"

Bunter, to judge by his expression, was not enjoying life. Bunter was seated in the stern, with a frown on his fat brow, and an expression of deep, suppressed indignation on his fat face.

Before brekker all the party had felt like booting Bunter. After brekker, scrappy as it was, they no longer desired to boot Bunter—such was the magic effect of breakfast. Bunter had taken his place in the boat, when the crew pushed off—and stated that he was hungry. And the juniors really began to believe in that tramp, when Bunter started on the canned goods. If Bunter had parked all the provisions inside Bunter, it seemed hardly possible that he could have room left for a can of beef and a can of sardines. It was a rather greasy Owl that sat and frowned.

This sort of thing did not suit Bunter.

With calm dignity Bunter had suggested stopping at Molesey for breakfast. That suggestion had been disregarded. He had further suggested stopping at Sunbury for breakfast. That suggestion also had been disregarded. Even if Bunter's tale of a tramp was true, the Famous Five did not see why Bunter could not carry on like themselves, with a brekker of sorts. Billy Bunter saw lots of reasons.

"Beast!" was Bunter's reply to Bob's cheery question.

"Like to steer for a bit?" asked Bob.

"That's like you, isn't it?" said Bunter bitterly. "Make another fellow do all the work."

"Like to take a turn at towing?"

"If you think I'm going to lug this boat along while you loaf about and do nothing—"

"Ain't he nice?" said Bob. "Ain't he the jolly company that would make any trip a success? Cheer up, old fat man, we're going to get a new supply of grub at Staines! You can do the shopping if you like."

"I shan't be able to pay for anything," said Bunter. "You left me in the lurch, and that tramp robbed me of every penny I had—"

"Both of them?" asked Bob sympathetically.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He cleared me out of five pounds," said Bunter. "I hadn't much with me—but he bagged the lot. Five pounds isn't much to me, though it may be to you fellows; but it was all I had about me."

Bob Cherry winked at Nugent and the nabob.

"Five pounds is too much to lose," he said. "Bunter won't miss it like we should; still, I don't see letting a tramp get off with it. We'll step in at the police station in Staines, and put them on the track. They'll get your five pounds back all right, Bunter."

"Oh!" said Bunter. "I—I—um—I—I—I—"

"You'll have to state the exact amount he pinched, of course," said Bob. "The police have to be given accurate information. Exactly five pounds, was it?"

"I—I—I forget! I'm not always counting my money!" said Bunter. "It might have been only four—"

"Well, we'll say four, to keep on the safe side," said Bob gravely. "Sure it was four? It was three when you told us this morning, you know."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Better make it three, old fat man!" said Bob. "You can't be too careful in making statements to the police. But you'll have to state whether it was three quids or three farthings. Are you sure which?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Nugent and the nabob.

"Yah!" snorted Bunter. "As a matter of fact, it was really about six or seven pounds—but I'm not going to make a fuss about it! I don't want to waste a holiday bothering about such trifles. I shall let it go! I shan't miss the seven or eight pounds as much as you would! I decline to go anywhere near the police station at Staines, so yah!"

Billy Bunter blinked shoreward, where buildings appeared in sight.

"Is that Windsor?" he asked.

"Ha, ha! Not quite! Nowhere near Staines yet."

"I didn't ask you if we were near Staines—I asked you whether that was Windsor!" yapped Bunter.

"Windsor's past Staines, up the river, fathead!"

"Oh! Is it? I suppose that's Chertsey! Look here, let's land at Chertsey and get some grub—"

"You can't land at Chertsey here—"

"Why not?" hooted Bunter. "If you think you're going to starve me, and feed me on putrid stuff in tins—"

"Well, if you think you could jump ashore at Chertsey here, you must be some jumper!" said Bob. "That place happens to be Walton!"

"I don't care whether it's Walton or Chertsey, so long as I get something decent to eat! Steer for the bank!" said Bunter.

"Bow-wow!"

"Will you steer this beastly boat in, so that I can jump ashore?" roared Bunter. "I'm willing to take all the trouble doing the shopping! I expect everything to be put on me."

"We're not stopping at Walton!" said Bob cheerily. "I dare say it may surprise you to hear it, old fat man, but we haven't started up the Thames wholly and solely to stop for meals! If meals were all we wanted, we could have got them at home, and

saved the cost of hiring this boat from old Baker at Friardale."

"The mealfulness is not the beginning and end of existence, my absurd Bunter!" remarked Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

Snort, from Bunter!

That statement appeared to him utter rot. If meals were not the beginning and end of existence, Bunter would have liked to know what the beginning and end of existence were.

He stood up in the boat and yelled to the two juniors pulling on the tow-rope.

"I say, you fellows! Wharton, you idiot! Bull, you fathead! I say!" The towers looked round.

"Stop here!" roared Bunter.

"Eh? Why?" called back Wharton.

"We're getting into Walton! I dare say you fancied it was Chertsey or Windsor—fat lot you know of your way about! But it's Walton—and we can get some grub there for lunch. So hold on with that rope!"

"Fathead!" answered Harry.

"Shut up!" said Johnny Bull.

And they towed on, regardless.

Billy Bunter breathed hard and deep.

Harry Wharton and Johnny Bull marched on with the rope, just as if Bunter did not matter. Bob Cherry continued to steer clear of the bank, just as if Bunter did not matter. Nugent and the nabob grinned at his fat and wrathful face, just as if Bunter did not matter. It was clear that no member of the Famous Five realised in the very least how much William George Bunter actually did matter.

Bunter sat down again.

But there was a sly gleam in his little round eyes behind his big round spectacles. That boat was going to stop—if Bunter could contrive it! And Bunter fancied that he could!

Bob Cherry was reclining on the stern seat with the tiller lines over his shoulders, keeping the boat clear.

Billy Bunter shifted along the seat a little within reach.

Suddenly he made a grab and pulled the wrong line—that is, the wrong line from Bob's point of view. From Bunter's, it was the right line.

Taken by surprise by that sudden manœuvre on the part of the astute fat Owl, Bob had no chance. Before he knew what was happening, the Water-Lily swung in to the bank, which was rather steep at that spot.

Wharton and Johnny Bull, naturally, went on pulling, unaware of anything happening astern. The result was that, an instant after Bunter's masterly move, the nose of the Water-Lily was trying to climb up the bank.

"Look out!" gasped Nugent.

"Oh, my esteemed hat!" gasped the Nabob of Bhanipur.

There was a strong pull on the towrope! The bows crashed into the bank and tilted into the air! Nugent and the nabob were in the bows. They did not remain there as the nose of the Water-Lily soared skyward! Both of them hurtled headlong along the slanting boat.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bob Cherry.

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He rolled backwards in the stern seat.

Billy Bunter rolled across his legs. The next instant, Frank Nugent and Hurree Jamset Ram Singh, hurtling down the boat, crashed on Bunter.

"Yaroooh!" came a fiendish howl from the Owl of the Remove.

Bunter had not expected that.

Really, he might have, when he suddenly turned the boat's nose into a steep bank, with two fellows tugging on the towrope. But he hadn't. Bunter's idea had been to stop the boat. He had stopped it—there was no mistake about that. Jammed on the bank, tilted almost on end, and trying to reach the towpath with its nose, the Water-Lily was effectually stopped. But it was rather a catastrophic stoppage!

In the stern, there was a wild mix-up!

Four juniors were heaped there, spluttering and yelling, with a kind of catherine-wheel display of tossing arms and legs.

The towers, still unaware, towed on, dragging the boat up the bank, till the resistance on the towrope apprised them that something was amiss. Then, fortunately, they slackened down before the boat stood completely on its tail and pitched its crew and contents into the river.

"Oh, my hat!" exclaimed Harry Wharton.

"Clumsy ass!" ejaculated Johnny Bull. "Call that steering?"

They ran back.

"Ow! Wow! Gerroff!" came an anguished howl from the bottom of the heap in the stern of the Water-Lily. "You're squish-squish-squashing me! Wooogh!"

"Oh! Ow! Ooogh!" spluttered Nugent.

"Whho-hoo-hoooh!" gurgled Bob Cherry.

"Well, of all the clumsy asses!" exclaimed Johnny Bull. "Lay hold! They'll be pitching into the Thames next!"

Johnny and Wharton grasped the Water-Lily and shoved her down the bank.

She righted, and the heap in the stern rolled asunder.

Frank Nugent tottered to his feet; Hurree Jamset Ram Singh sat and gasped, with a hand to his nose, which seemed to have had a knock. Bob Cherry staggered up, spluttering. Billy Bunter remained where he was. All the wind had been knocked out of Bunter, and he lay in the bottom of the boat and gurgled feebly.

"Is that what you call steering?" howled Johnny Bull, from the bank.

"Which silly ass—" began Wharton.

"That fat chump!" shrieked Bob Cherry. "He grabbed the line and steered in! I hadn't any time to stop him! Bunter—"

"Urrggh!"

"I'll burst him all over the boat!" roared Bob.

"Wurrrrggh!"

"Get up, you fat villain!" roared Bob. "I'm going to slaughter you!"

"Oooooogh!" moaned Bunter.

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He did not get up. He did not stir. He lay on his podgy back, with both fat hands pressed to his waistcoat, moaning feebly, with an expression of anguish on his fat face that might have touched a heart of stone.

There was no wind left in Bunter. He could not speak. He could only moan and gurgle feebly.

Bob looked at him—and decided not to slaughter him. Really, Bunter looked sufficiently slaughtered already!

"Get on!" he grunted.

The towers, grinning, resumed with the towrope. The Water-Lily rolled on her way, with Bob steering again.

In ten minutes or so the crew dismissed that little accident from mind—with the exception of Billy Bunter. Bunter lay in the bottom of the boat still gurgling and moaning. He did not even think of landing again at Walton-on-Thames for that much-needed supply of grub. He was still moaning and gurgling when the Water-Lily was rolling on far past Walton.

A Present From Highellife!

"LIKE a 'and, sir?"

It was a hot afternoon.

That August was a fine August, and a hot August. Which, of course, was exactly what fellows wanted who were on a holiday up the river. Still, it was possible to have too much of a good thing; and it was an undoubted fact that that afternoon was very hot—indeed, almost tropical.

Frank Nugent and the nabob were taking a turn with the towrope, and Bob was steering.

Harry Wharton and Johnny Bull were taking a well-earned rest after their exertions in the morning. Billy Bunter was asleep—as a sound like the roll of distant thunder apprised all the passing craft on the Thames. The resonant snore that was wont to wake the echoes in the Remove dormitory at Greyfriars now woke them along the Thames valley.

To Bunter's relief and satisfaction, there had been a stop at Chertsey to renew the stores.

Bunter had considerably reduced the new supply at lunch.

Life once more seemed worth living to William George Bunter. Having surrounded vast quantities of foodstuffs, Bunter had declined an offer of a turn with the towrope and gone to sleep.

A bundle of blankets and the folded sail made him a fairly comfortable bed. A hat over his fat face kept off the sun and the flies. The crew had been warned not to tread on him, or to drop anything on him, or to make a row. And Bunter slumbered and snored—rather to the satisfaction of the crew of the Water-Lily. His snore was not musical, and did not bear the remotest resemblance to the music of the spheres; but it was rather better than his conversation, and Bunter was welcome to snore all round the clock, if disposed so to do.

Nugent and the nabob towed—and

perspired, and rather wished that it had not been such a splendid August. Even Hurree Jamset Ram Singh admitted that it was hot.

So when a man on the towpath asked them if they would like a hand, they gave ear.

Certainly, the Greyfriars fellows had not started up the Thames to be towed by hired towers; they were too strenuous for that. But every rule has an exception—and this seemed to the two tired towers one of the exceptional spots.

The man was not a nice-looking man—but he seemed hefty enough. Looks did not matter, so far as pulling went.

He was rather stubbly, and rather pimply; he wore an old jacket too large for him and a pair of trousers too short for him, one black and one tan boot, and a fur cap like a mangy cat.

Had Billy Bunter been awake and on the look-out, he might have recognised the tramp who had robbed him of all his money.

But Bunter was fast asleep and hidden from sight by the hat over his face, so he remained blissfully unaware of Mr. Hopkins; and Alfred Hopkins, on his side, naturally did not recognise Bunter by his snore.

The other fellows were strangers to him; he had never seen them before, and they had never seen him.

"'Ot work, sir, in this 'ere 'ot weather!" said the man in the fur cap, touching the same as he addressed Frank Nugent. "Arf-a-crown will see you through, sir! Take you up to Staines, sir!"

Nugent paused a moment. He did not want to slack. On the other hand, when a fellow was on holiday, he was on holiday! And the boat gliding gently through the rippling water looked very tempting.

"What about it, Inky?" he asked.

"Terrifically good idea!" said the nabob. "If this esteemed person is looking for hard and honourable work, why notfully?"

Mr. Hopkins blinked at the nabob as he made that reply. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh's variety of his language seemed to entertain him a little.

"Cor!" said Mr. Hopkins.

"All right," said Nugent; and he handed the towrope to the man in the fur cap. And the boat pulled closer for him to jump in with the nabob.

Mr. Hopkins took the rope under his arm and towed.

The Water-Lily floated on with a full crew.

Sitting in the boat with the other fellows, Nugent and the nabob enjoyed that tropical afternoon much more than they had been enjoying it heretofore.

But the pace was not quite so good.

The Greyfriars towers had not been hurrying; they were not on the river to hurry. But they had been going at a good average rate.

Average rates did not seem to appeal to the man in the fur cap. If he was looking for work, it was clear that he was not looking for hard work.

A well-laden boat with six inside required a certain amount of pulling. Pulling seemed to be a thing that Mr. Hopkins disliked.

He started off with quite a swing, covering the ground at a fairly good rate. But he soon slowed down to the pace of a very old, very tired, and very reluctant snail.

The Famous Five had rather wondered at what rate the Water-Lily would progress if Billy Bunter took a turn at the rope. They could guess now!

"What are you giving that tottering wreck for this tow, Franky?" asked Bob Cherry, after half an hour.

"Half-a-crown!" said Nugent.

"He's doing you out of two-and-sixpence!" said Bob.

"There's one thing that worries

around on a holiday, he ought to be encouraged!"

"If that chap ever looks for work," grunted Johnny Bull, "there'll be a fatality if he finds it! He would die of shock!"

Three or four towed boats overtook the Water-Lily and passed on—the Greyfriars crew being kept rather busy in avoiding tangling towropes. They were, in fact, a good deal busier than the man who was earning an honest half-crown by pulling them along.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" ejaculated Bob suddenly. "Know that lot?"

A boat much lighter than the Water-Lily came up the river, farther out, under two pairs of oars.

There were three fellows in it—

ing by any means. Gadsby and Monson rowed, as Bob expressed it, like a pair of stuffed dummies. But compared with the snail-like crawl of the Greyfriars boat, it was quite a rush.

Ponsonby, in the stern, half rose and stared across at the Water-Lily. The Highcliffe boat, as it happened, was also named the Water-Lily, but it did not resemble the Greyfriars boat in other respects, being little more than half the size.

"That crew again!" The Remove fellows heard Ponsonby's sneering voice. "There's seven of them now. They've picked up a pal—another Greyfriars cad!"

Harry Wharton & Co. gave Ponsonby grim looks. It was quite impossible for Pon really to have supposed that



"Ow! Yow! Stoppit!" roared Bunter, as the Famous Five hauled on the rope. "Yaroooh! You're pulling my legs off!"

me," said Johnny Bull thoughtfully. "Think we may get fined for speeding?"

"Well, after all, what's the hurry?" argued Nugent. "We've got the whole vac before us to do the Thames—and we don't want to spot Oxford in the morning!"

"But we want to spot Staines before the end of the holidays!" suggested Johnny. "Bit rotten if we have to send this boat back to old Baker at Friardale without having seen Staines!"

"We're still moving!" remarked Bob, glancing at the water. "You don't notice—but if you look at the ripples, you'll see!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, give him a chance!" said Frank. "After all, if a man's looking for work while we're loafing

Ponsonby, Gadsby, and Monson, of Highcliffe School.

Harry Wharton & Co. sat up and took notice at once.

They had encountered the Highcliffe fellows the previous day, and there had been an exchange of compliments—a whizzing turf from Pon, and whizzing tomatoes from the Greyfriars boat.

Pon & Co., it seemed, were also spending the holiday on the Thames, though they were not towing and camping like the Greyfriars crew. Roughing it did not appeal to the knuts of Highcliffe. They put up at inns and hotels along the river—which was quite a pleasant way of spending a holiday—but rather more expensive and less strenuous than the Greyfriars fellows wanted.

The Highcliffe boat was not speed-

the dingy, frowsy figure in the fur cap was really a Greyfriars fellow who had joined the party.

Gadsby and Monson looked round. "Oh gad!" said Monson. "I told you men that they never wash at Greyfriars. That chap on the tow-path is the limit!"

"Genuine Greyfriars style!" grinned Gadsby. "Old Boy, I suppose—or perhaps they've got a Greyfriars beak in the party."

Five faces in the Greyfriars Water-Lily grew pink. Gaddy was taking his cue from Pon—and certainly did not really suppose that Alfred Hopkins was either an Old Boy of Greyfriars School or a beak on the staff of that scholastic establishment.

Ponsonby groped in a suitcase in his boat as the crafts drew level.

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His hand came out with a cake of soap in it.

"Present from Highcliffe!" he called out. "I hope you fellows will have washed by the time I see you again!"

Whiz!

Bang!

The cake of soap flew across the space between the boats. It landed on Johnny Bull's nose with a bang.

"Ow!" roared Johnny.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled Gadsby and Monson.

In an instant, Harry Wharton & Co. were on their feet, groping for anything in the nature of a missile to return the fire. But the Highcliffe boat shot away like an arrow. An apple dropped yards behind as Pon & Co., roaring with laughter, shot on towards Staines.

Johnny Bull rubbed his nose and breathed fury. The other fellows glared after the Highcliffe boat as it vanished among the innumerable craft on the river.

Billy Bunter snored on under his hat. On the towpath, Alfred Hopkins continued his understudy of a tired old snail! And the Famous Five, with faces red with wrath, were left with the cake of soap—a present from Highcliffe!

A Spot of Trouble!

"AND the rest!" said Mr. Hopkins.

"What?"

"Deaf?" asked Mr. Hopkins. "I says and the rest!"

Considerably on the hither side of Staines, Harry Wharton & Co. decided to dispense with the valuable services of Mr. Hopkins.

They did not want to be exacting; and it was hot weather, and it was abundantly clear that the man in the fur cap was one of those persons who are born tired. But they did want to pass Staines before nightfall; and at Mr. Hopkins' rate of progress it seemed improbable that they were going to see Staines for some days to come!

So they called a halt; and Frank Nugent jumped ashore, and tendered a half-crown in payment for those valuable services. The man in the cap certainly had not earned that half-crown, or half of it; but nobody was disposed to haggle on that point; indeed, it was worth the half-crown to see the last of him. He made them all feel tired to look at him.

Mr. Hopkins took the half-crown, bit it to make sure that it was a good one, and slipped it out of sight in his tattered garments. Then, like Oliver Twist, he asked for more!

"What the dickens do you mean?" exclaimed Nugent. "You asked for half-a-crown to tow us up to Staines—and we're not near Staines yet!"

The man in the fur cap looked unpleasant. His stubbly jaw jutted aggressively.

"Stow it!" he said disagreeably. "Arf-a-crown will see you through, was what I says—arf-a-crown each, of course! There's five of you 'ere—and one what's snoring like a 'og in the

boat—that's six! Six arf-crowns is fifteen shillings!"

Harry Wharton & Co. stared at him.

Frank Nugent coloured with vexation. It dawned on him, rather late, that it was injudicious to have dealings of any kind with a man of Mr. Hopkins' looks!

But the Famous Five of Greyfriars were not the fellows to be robbed by a bullying rascal. The man in the fur cap supposed that they were—but that was a little mistake of his.

Probably it was the umpteenth time he had bullied money out of river parties, unwilling to engage in a shindy with a disreputable ruffian. But in trying that game on the Famous Five of the Greyfriars Remove, he had, so to speak, woke up the wrong passengers.

Harry Wharton glanced at Nugent. "There's no mistake about it, of course?" he asked.

"Of course there isn't!" answered Frank tartly. "He said half-a-crown—and he hasn't earned it! He won't have a farthing more from me!"

"Or from any fellow here!" said Johnny Bull, in a deep voice that was rather like that of the Great Huge Bear.

"Scz you!" jeered the man in the fur cap. "Twelve-and-six you got to 'and me, if you don't want a covey to get rorty!"

"You can get as rorty as you like, you rascal!" said Harry Wharton contemptuously. "You won't get anything more, so clear off!"

"Clear off, says you! I ain't, clearing off till I been paid!" declared Mr. Hopkins. "Now, then, dub up sharp, afore I set about yer!"

Harry Wharton laughed. Obviously the river ruffian fancied that he could scare a party of schoolboys! It was rather amusing to the captain of the Remove. The Famous Five were not easily scared.

"Leave him to me!" said Bob Cherry. "If I can't handle a sweep like that, I'll chuck away my boxing-gloves and swop my punch-ball for a set of marbles. Get going, you unwashed slug!"

"Better duck him in the river," said Johnny Bull. "A wash will do him good!"

"You 'anding it out?" roared Mr. Hopkins, brandishing a clenched fist.

"Yes—I'm handing it out!" said Bob cheerfully, and he handed it out—in the shape of a tap on Mr. Hopkins' nose.

It was rather a hard tap! It was meant to indicate to Mr. Hopkins that his room was preferred to his company. It made the man in the fur cap stagger.

The next moment he was jumping at Bob.

But the champion fighting-man of the Greyfriars Remove did not recede an inch. He stood up to Mr. Hopkins, and met him with left and right.

The yell that Mr. Hopkins uttered the next moment might almost have been heard from Hampton Court to Staines.

There was a heavy bump as he went down on his back on the towpath.

He sprawled there, blinking.

A spurt of red came from his nose. One of his eyes winked. Bob had got in two—both good ones. It was quite a surprise for Alfred Hopkins. It was not at all what Alfred expected.

"Cor!" he gasped.

"Jump up, old bean, and have a few more!" suggested Bob. "I've got some if you're really keen on it!"

"The morefulness is terrific, my esteemed and cheating rascal!" chuckled Hurree Jamset Ram Singh.

"Cor!" repeated Mr. Hopkins.

He sat up and blinked at Bob. But he did not get on his feet. He seemed to have a misgiving that he might be knocked off them again if he did!

"Taking a rest?" asked Bob.

"Cor!" gurgled Alfred.

It seemed that Alfred had had enough. Leaving him, therefore, fully satisfied on that point, the Famous Five turned back to the boat. Three fellows stepped aboard, and Nugent and the nabob took the towline again.

Then, as the Water-Lily surged onward, Mr. Hopkins rose to his feet. He dabbed his nose with a tattered, greasy sleeve, and fingered his eye tenderly with a grubby hand. Then he slouched after the boat.

"Hi!" he called out. "Nigger!"

Hurree Jamset Ram Singh glanced round, colouring under his dusky complexion.

"Nigger!" bawled Mr. Hopkins.

"Come on, old chap!" said Nugent hastily.

But Mr. Hopkins was not done with them yet. He had not succeeded in extorting money; and he had captured two hefty punches. It seemed to be his idea to take it out in abuse.

He tramped along the towpath, keeping pace with the boat.

"'Ere, you in the boat!" he bawled. "Ain't you got the change of a quid about you? 'Ard up lot, what? Spent it all on the coconut shies?"

The boat's crew took no heed. It was distinctly unpleasant—with other boats' crews within hearing. It drew a lot of unwelcome attention to the Greyfriars boat. But they hoped that the man in the fur cap would get tired of this form of amusement.

Mr. Hopkins, however, tired as he had seemed when pulling on the tow-rope, did not tire of making himself objectionable and obnoxious.

He had to put on quite a speedy walk to keep up with the boat. But he did it—keeping abreast of the Water-Lily as it rolled on at the end of the towrope, and shouting from the bank.

A boat passed, with a numerous company of young men and girls. Mr. Hopkins shouted to them, at the same time pointing to the Greyfriars boat.

"Look at that lot!" he bawled. "Ain't got a brown between them! They've pinched that boat, and the coppers are looking along the river for them! Jest out of the workus, that lot!"

There was a giggle from the other boat as it passed.

Bob Cherry rose to his feet with a crimson face.

"That's going to stop!" he said.

He made a jump from the boat to the shore.

But Alfred Hopkins did not wait for him. Alfred devolved on his axis, and went down the towpath like a rabbit.

Bob jumped back into the boat.

"Thank goodness we're done with him!" he said. "This is a tip to keep clear of that sort of blighter!"

"Well, he's gone, thank goodness!" said Harry.

But Mr. Hopkins was not gone. He was not done with yet. As soon as Bob had sat down in the boat again, he came cutting up the towpath.

"Hi!" he roared. "You in the boat! You poor workus lot! You going to pay up! If you don't pay up, I'm follering you right into Staines, and you can lay to that!"

"This is getting nice!" murmured Bob.

Harry Wharton set his lips. It was unpleasant enough already; but the idea of the man in the fur cap carrying on in that style, right into Staines, was not to be tolerated.

The captain of the Remove sorted a good-sized potato out of a bag—one of the recent purchases at Chertsey.

He took aim at the frowsy man on the bank, and landed that potato fairly in the middle of Alfred Hopkins' unprepossessing features!

"Oooh!" roared Alfred.

He staggered and roared. The boat rolled on, and for some minutes Mr. Hopkins stood rubbing his features; and the Greyfriars party hoped that they were done with him at last.

But Alfred was a stickler. Having rubbed his features, he stooped and picked up the potato and cut after the boat.

That potato came back with a whiz.

But Alfred's aim was not so good as Wharton's. The potato missed the captain of the Remove by a foot or more and crashed on a straw hat that lay over the face of a sleeping beauty.

Crash!

"Yarooop!" came a startled yell from Billy Bunter.

The straw hat rolled in the boat as the startled Owl sat up.

"Ow! Beasts! Who banged me?" yelled Bunter. "Can't you let a fellow snooze for a few minutes? If that was you, Bob Cherry, you silly idiot—"

Bunter broke off as his eyes, and his spectacles, fell on the frowsy man on the bank. Bunter bounded.

"Oh crikey!" he gasped. "That's him!"

"Eh, who?" grunted Bob. "Ever seen him before?"

"It's him!" howled Bunter. "That tramp who made me cook his breakfast, and walked off with all the food, and robbed me of all my money!"

Alfred Gets Wet!

"WHAT?"

Three juniors in the Water-Lily jumped to their feet excitedly.

They half-believed in the existence of Bunter's tramp. Now, as the fat junior identified him, they quite believed in that tramp.

And if they had doubted, they would have been convinced by the stare that the man in the fur cap fixed on Bunter, as the fat junior sat up, revealing his face for the first time, and his surprised ejaculation.

"Cor!" ejaculated Alfred. "That fat covey! Cor!"

"That footpad!" hooted Bunter. He pointed a fat, denouncing finger at the man on the bank. "That—that highwayman! That bandit!"

"Go easy with that rope, Frank!" shouted Harry.

The towers looked back and slacked pace. The boat slid to the bank. Mr. Hopkins was speaking again.

"Same blooming boat what I see this morning! Cor! That fat covey! Cor! Fat Jack of the Bone-house! Tuppence-ha'penny all he'd got! And the rest of you ain't got that much! Workus lot!"

Harry Wharton, Bob Cherry, and Johnny Bull leaped ashore.

Alfred Hopkins repeated his former tactics—prompt retreat.

But this time he did not get away with those tactics. This time the juniors were prepared to put in all the time that was necessary to run Mr. Hopkins down! They were not only fed-up to the chin with Alfred and his tirades from the bank, but if he was the ruffian who had plundered their camp that morning they were going to call him to account.

So they cut after Alfred at a racing speed.

Nugent and the nabob stood with the towrope, the boat at a halt.

The man in the fur cap covered twenty yards, and then stopped for breath and looked back.

He had no doubt that that was enough—fellows going up the river did not want to put in time racing down the river. But Mr. Hopkins was out in his calculations. His backward glance showed him three juniors coming down the towpath like the wind—and he gave a gasp and cut on again.

But a further twenty yards did for Alfred. Beer, tobacco, and the hot weather combined against Alfred in a foot race! Beer and baccy were the delights of Alfred's frowsy existence—but they were not useful as training for a running match.

Alfred had bellows to mend, and he puffed, he blew, he panted, he gurgled, and he slowed down—and three pairs of hands fell upon him.

"Ere, you leggo!" panted Alfred. "I'll go—on my davy! I'm fed-up with yer! I'll beat it, and you can lay to that!"

"You won't!" said Harry Wharton, taking a grip on the green-spotted muffler. "You should have gone while the going was good, my man! Now you're coming along with us, to be given into custody!"

"Wot!" gasped Alfred.

"Hook him along!" said Bob.

"Ere, you leggo!" howled Mr. Hopkins, in alarm. "Wotcher mean. I'd like to know? Can't a man walk on this ere bank if he likes, and can't

'e say what he blooming well pleases! You ain't got nothing on me!"

"Shore him along!" said Johnny Bull.

The man in the fur cap objected strongly. But his objections were not heeded. He was forcibly walked back to the point where the boat had stopped.

"Get in!" said Harry.

"What for?" roared Mr. Hopkins.

"We're taking you to the police station at Staines."

"Cor!" gasped Mr. Hopkins.

"You robbed our camp this morning," said Harry. "You'll be charged at the police station. Get in!"

"I ain't going in that there boat! I ain't—"

"Pitch him in!"

"Whooooop!" roared the man in the fur cap, as he went headlong into the Water-Lily from the bank.

He crashed in the boat.

Three juniors jumped in after him, and Harry Wharton waved his hand to the fellows with the towline.

"Get on!" he called out.

"Taking a passenger?" called out Nugent.

"Yes; we've giving this mad in charge for robbing Bunter!"

"Good egg!" grinned Nugent.

They marched on with the rope, and the Water-Lily got into motion again. The crew pushed well out from the bank to give Mr. Hopkins no chance of jumping ashore.

Alfred Hopkins sat and panted, and glared at them.

Obviously, he would have been glad to leap at them, instead of glaring, and hit out right and left. But Alfred realised that that was a chicken that would not fight. As Bob was able to handle him single-handed, he had not much prospect in a tussle with the three. Alfred realised that he was in a bad box! No doubt he regretted by that time that he had not departed while the going was good.

Not that Harry Wharton & Co. had an actual intention of expending time and trouble by handing over the rascal to the law. They were giving him a fright by way of punishment—and there was no doubt that Alfred was scared. Apart from his proceedings in the camp that morning, he had all sorts of reasons for disliking the society of policemen. He had never pulled well with the police force—they knew altogether too much about Alfred.

"That's the villain!" said Bunter, with a stern blink at the panting rascal. "That's him! He's got all my money!"

"Bloated millionaire!" said Bob Cherry.

"All your blinking money!" hooted Mr. Hopkins. "Tuppence-ha'penny was all you 'ad, and you give it to me!"

"You'll go to chokey for it," said Bunter. "Tramps ain't allowed to steal, and the amount don't make any difference!"

"True, O king!" said Bob Cherry. "There's a jolly old verse you ought to remember, my man—He that takes what isn't his'n, is pretty sure to go to prison! Keep that in mind

as a tip for the future—when you come out!”

“I’ll have him up for assault and battery, too!” said Bunter. “He kicked me and smacked my head. He can get six months for that!”

Mr. Hopkins gave Bunter a look. That look indicated plainly what would have happened to the fat Owl had he been alone with Alfred.

Bunter gave him a blink of lofty contempt. He was not afraid of Alfred Hopkins—now!

“You rotten rascal!” he said. “For two pins I’d smack your head! Don’t look so cheeky or I jolly well will! I know how to deal with your sort, I can jolly well tell you!”

“Cor!” breathed Mr. Hopkins. “If I ’ad you to yourself for ’arf a mo’, you fat young ’og——”

“Shut up!” ordered Bunter. “Another word, and I’ll smack your head!”

“You bladder of blooming lard——”

Smack!

“Ow!” roared Mr. Hopkins, as a fat hand smote. “Why, I’ll——”

He half-rose as Bunter smacked his head.

“I say, you fellows, keep him off!” yelled Bunter.

“Ha, ha, ha!”

Bob Cherry gave Alfred a shove, and Alfred sat down again, with a bump.

Alfred gave him an infuriated glare.

“Think I’m going to ’ave my ’ead smacked!” he yelled.

“Why not?” asked Bob cheerily. “One good turn deserves another. If you smacked Bunter’s head, why shouldn’t he smack yours?”

“I’ll jolly well smack it again if you’re cheeky, my man!” said the fat Owl victoriously. “You’d better shut up!”

Alfred Hopkins sat breathing fury as the boat rolled on.

Several times he cast glances towards the bank. But Bob Cherry steered well out. There was no chance of a jump ashore. If Alfred cared to take his chance in the water, no one was going to stop him. But he shrank from that idea. Neither inside nor outside did Mr. Hopkins like water.

“Look ’ere,” he said at last. “I’ll give the young bloke his money back, and you young gents go easy with a bloke!”

The juniors grinned. Alfred was getting much more civil.

“You can give him his money back if you like,” said Harry. “It may make things better for you when you’re charged.”

Mr. Hopkins eyed him, and finally sorted out two pennies and a half-penny.

Billy Bunter had stated the amount of his financial loss variously from three pounds to seven or eight. However, he retook possession of the twopence-halfpenny with satisfaction. He was glad to get all his money back!

“Now you let a bloke git out of this ’ere boat!” said Mr. Hopkins. “I don’t want to see no blooming coppers, I don’t!”

“They may like to see you,” suggested Bunter.

gested Bob Cherry. “You may be the very man they want to see, if there’s anything missing along the Thames between Richmond and Crick-lade.”

Alfred Hopkins breathed hard. He had a misgiving himself that the police at Staines might be glad to see him. Grub from the Greyfriars camp that morning was not all that he had stowed in his baggy pockets that August. As a habitual snapper-up of unconsidered trifles, Alfred preferred to keep gentlemen in blue tunics at a safe distance.

Staines was in sight now—and Alfred was getting more and more uneasy. But the boat kept well out and there was no jump ashore for him. He had to swim for it, if he got away at all—and, at long last, he made up his mind to it.

He shuddered at the prospect of establishing contact with clean cold water. But even that was better than the coppers.

He jumped up suddenly.

“Collar him!” roared Bob, though without making any move to do so.

The juniors wanted to give Mr. Hopkins a lesson; but they did not want to carry such a passenger into Staines.

Splash!

Alfred went over the side, headlong.

“After him!” roared Johnny Bull, sitting still. “Get him with that boat-hook!”

Alfred could swim. He swam! He plunged ashore puffing and spluttering, and dragged himself up the bank.

He crawled on the tow-path, soaked to the skin and looking like a drowned rat.

Bob Cherry gave a roar:

“Stop him! Hold him till I get at him! Stop him!”

Alfred did not wait. Squelching water, dripping from head to foot, gurgling for breath, Alfred went down the towpath at his best speed.

The Greyfriars fellows chuckled as he went. They had got rid of Alfred at last—so far from following the boat into Staines, as he had threatened, Alfred’s one object now was to avoid getting into Staines along with that boat!

Alfred puffed, and blew, and gurgled, and squelched out of the picture—and the Water-Lily rolled on to Staines, leaving Alfred to disappear over the horizon.

Startling Disappearance of Bunter!

“I SAY, you fellows!”

“Well?”

“I’m tired!”

“What?”

“What about a camp?” asked Bunter.

The Water-Lily had passed through

Bell Weir Lock, a mile above Staines, and was gliding on towards that spot so famous in English history—Runnymede—when Bunter announced that he was tired.

How Bunter had got tired was rather a mystery.

Even if he had got tired getting breakfast for Mr. Hopkins in the early morn, he had had time to recover from the fatigue. Since then he had, so to speak, used no other.

Having spent the day sitting, or lying, in the boat, sleeping half the time, and eating most of the other half, even Bunter might have been expected to bear up against the fatigues of that river trip.

Possibly, however, Bunter was



Whop! The stick landed on Mr. Spooner's trov
splitting yell from

thinking more of supper than of rest.

The golden sun was sinking in a blaze of colour in a gorgeous sky. The scenery on the river, as the voyagers approached Magna Charta Island, was a perfect picture. But Billy Bunter had little use for sunsets and other beauties of nature. Sunset only reminded him of supper.

“Poor old Bunter!” said Bob Cherry. “Must be almost worn out! Tiring work, sitting on a cushion!”

“Well, I’m hungry!” said Bunter. “There’s some jolly nice spots along here for a camp! Better pick a place, I think. I shall have to wait while you fellows get the tent up, and all that.”

“Couldn’t lend a hand at getting the tent up, or anything of that kind?” inquired Bob.

"That's right—leave everything to me!" said Bunter. "It's the sort of thing I expect from you fellows!"

"We made rather a mistake coming through the last lock," said Bob Cherry regretfully. "We ought to have dropped Bunter in the lock!"

"Oh, really, Cherry—"

"Don't you want to see Magna Charta Island?" asked Nugent.

"Eh? What's that?"

The juniors chuckled. Even Billy Bunter, at school, had to learn a spot of history—just as much as Mr. Quelch was able to drive into an un-receptive head. But Bunter knew how to deal with schoolmasters.

It was true that the beasts made him learn things. On the other hand,

"Oh, crikey!"

"It was Cromwell, I think, who gave him the kybosh!" said Bunter. "Or—or was it Marlborough? I forget which, at the moment! But I remember he said: 'A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse!' And he never smiled again. I forget why."

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Bob Cherry. "He would have smiled again if he had heard you spouting history, Bunter! He couldn't have helped it!"

"The smilefulness would have been terrific!" chuckled Hurree Janset Ram Singh.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can cackle!" said Bunter disdainfully. "You fellows don't know much. It was King John who lost his linen in the wash—think I don't know?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He lost his baggage in the Wash!" gasped Harry Wharton. "That was at another time! He signed the Great Charter at Runnymede. They got him on the island so that he couldn't dodge them, and he signed it."

"They got him, that's a cert," said Nugent. "But I jolly well think it wasn't on the island. It must have been on the bank at Runnymede, according to what I've read of the Charter itself. It says: 'In prato quod vocatur Runnymede.'"

"Construe!" grinned Bob Cherry.

"In the field which is called Runnymede!" said Nugent. "That's on the bank, not on the island."

"Look here," roared Billy Bunter indignantly, "are we going to have putrid Latin in the hols, same as at school? You jolly well shut up, Nugent! We might as well be listening to Quelch in the Form-room!"

"And since old John signed the Great Charter we've been blessed with jolly old liberty!" said Bob. "Kings can't lay taxes on us now—only the House of

Commons! It's true that the House of Commons lay three times as much taxes on us as any king ever dreamed of! But what's the odds, so long as you're 'appy?"

"Look here, blow King John, and blow Runnymede, and blow Magna Charta Island, and blow the whole lot of 'em!" said Bunter. "Let's look for a camp—and if you spout any more Latin, Frank Nugent, I'll jolly well buzz something at you!"

Johnny Bull, who was towing, looked round into the boat.

"Say when!" he called out.

"When!" said Bunter promptly.

"We'll do Runnymede in the morning!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "This is as jolly a part of the river as a fellow could want. Look at the scenery, Bunter—"

"Blow the scenery!" said Bunter.

The river party looked for a camp, towing on gently while they looked. A tiny islet attracted their eyes, and the boat was promptly punted into it. There was—for a wonder—no notice-board to be seen, warning trespassers that they would be prosecuted.

A shelving green bank, backed by shady trees, looked quite delightful. There was a wood beyond, deep and shady. Whether this was public land, or private land, the Greyfriars fellows did not know—they hoped that it was the former, or alternatively, as the lawyers say, that the owner, if any, had no objection to a really nice party of fellows camping there for the night. Anyhow, they were going to chance it.

Owners along the river are not, generally, enthusiastic about camping parties. But, really, even a very good-natured property-owner could not be expected to like his turf burnt up by a camp-fire, and empty bottles, paper bags, and other rubbish left about for him to clear up.

Harry Wharton & Co. were careful campers. There was no real need for a camper to be a worry and a nuisance—it only required a small extra spell of work when breaking camp to leave a place as tidy as they found it. And a fellow who is afraid of work is no true camper.

Billy Bunter sat in the boat, while the juniors ran up the tent. Perhaps he was too tired to help. More probably, he was too lazy.

"I say, you fellows, aren't you cooking anything for supper?" called out Bunter, as he saw no sign of cooking utensils being unpacked.

"Cold supper!" answered Bob.

"Well, I think that's the limit!" said Bunter, in utter disgust. "You're asking me to eat a cold supper, after a day on the river, because you're all too jolly lazy to unpack a frying-pan and cook a soss or two!"

"Nobody asked you, sir," said Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Really, it was quite a nice cold supper. There were hard-boiled eggs, sliced, with watercress; there was ham, there was bread-and-butter; there were radishes, there was a tin of salmon for any who liked it, and there was a wedge of cake. There would also have been a bunch of bananas and a bag of cherries; but these did not appear to be in existence when the party landed. Possibly Bunter knew what had become of them.

Grunting, Billy Bunter rolled ashore, to join in the supper—such as it was, as he sarcastically remarked.

The Famous Five sat round on cushions of macintosh squares, in the thick, rich grass.

Bunter brought a cushion and a rug ashore with him. He dropped them in the grass and blinked round through his spectacles. The nearest tree was some distance up the bank; and Bunter did not want to go so far from the food—but, on the other hand, there was nothing for him to lean on when he sat down.

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users, to be followed immediately by an ear-
n Mr. Spooner!

Bunter could retaliate by promptly forgetting them.

"Blessed if I can see anything to cackle at!" said Bunter. "I don't care much for islands, and if there's a carter on the island, I don't want to have anything to do with him."

"Oh, my hat!"

"That island is where King John signed Magna Charta, fathead!" said Harry Wharton. "That's where the barons cornered him, and made him sit up and take notice."

"Oh, I know all about it!" said Bunter. "You fellows can't teach me history. I could pass an exam in history with my eyes shut! Think I don't know that King John was beaten at the battle of Blenheim, when Wellington said: 'Up, guards, and at 'em!'?"

He glanced at the tent, but it was clear that if he leaned on the tent, it would not sustain the burden. There was nothing else.

"Sit down, old fat man!" said Harry, rather surprised to see Bunter still standing. Bunter seldom stood when he could sit.

"What am I going to lean against?" asked Bunter.

"Oh! Is that a riddle?"

"Look here, get some bags and things from the boat," suggested Bunter. "Two or three bags and the hamper would be all right, if you stack them up carefully. Don't be careless asses and let them fall over when I sit down!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you cackling at?" roared Bunter.

"Your little joke, old porpoise!"

"Same old tale—laziness and selfishness all round!" said Bunter bitterly. He could see that he was not going to get the stack of baggage to lean his fat back on. "All right! You ask a fellow on a boating trip, and a fat lot you care whether he has anything to lean on or not! I might have expected it!"

Billy Bunter spread the rug out over the long grass, and deposited the cushion in the middle of it. Then he plumped down on the cushion with a heavy plump.

The next instant a wild yell rang over the Thames valley. And the Famous Five gasped with astonishment.

Bunter had disappeared.

For the fraction of a second they had an astounding glimpse of a pair of little fat legs sticking up in the air—then Bunter was gone!

In blank amazement, they gazed at the spot where he had vanished—swallowed up before their eyes by the seemingly solid earth!

Bunter's Come-Back!

BUNTER!"

"What the thump—"

"Great pip!"

The Famous Five bounded to their feet.

They were utterly amazed.

Billy Bunter was completely lost to sight. What had become of him was, for a moment, an amazing mystery. He seemed to have vanished like a spectre before their startled eyes.

But he was not, it seemed, gone for good! His voice was very soon heard—on its top note! *

"Yaroooooh! Oh crikey! Gemme out of this!"

It was really astonishing to hear Bunter's voice proceeding, as it seemed, from the dim and mysterious interior of the globe into which Bunter had vanished.

But as they gathered round the spot where the fat Owl had sunk from sight, the amazing mystery was explained.

There was a narrow but deep channel in the bank, running down to the water—a "feeder" of the river. It was completely hidden by the long grass—and Bunter had hidden it

still more effectually by spreading his rug over it before he sat down!

The grass sustained the rug and the cushion; but when Bunter sat down it did not sustain Bunter.

Bunter had, in fact, sat down on empty space, screened by grass and rug.

Naturally, he had gone through, taking rug and cushion with him.

"Oh!" gasped Harry Wharton, as he stared down.

"Wow! I'm drowning! Help! Beasts! Yarook!" came a roar from the interior of the earth.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Bob.

That channel was six feet deep. Looking down into it, the juniors could see Bunter on his back, on the rug, with his feet sticking up. The expression on his face was expressively expressive.

Luckily, there was little water in that feeder in August. In November, probably, it would have been full. In a hot and dry August it had only a trickle at the bottom.

Bunter was not, as he announced, drowning. But he was getting damp.

"Lug him out!" said Bob.

"Why not leave him there?" suggested Johnny Bull. "Lug him out after supper, if he's too lazy to crawl out!"

"Why, you beast!" came a roar from below. "You rotter! I'm drowning! I've broken my neck! My head's cracked!"

"It was cracked before you went in!"

"Beast!"

"Come on!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "All hands on deck!"

"Will you gemme out of this!" shrieked Bunter. "I can't move! I'm jammed in! Beasts! Rotters! Gemme out!"

Really, it was not easy to get Bunter out. Harry Wharton and Bob Cherry lay on their chests, on the edge of the channel, and grasped a fat ankle each. They pulled. But they pulled in vain. Safe on the surface of the earth, they could have lifted Bunter, by a combined effort. But pulling him out of that depth by his legs was quite another proposition.

"Ow! You're pip-pip-pulling my legs off!" yelled Bunter. "Stop pulling my legs off, you beasts!"

"I'll get the boathook!" said Johnny Bull. "I can help you by hooking him up—wait till I get the boathook!"

Yell from Bunter!

"You beast, don't you bring that boathook near me!"

"Do you want to be got out or not?" roared Johnny.

"Beast!"

"Pull devil, pull baker!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Go it!"

"Yaroooooh! You're pulling my legs off!" roared Bunter. "Leggo my legs, you silly dummies! I won't have my legs pulled off!"

The fat ankles were released. Plainly, Bunter was not to be extracted that way.

Wharton and Bob Cherry gasped for breath after their exertions.

"Well, what's going to be done?" gasped Bob.

"All of you get down here and lift

me up!" howled Bunter. "Are you going to leave me here all night, you beasts?"

Five fellows eyed him. Nobody seemed fearfully keen on squelching down into two inches of water and several inches of thick, smelly mud. Neither was there much room for movement in that narrow, deep channel, with crumbling earthy walls. It did not seem to occur to Bunter to help himself. He remained on his back, glaring up in indignant wrath.

"I'll get the rope!" said Nugent.

"Good egg!"

"That's the big idea!"

The towrope was unhooked from the Water-Lily and brought ashore.

Bob Cherry made a loop at the end and leaned down over the edge of the channel.

"Catch hold, Bunter!" he said.

"I can't possibly hold on while you pull me out, you beast, unless somebody comes down and gives me a bunk!" howled Bunter.

"You jolly well can, you fat chump!"

"I jolly well won't, so yah!" roared Bunter.

"Oh, all right!"

Bob dropped the loop of the rope over the two fat legs that were sticking up. He jerked it tight.

"Now, then, pull, you chaps!" he said. "All hands!"

"Yaroooooh!"

Five sturdy fellows threw their weight on the rope.

Bunter had to be got out. If he couldn't, or wouldn't hold on the rope with his hands, obviously he had to come out by his legs.

He came out by his legs; but to judge by his remarks during the hauling process, he disliked the operation intensely.

"Ow! Yow! Stop it! Beasts! Rotters! Yarook! Oh crikey! You're pulling me to bits! You're lugging my legs off! I'm all muddy! You're banging my head! Yaroooooh!"

But the others took no notice. They lay back on that rope like a tug-of-war team, and heaved for all they were worth.

"A long pull, and a strong pull, and a pull all together!" gasped Bob Cherry. "Here he comes!"

Bunter's legs came up. After the legs came the rest of Bunter—yelling! He was landed at last, like a fat fish.

For the next five minutes Billy Bunter forgot even supper. Johnny Bull hooked out the rug and the cushion with the boathook. The Famous Five sat down to continue their interrupted meal. Bunter sat in the grass—at a safe distance from that channel—and told them what he thought of them. He told them at great length, and with almost infinite iteration and reiteration, till he had no breath left with which to tell them any more.

The Famous Five, sad to relate, did not seem to care a boiled bean what Bunter thought of them. They ate their supper with smiling faces. Billy Bunter's eloquence passing them by like the idle wind which they regarded not.

Caught Bending!

CLINK!
Harry Wharton awoke.
Clink!

The captain of the *Remove* grinned, in the dark interior of the tent, as he heard that metallic clink.

Six fellows had been fast asleep in the tent. Billy Bunter was snoring, deep in the land of dreams. The others had been sleeping soundly enough. But that metallic clinking close at hand caused Wharton to open his eyes.

Quietly he rose to his feet without awakening the other fellows, and drew aside the flap of the tent.

Outside, there was a bright glimmering of summer starlight. The trees rose black against a deep blue sky spangled with stars. The little inlet in which the *Water-Lily* was moored shimmered in the starlight—and, twenty yards distant, the broad Thames rolled like a sheet of silver.

Wharton's eyes fixed on the boat—and on a dark figure bending over it.

Clink, clink!

The previous night the chums of Greyfriars had had a narrow escape of losing that boat.

That boat had once belonged to a man named Spooner, and had been sold while Mr. Spooner was enjoying—more or less—the hospitality of the Government for a space of two years!

Shifty Spooner had finished serving his sentence just before Greyfriars School broke up for the summer holidays. And for some reason best known to himself, Mr. Spooner's first thought, when he left bars and warders behind, was to get back his old boat.

The boat-builder at Friardale had refused to trust it in Mr. Spooner's hands. But it was clear that Shifty Spooner wanted that boat badly, for he had watched the Greyfriars river party and attempted to get away with it under cover of darkness.

For which reason the Famous Five did not trust it to the mooring-rope.

Why Mr. Spooner was so keen on that boat, they did not know; but he was fearfully keen on it, and it seemed probable that he might drop in another night with the same object in view.

So during that day's shopping in Chertsey they had purchased a chain with a strong padlock.

One end of the chain was securely stapled in the bows of the *Water-Lily*. The other end, taken ashore, was passed round a stump and padlocked.

Thus secured, the *Water-Lily* seemed fairly safe in the possession of its present hirers. If Mr. Shifty Spooner dropped in again, he was likely to find some difficulty in dealing with that chain and padlock.

Clink, clink!

Harry Wharton grinned as he looked from the tent. He could only make out a dark figure by the boat, but he could guess that it was Mr. Spooner—after his old boat again. He was having trouble with that chain.

Probably it had taken him by sur-

prise. As he strove to push off the boat, it clinked and clinked.

"Suffering snakes!" Harry Wharton caught a suppressed ejaculation in tones of intense exasperation.

"Blow 'em!"

The clinking ceased.

The man in the dark had made no sound himself. Shifty Spooner was a man of stealthy ways. But the chain had made some noise as it was dragged, and that noise had awakened one fellow in the tent.

Looking out, Wharton saw the dark figure turn, and caught the gleam of two narrow sharp eyes fixed on the tent. Evidently Shifty was uneasy lest someone had awakened.

Wharton made no sound. He just watched.

A long minute of silence followed. Then Mr. Spooner, apparently reassured, ceased to watch and listen, and gave his attention to the boat again.

The chain did not clink any more. Shifty, now that he realised how matters stood, was very careful.

He groped cautiously at the chain, groped along its length, and stopped at the tree-stump where it was padlocked.

Harry Wharton grinned again, as he watched him.

He could not deal with the padlock. He was trying to drag the circling chain up over the top of the stump.

But that stump was of irregular shape, and there were juts and knobs in the way, and the chain was tight. Wharton was well aware that the boat-thief would not succeed in that endeavour—and he did not.

Shifty rose to his feet at last, breathing hard.

He groped in his pocket and produced something therefrom—probably a pocket-knife. Then he bent by the stump again, and there was a scraping sound. He was trying—perhaps not very hopefully—to force open the padlock with the pocket-knife.

Harry Wharton still made no sound. He picked up a thick stick that had been left handy, in case it was wanted. It was wanted now.

With the stick in his hand he stepped silently from the tent.

The dark figure, bending over the padlock, had its back to the tent. Harry Wharton made no sound on the grass as he approached on tiptoe, the stick lifted ready for a swipe.

Mr. Spooner was going to get a surprise.

He was excellently placed for a swipe. Bending over the padlock, he could not really have been better placed, if he had been himself trying to assume a position specially favourable for the purpose.

Step by step, without a sound, Wharton drew nearer, with stick up-lifted.

"Blow it!" he heard in suppressed tones. "Suffering snakes! Blow it and blow them! Blow!"

There was a scraping sound. Whether Mr. Spooner might have succeeded, if given time, in snapping open that padlock cannot be said. He was not given time.

Harry Wharton reached him.

Standing just behind the stooping Shifty, he swept the stick down with all the beef he could put into the swipe.

Whop!

The stick landed on Mr. Spooner's trousers with a report like a rifle-shot. That report rang and echoed among the trees round the Greyfriars camp.

It was followed by an ear-splitting yell.

The stooping man bounded clear of the earth in his surprise. He yelled wildly as he bounded. Never had a boat-thief been taken so completely by surprise!

Shifty Spooner bounded, yelled, and spun round, still yelling.

There was a hubbub of voices from the tent. Five fellows there had awakened—that terrific yell had awakened even Billy Bunter.

The starlight glimmered on Mr. Spooner's sharp, foxy face for a moment as he spun round. But it was only for a moment. The next moment Shifty Spooner made another bound, and was gone.

One swipe seemed to be enough for him. He did not stay for another. He vanished into the shadows of the night—a howl floating back from the shadows as he vanished.

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" came a shout from the tent. "What's up?"

Harry Wharton, laughing, walked back to the tent.

"O.K.!" he said. "Only Spooner after the boat! I caught him bending—and he left without saying good-night!"

"Oh crumbs! It sounded like a shot!" exclaimed Nugent.

"Only a swipe on his bags!"

"Some swipe!" said Bob Cherry, with a chuckle.

"The swiftness must have been terrific!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, I wish you wouldn't wake a fellow up in the middle of the night!" came a peevish grunt. "I can jolly well tell you that if you don't let me sleep at night, I shan't turn out in the morning. I can't expect it. Ow! Who's treading on me?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If you tread on me again, I'll jolly well—Yaroooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"All right!" said Billy Bunter, in tones of concentrated indignation. "You won't let a fellow sleep! Don't call me in the morning. I was going to get up at eight, to please you fellows—now I won't! Yarooob! Somebody's treading on me again!"

"I fancy somebody's going on treading on you till you shut up!" remarked Bob Cherry.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter decided to shut up.

Left Behind!

"**L**OVELY morning!" said Bob Cherry.

"Gorgeous!"

"And that fat ass wasting it snoring!" grunted Johnny Bull.

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Five fellows had turned out early on a glorious August morning. They had called Bunter, and had a dip in the Thames. They had called Bunter, and cooked breakfast over the stove. They had called Bunter, and eaten their breakfast. They had called Bunter, and packed for departure—with the exception of the tent, in which Bunter was still snoring.

Bright sunshine, shining river, green woods and green meadows, blue skies and a gentle breeze, called them forth. But they did not call Bunter forth. Bunter slept and snored.

Each time he was called, he grunted—that was all. Now the Famous Five were ready to go.

"Roll him out and dip his head in the water," suggested Johnny Bull; "that will wake him up!"

"Or get the tent down with Bunter in it!" said Bob. "He will shift when it comes down wallop!"

Harry Wharton laughed.

"What about leaving him to it?" he asked. "We want to do Magna Charta Island, and Bunter doesn't! Let's push off, and come back for him!"

"Good egg!" Bob Cherry chuckled and walked over to the tent. "Here, Bunter! Hallo, hallo, hallo! Waking up yet?"

Snore!

"We're going!" roared Bob.

Snore!

"Do you want to be left behind?" roared Bob Cherry.

Snore!

"Still asleep!" said Bob. "That chap can sleep! I'll heave something at him!"

"Beast!" came a sudden howl. It seemed that Bunter was not very fast asleep, after all. "Lemme alone! You kept me awake nearly all night!"

"Roll out!"

"Shan't! You can call me at ten, and if brekker's ready, I'll get up!"

"Want to be left behind?"

"Yah!"

"We're just starting——"

"Yah!"

"Oh, all right! Good-bye, Bunter!"

Bob Cherry walked away and rejoined his comrades at the boat.

Billy Bunter grunted contemptuously as he turned over to go to sleep again.

Those beasts were, perhaps, capable of going on and leaving him behind—after all he had done for them! But they were not likely to go on and leave the tent behind. So long as the tent was there, Bunter felt safe. And he closed his eyes and went to sleep again contentedly.

It was about an hour and a half later that the fat Owl's eyes opened once more. He sat up, and pitched off blankets.

At half-past nine, even Billy Bunter was willing to make a move. He was not keen or eager—but he was willing. At half-past nine the urge to breakfast rather outweighed the urge to slumber. So Bunter was ready to get up.

He got up.

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"I say, you fellows," he squeaked, "I shall be ready for brekker in two minutes!"

There was no answer.

Bunter rolled out of the tent and blinked round him through his spectacles.

Nobody was in sight.

"I say, you fellows!" he yelled.

Echo answered. There was no other answer.

Billy Bunter's eyes gleamed behind his spectacles. He had no doubt that the beasts were keeping out of sight just to pull his fat leg. Then, suddenly, he saw that the boat was gone.

He jumped.

"Oh crikey!" gasped Bunter.

He blinked at the vacant mooring-place in consternation. Had they, after all, gone on and left him behind?

But they couldn't have left the tent. The tent was useful, if Bunter wasn't—it was wanted, though Bunter might not be!

But an awful thought struck Bunter. Did they think it was worth the tent to see the last of him?

"Beasts!" hissed Bunter.

He rolled along the bank of the little inlet to the river. He blinked out over the shining Thames.

Plenty of craft were in sight. Five or six boats, at least, met Bunter's view, a canoe and a punt, and farther off, a puffing steam-launch. Whether one of the boats was the Greyfriars boat, Bunter did not know. None was coming in his direction, at all events.

For a good ten minutes the fat junior stood there, watching the river. Then he turned back to the camp with deep feelings.

They were gone! They had left him behind—even at the cost of leaving the tent! Everything but the tent was gone! Not a single utensil lay about—not a spot of food! They had taken their own things out of the tent—only Bunter's ground-sheet and blankets remained. Even Bunter could not eat blankets, and had no desire to attempt to masticate a ground-sheet! There was no brekker for Bunter!

"Oh crumbs!" groaned Bunter.

The fat Owl rather wished he had turned out a little earlier now. He realised that he might have guessed that those fellows, with their usual selfishness, would not be willing to hang about doing nothing till he turned out at half-past nine. But who could have guessed that they would leave the tent behind, for the sake of leaving Bunter in it?

"Oh, the rotters!" moaned Bunter.

He blinked at his watch. It indicated a quarter to twelve—though whether by day or by night, Bunter did not know, as it had stopped. Bunter wished that he had taken the trouble to wind it. Still, why should a fellow take the trouble to wind a watch when there were five other watches, as well as a travelling clock, available? Bunter was not the man to take unnecessary trouble.

"Oh lor'!" moaned Bunter.

What he was going to do was rather a puzzle.

They were gone—had very likely been gone hours. Miles away by this time—even if he could get after them on land. And how could he—without any breakfast to start on?

Really, it was awful!

He turned back to the river again and leaned on a tree near the tow-path, watching. He had a faint hope that some boat towing up the river might give him a lift.

It was about half-past ten when a young man came along close by the shore, paddling in a canoe.

Bunter hailed him.

"I say! You! I say!"

The young man in the canoe looked round.

"I say, will you give me a lift?" squeaked Bunter. "My friends have gone in their boat and left me behind!"

The young man looked at him fixedly. He was paddling a light canoe, which was nearly filled by himself.

"Give you a lift?" he repeated.

"Yes, please!"

"In this canoe?"

"Yes. You see——"

"I don't!" said the young man in the canoe, shaking his head. "Take a tip from me, and wait for a barge—or an ocean liner! You'll have to do some slimming before you go canoeing! Wait till they bring the new Mauretania up the river!"

And he paddled on, grinning.

"Beast!" roared Bunter after that derisive young man.

The cheeky beast was making out that Bunter was too bulky for his canoe. Perhaps he was. But really, even Bunter did not need a Mauretania!

However, Bunter decided to hail no more canoes. He watched for a boat.

A boat came by at last, towing. There was an old gentleman and a dog in the boat, and it was towed by a man in a jersey, evidently hired for the purpose. It was no use asking the man in the jersey, so Bunter hailed the boat.

"I say!"

An old gentleman and a dog looked at him.

"I say, I've been left behind! Will you give me a lift up the river?" called out Bunter.

The old gentleman put his hand to his ear.

"Hay?" he called out. Apparently he was a little deaf.

"Will you give me a lift?" howled Bunter.

"Who are you, telling me to shift?" demanded the old gentleman testily. "What right have you to tell anyone to shift?"

"Not shift—lift!" shrieked Bunter. "I've been left behind by my friends. They've gone off without me!"

"Hay?"

"I want a lift up the river!" roared Bunter.

"What do you mean? My man's towing me up the river—as fast as I want to go, or intend to go. Upon my word! Who are you to tell a man to shift up the river? I repeat, who are you? Impudent young rascal!"

"Will you give me a lift in that boat?" bellowed Bunter.

"If I step on shore, young man, I will teach you to call a man old enough to be your grandfather a goat! Upon my word, I never heard of such a thing! The manners on this river are shocking, outrageous!"

The boat rolled on, the old gentleman fuming and glaring back at Bunter with an expression that made the fat Owl rather glad that that old gentleman was not on shore.

Billy Bunter, breathing hard, waited for another craft. Presently a man came by in a light skiff, sculling. Bunter gave him a yell.

"I say, stop and give me a lift up the river!"

The man in the skiff gave him a glance.

"Ask me again next August!" he said genially; and he sculled on without stopping.

It began to look very doubtful whether Bunter would get that lift up the river, on the track of the beasts who had so basely deserted him. But at length a boat appeared, pulling direct for the little inlet, as if intending to enter it.

There were three fellows in that boat. They looked, at the distance, like schoolboys; and Bunter's hopes rose again.

He waited for them to draw nearer to hail them.

But as they drew nearer, he did not hail them. Instead of hailing them, the fat Owl backed out of sight behind a tree.

The three fellows in that boat were Ponsonby, Gadsby, and Monson, of Highcliffe!

Billy Bunter did not want a lift in that boat. Very much indeed he didn't. A lift in the Highcliffe boat would have made his last state worse than his first. Billy Bunter hunted cover as that boat pulled into the inlet and came to a stop only a few yards from the spot where the Greyfriars party had camped the previous night.

come between the wind and his nobility.

He walked over to the tent. If there was a fellow about who looked like scrapping, Pon was going to be civil, in spite of his annoyance. If there was some timid sort of chap, Pon was going to be distinctly unpleasant.

As it happened, there was nobody at all! The tent was empty, and nobody was to be seen in the offing.

"Nobody here!" said Pon. "Some camping gang, I expect, and they've gone and cleared off for the day, and they'll be coming back again to camp, as they've left their tent here."

"Needn't bother us!" said Monson. "We're only stoppin' here to lunch."

"Rather a lark to ship their tent while they're gone!" remarked Ponsonby.

Any kind of malicious mischief had an almost irresistible appeal for Pon!

He had not the faintest idea to whom that tent belonged. But he was quite prepared to dismantle it and give the unknown owners the task of setting it up again when they came back to their camp. That was the sort of playful nature he had.

"What larks!" agreed Monson. "They won't be back till after we're gone—whoever they are! Must have left it standing for a camp to-night."

"Oh, for goodness' sake, let the tent alone!" exclaimed Gadsby. "What's the good of playing a rotten trick on people we don't know!"

"Think we'd better leave it alone?" sneered Pon.

"Yes, I do."

"Then you can think again, Gaddy!" said Ponsonby; and he started pulling out tent-pegs. "Lend a hand, Monson!"

Monson chuckled and lent a hand.

Gadsby gave a grunt, and walked along the bank with his hands in his pockets. Gaddy was not going to have a hand in that hooligan trick;

but, as usual, he gave his comrades their heads.

"Oh crikey!" murmured Billy Bunter.

From his cover in the trees, the fat Owl watched the Highcliffians through his big spectacles.

Clearly, Pon did not know that that tent belonged to old foes of Greyfriars! He was simply indulging in reckless hooliganism in pitching it over—quite amused by the idea of some party coming back, tired after a day on the river, expecting to find their tent standing, and discovering it in a tangled heap! That was the good Pon's idea of amusement!

Billy Bunter did not care a bean what happened to the tent. But he cared whole bushels of beans what might happen to his fat self.

He quaked at the thought of Pon & Co. finding him there! He could imagine how Pon would delight in ragging a Greyfriars man who could not put up a scrap.

The tent came down with a crash!

Pon was not merely taking it down. He was rumpling it up, tangling the tent-ropes, and chocking the tent-pegs right and left. It was not going to be an easy task for the unknown owners to stick that tent up again at night. Monson was lending him hearty assistance, while Gadsby, from a distance, looked on disapprovingly.

Billy Bunter's gaze shifted from the Highcliffians to their boat.

They had tied the painter to the stump to which the Greyfriars boat had been padlocked the night before.

On the stern seat of the boat was a hamper.

From that hamper Bunter could have guessed why the Highcliffians had landed at the shady spot, even if he had not overheard what they said. They had landed for lunch; and the lunch, evidently, was in the hamper.

Billy Bunter's eyes and spectacles fixed longingly on that hamper.

Neck or Nothing!

"HALLO, somebody here already!" said Gadsby.

He stared at the tent as the three Highcliffians landed.

"Some cheeky cad of a tripper!" grunted Ponsonby.

He frowned.

"Oh, awfully cheeky of anybody to come up the Thames, when we want all the river!" remarked Gadsby.

"Oh, shut up!"

Gadsby was being sarcastic. Pon did not like Gaddy's sarcasm.

"Well, we're sticking here, anyhow," said Monson. "This is a jolly place for lunch. If they don't like it they can lump it!"

"I shan't stand any cheek from trippers!" growled Pon.

Pon & Co., of course, were not trippers! They were lofty and lordly Highcliffians, who rather honoured the Thames. Other people who used the river were trippers.

It was cheeky—indeed, scandalous—for any of them to barge in where Pon wanted to barge in. Pon was naturally annoyed by such cheek. It irritated Pon for common persons to

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It was noon now—and Bunter was not merely hungry—he was ravenous! Quite unaware that the Famous Five intended to return after exploring Runnymede and Magna Charta Island, Bunter had not the faintest idea where his next meal was to come from. Even if he walked to a place where foodstuffs were sold, it was clear that no extensive meal could be purchased for the moderate sum of twopence-halfpenny! Bunter had recovered the wealth of which Mr. Hopkins had deprived him; but he realised that it would not go very far at a riverside inn!

Bunter's eyes gleamed behind his spectacles.

Pon and Monson, ragging that tent, were a dozen yards from their boat. Gadsby was farther off, strolling on the bank. None of them had the remotest idea that a fat Owl was watching them from behind the trees.

Bunter's fat heart beat fast.

He calculated the chances of a sudden rush!

Serve the beasts right for ragging the Greyfriars tent! That was a justification, if Bunter wanted one! But, truth to tell, Bunter was thinking more of the hamper than the justification!

He made up his fat mind.

Pon and Monson would not be much longer tangling up the tent and tent-ropes. Gadsby might walk back any minute! It was now or never!

Taking his courage in both hands, as it were, Bunter emerged from behind his tree and rushed for the boat.

So sudden was his appearance that none of the Highcliffians observed him till he had reached the boat. Then there was a shout.

"Oh, look!"

"Greyfriars cad!"

"That fat ass!"

Billy Bunter bounded into the boat! He landed in that boat rather like a ton of bricks! It dipped deep, the gunwale touching the water under the impact.

And it shot away! He did not need to untie the painter. That terrific shock, driving the boat off the bank, snapped the cord like a thread.

Even as the fat Owl sprawled in the boat, the boat left the bank and shot away towards the Thames.

Rocking wildly, it went; and Ponsonby and Monson, rushing back to the water's edge, stared after it in rage and dismay.

Gadsby came running back to join them.

They all yelled to Bunter.

Bunter sat up.

The boat rocked and dipped and plunged, floating out into the river, broadside on.

Ponsonby waved a furious fist.

"Bring back that boat!" he yelled.

"You fat cad, bring back that boat!" roared Monson.

Billy Bunter did not answer. He wriggled to a seat and groped for the oars!

Bunter was not likely to bring back that boat! Even if he had not wanted the hamper, the look on Ponsonby's face would have discouraged him. That look indicated, only too plainly,

what the fat junior had to expect if he fell into Pon's clutches.

"Oh crumbs!" gasped Gadsby. "He's got our boat!"

"And our hamper!" howled Monson.

"I'll smash him!" raved Ponsonby.

They cut down the inlet to the tow-path. There was a little wooden bridge over the mouth of the inlet, where it entered the Thames. But Bunter and the boat had already floated under it and were out on the river. Bunter and the boat were far out of reach.

"Will you bring back that boat?" shrieked Ponsonby.

"Yah! Highcliffe cads!" came a defiant howl from the boat.

That was Bunter's last word!

Bunter could row, after a fashion. Catching innumerable crabs, Bunter rowed. The boat zigzagged wildly. It moved in most directions at once. But it moved! And Pon & Co., raving, were left stranded—with feelings that could not be expressed in words, though they tried to express them—as Billy Bunter, and the boat, and the hamper, all vanished from sight together!

Not Pleasant For Pon!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!"

"Highcliffe cads!"

The Greyfriars Water-Lily was returning.

Harry Wharton & Co. had explored the historic field of Runnymede and Magna Charta Island, where King John had—or hadn't—signed the Great Charter. They had viewed the spot where a blow had been struck in the great cause of taking power out of the hands of kings, and putting it in those of elected persons—which, no doubt, was a great change for the better.

Now they were coming back for Bunter—and lunch! And as Bunter had had to wait for his breakfast till they came back for lunch, they thought it probable that, on another occasion, Bunter would turn out of bed when the party was ready to start. If not, they were prepared to repeat the lesson, as often as required!

They expected to see a fat figure in full view. They expected to see Billy Bunter equally relieved by their reappearance, and exasperated by their having left him brekker-less.

But they did not see Bunter at all!

Instead of one figure on the bank of the inlet, they saw three—none of them Bunter's!

They stared at the unexpected sight of the Highcliffe trio.

"Look at the tent!" said Johnny Bull. "They've yanked that tent down!"

"But where the dickens is Bunter?"

"Scuttled!" grunted Johnny.

"Catch him sticking it out, if those Highcliffe cads turned up!"

The boat pulled in to the bank: Pon & Co. stood watching it with uncertain looks. It was a quarter of an hour since Bunter had vanished—with their craft. Pon & Co. were at a loss.

The sight of Bunter apprised them that the tent was probably the Greyfriars party's property. And—as Bunter had been there—they supposed that the rest of the party would be somewhere in the offing. They were not anxious for a meeting—especially after the way they had handled the tent.

But they were quite at a loss. They had to have their boat. At least, they were extremely unwilling to depart without it. They were in angry debate on the subject, quite undecided what on earth to do, when the Greyfriars boat pulled in.

The Famous Five jumped ashore. Pon & Co. eyed them, and backed away.

"Fancy meeting you fellows!" said Bob Cherry agreeably. "What have you done with our porpoise?"

Ponsonby gritted his teeth.

"Look here, that fat cad's stolen our boat!" he said savagely. "If we don't get it back, and sharp, we shall put the police on him!"

"Did you come here by boat?"

"Do you think we swam here, you fool?"

"Well, you might have walked!" said Bob. "So you found Bunter here, and he got off in your boat! I expect you were going to rag him—he's the sort of helpless ass you would rag!"

"We never saw him till he suddenly cut out of the trees and bagged our boat!" growled Monson. "He went off in it, a quarter of an hour ago! There was a hamper in it!"

Bob Cherry chuckled.

"You'll get your boat back and the hamper—but I'll bet you two to one in doughnuts that there won't be anything in the hamper!" he said.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here—" hissed Ponsonby.

"We'll look for Bunter when we get off!" said Harry. "But what's happened to our tent?"

The Greyfriars fellows looked at the tent.

It lay in a dismantled heap, rumpled and tangled, and the number of knots that had been tied in the ropes could hardly have been counted. Tent-pegs lay everywhere in the grass.

Ponsonby and Monson exchanged dismayed glances. Gadsby shrugged his shoulders. That lark with the tent looked like coming home to roost, as it were!

Harry Wharton's face grew grim as he surveyed the wrecked tent. There was a good hour's work ahead of somebody, at least, before that tent was put in order again.

The captain of the Greyfriars Remove made up his mind at once who that somebody was going to be.

"Is that your idea of a jape, Pon?" he asked quietly.

"We never knew the tent was yours!" snarled Ponsonby uneasily. "We never knew you'd been here at all till we saw that fat rotter! Look here, if you don't want trouble, you'd better get our boat back for us!"

"I'm not bothering about your boat at present—I'm bothering about that tent! If you didn't know it was ours,

"you're a worse hooligan than I thought!" said Wharton contemptuously. "Anyhow, you're going to set it right! Get down to it, and look sharp!"

Ponsonby breathed hard, backing away. He had quite enjoyed ragging that tent. He did not feel as if he would enjoy setting it right again.

The three Highcliffians exchanged a quick look, turned, and cut towards the trees.

Five active fellows were after them like five arrows.

Harry Wharton's grasp was on Ponsonby before he had taken six steps.

The dandy of Highcliffe turned on him with a snarl, hitting out savagely.

But that was a game at which two could play; and a game at which the captain of the Greyfriars Remove was rather a better man than the dandy of Highcliffe.

They punched, and punched, and punched, Ponsonby getting at least two to one of the punches.

Meanwhile, Gadsby and Monson were keeping on. Nobody wanted them—and they were assisted in their flight by lunging boots from behind. Yelling, they disappeared through the trees.

Ponsonby would have been glad to follow! But there was no escape for Pon.

Pon had a job of work ahead of him, before he was to be allowed to escape!

"Stop it!" he gasped. Six or seven punches were enough for Pon. "Stop it, I say!"

Wharton dropped his hands. "Any old thing!" he said. "Get to work on that tent!"

"I won't!" yelled Ponsonby. "Collar him, you men, and dip him in the water! I dare say he'll get to work after that!"

"You—you—you rotters!" Ponsonby cast a hunted look round him. "I—I—I'll set the tent right, if you like!"

"The likefulness is terrific, my esteemed disgusting Ponsonby!"

"Get to it!" said Harry. "You're not going till it's in apple-pie order! We'll have our lunch while he's busy, you fellows!"

"Good egg!" agreed Bob Cherry. "You keep an eye on that Highcliffe cad, Johnny! Boot him if he slacks down!"

"Leave him to me!" said Johnny Bull.

Lunch was brought ashore, and the Famous Five sat down to it.

Gadsby and Monson had disappeared, and showed no sign of re-appearing. Ponsonby worked at the tent.

He worked with a face pale with rage, his eyes glittering, his lips set, and an expression of sheer evil in his looks. But he worked. Five fellows were ready to stop him if he attempted to bolt; and Pon did not want to be dipped in the water.

Laboriously, in intense exasperation, Pon worked at untying knots and untangling tangles.

From the bottom of his heart, he wished that he had not been quite so industrious in knotting those knots and tangling those tangles.

He had taken it for granted that a river party who had left a tent standing in that sequestered nook had left it for their return at the end of the day. Certainly he had not calculated on being caught on the spot. This was quite a useful lesson for Pon—it was probable that next time he came on a tent left by its owners he would think twice—if not three times—before larking with it. But the lesson, though useful, was not enjoyable. Pon, as he worked, looked as if he was understudying a demon in a pantomime.

The Famous Five had finished their lunch before Pon had finished undoing the work of his own mischievous hands.

They packed up and were ready to go; but they had to wait for the tent. They stood round Pon, encouraging him with cheery words.

"Go it, Pon!"

"Pile in!"

"Don't you ever work at Highcliffe?"

"Get a move on!"

"Look here, we can't wait here for ever! Let's boot him!"

Pon gritted his teeth and laboured on.

It was done at last—the canvas smoothed and neatly folded, the ropes completely unknotted and disentangled, the tent-pegs collected.

Ponsonby, tired out, boiling with rage, stood looking at the cheery five as if he could have bitten them.

"That's all right!" said Harry Wharton. "Shove it into the boat, you chaps! We're done with you, Pon—you can cut!"



Ponsonby leaped into the boat—leaving a patch from the seat of his trousers in the bulldog's jaws!

"What about giving him tuppence for what he's done?" suggested Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Pon did not look as if twopence would have consoled him. Really, he looked as if he could have been consoled by nothing short of the hanging, drawing, and quartering of the whole Greyfriars party.

"Where shall we send your boat, if we find it?" asked Harry.

Ponsonby's eyes glittered.

"Don't you worry," he said, between his teeth. "I'm going straight back to Staines, to send a policeman to look for it and arrest the pincher."

"Are you?" Harry Wharton laughed. "I don't know exactly how that would work out, old bean, but I know you're not trying it on! I think you'd better come with us to look for it!"

"I shall do nothing of the sort!"

"You won't step into our boat?"

"No!" snarled Ponsonby.

"Please yourself! You've got the biggest feet, Bob—boot him into the boat!"

Ponsonby decided to step in!

Beastly For Bunter!

"Hi!"

"Look out!"

"Clear the way, will you, you fat fool?"

"You in that boat—you fat young donkey!"

"Hi!"

Harry Wharton & Co. were pulling in the Water-Lily. Towing had to be left till they had found Bunter.

Not that they were fearfully anxious to find Bunter. But, evidently, he had to be found. They had taken on Pon as a passenger till his boat was recovered, and clearly Bunter could not be allowed to play the part of a bold, bad buccaneer, sailing off with a captured craft!

But they had rather wondered how, when, and where they were going to find Bunter. The Thames was wide, and it was long—and Bunter really might have been almost anywhere on the Thames. Having a captured hamper on board the captured boat, however, it was probable that Bunter would have tied up somewhere and started on the hamper. But where? No doubt he was somewhere between Staines and Windsor—but looking for him over that space looked like a large order!

But, as it happened, there was no need to look very far.

Pulling on the Thames, their ears were greeted by a regular chorus. That chorus centred on a boat well out in the river, which seemed to be causing a spot of excitement.

Voices from all sorts of craft addressed the crew of that boat—the crew consisting of a fat Owl who blinked round him in bewilderment through a big pair of spectacles.

Bunter was rowing. When Bunter was at his very best as an oarsman he caught a crab with only one oar. Generally he caught two—one with each oar. Sometimes his oars missed the water altogether, and Bunter

rolled backward. Sometimes he put in quite a good stroke with one oar, and spun the boat round like a humming-top. Occasionally—for accidents will happen—both oars gave a good pull, and the boat shot in whichever direction its nose happened to be looking at at the moment.

This sort of oarsmanship was liable to cause confusion on a crowded river.

From a steam-launch people yelled, shrieked, and waved at Bunter—unwilling to run him down and face the bother of an inquest. From a punt, which had nearly tipped over when Bunter, with one of his sudden, unexpected rushes, rammed it, came a stream of language which was absolutely tropical in its warmth. From a canoe, round which Bunter spun with one of his encircling stunts, came another stream of fearfully expressive expressions. In a light skiff, with which Bunter had collided broadside on, two young men were shaking infuriated fists. From six or seven other craft, voices addressed Bunter in every tone of rage and fury.

"Hi!"

"Get out of the way!"

"Do you want all the river?"

"Hi, hi! You fat donkey! Hi!"

Bunter, in a state of helpless confusion, blinked round dizzily.

He was making no progress. Bunter's idea had been to pull across to Magna Charta Island—not from any interest in that historical spot, but because it was safe from the owners of the hamper, left on the bank. He had about as much chance of reaching Magna Charta Island as of reaching the island of Newfoundland, or the Solomon Islands.

Indeed, he had forgotten even the hamper now. Every other minute he was in danger of capsizing, or colliding with another boat, or getting run down by a launch. The more he tried to row clear the more he spun about on the river, to the general rage and confusion.

That roar of enraged voices guided the Greyfriars fellows to Bunter. They had no need to seek for him—to hunt for him on the Thames. Bunter leaped to the eye.

"There he is!" chuckled Bob Cherry. "Row, brothers, row! We shall lose our porpoise if we don't rescue him pretty quick!"

The steam-launch rolled by Bunter's boat with about a foot to spare. Faces glared down at him, voices addressed him. Bunter did not heed them. His boat rolled and rocked on the wash, his oars sawed the air, and Bunter went backwards once more.

This time he did not recover his balance. He landed on his fat back, with a roar.

Two little fat legs stuck up in the air. That, at present, was all that could be seen of Bunter.

The legs sank down out of view, and Bunter was invisible, at the bottom of the Highcliffe boat.

With the boat rocking so wildly that the rowlocks on either side alternately dipped to the water, Bunter dared not make any attempt

to get up. He lay on his back and roared.

Harry Wharton & Co. were laughing almost too much to row. However, they pulled out to the rescue of the hapless castaway.

Four oars drove the Water-Lily along rapidly. Hurree Jamset Ram Singh captured the rocking boat with a boathook and pulled it alongside.

Bob Cherry laid in his oar and grasped the gunwale.

"Ow! Oh! Wow! Help!" Bunter was roaring. "Keep off! Yarook! Don't you run me down, you beasts! Help! Yarooop!"

"Hallo, hallo, hallo!" roared Bob Cherry. "Enjoying life, Bunter?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ow!" Bunter sat up as the boat steadied. "Oh! I say, you fellows! Oh crikey! Beasts! I say, hold on to this beastly boat! It's a rotten boat—it won't row, somehow! I say, hold on!"

"Come out of it, you fat ass!" said Harry Wharton, laughing. "You'd better chuck up piratical stunts, Bunter, if that's the way you make off with the craft you capture!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Bunter struggled up.

"I say, you fellows, hold her steady!" he gasped. "I say, mind you hold her steady! What did you clear off for, you beasts? I say, one of you take the hamper! I've got a hamper here."

Now that the peril was past, Bunter remembered the hamper!

"Leave it there, fathead!" answered Harry.

"Eh? No fear! I want my hamper!"

"Your hamper!" gasped Bob.

"Eh? Yes! Whose did you think it was in my boat?" yapped Bunter.

"I—I gave a pound for that hamper!"

"Wha-a-t?" gasped Wharton.

The fat Owl did not observe Ponsonby scowling in the Greyfriars boat. He naturally did not expect to see a Highcliffe man in such company, and now that he was safe, his attention was concentrated on the hamper. Bunter did not care a bean what became of the boat; but he cared a great deal what became of the hamper.

"You fat brigand!" howled Johnny Bull. "That hamper belongs to the chaps the boat belongs to!"

"Oh, really, Bull—"

"You bloated bloater!" exclaimed Nugent. "That's the Highcliffe boat, and it's their hamper!"

"Oh!" gasped Bunter. "How did you know it was the Highcliffe boat? Besides, it isn't! I—I mean, they lent me their boat—"

"They lent you the boat?"

"Yes, and—and gave me the hamper! Ponsonby asked me specially if I would like it, and I—I said I would! Lift it in, will you?"

"Ponsonby asked you if you'd like that hamper?" shrieked Bob Cherry.

"Yes! He said 'Like this hamper, Bunter, old chap?' Those were his words! So, you see, it's all right. Lift it in, Bob—it's too heavy for me!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Will you lift this hamper in?" hooted Bunter.

"I think we'll ask Ponsonby first if he really wants you to have it!" gasped Harry Wharton. "Do you, Pon?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh!" Billy Bunter became suddenly aware of a scowling face in the Greyfriars boat. "Oh crikey! Is—is that Ponsonby? What have you got that Highcliffe cad there for? Oh crumbs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you fellows, you're not going to let Ponsonby have my hamper! I say, if he says it's his hamper, don't you believe him! He's untruthful! I bought it at Egham—I mean Staines—and gave two pounds for it!"

Bob Cherry reached over into the Highcliffe boat, gripped a fat neck, and hooked Bunter, roaring, into the Greyfriars boat.

Bunter rolled there, and continued to roar.

"There you are, Pon—boat and hamper, and all!" said Harry Wharton. "Get going!"

Without a word, Pon climbed into the Highcliffe boat.

Bob Cherry pushed it off, and Pon, still looking like a demon in a pantomime, pulled away down the river to look for Gadsby and Monson.

Billy Bunter sat up.

"I say, you fellows, where's that hamper?" he roared. "Have you let that Highcliffe cad snaffle my hamper? I hadn't even opened it! Beasts! I say, I'm hungry! I haven't had any brekker! I say, what have you got to eat?"

Fortunately there was plenty to eat on the Greyfriars boat.

Billy Bunter proceeded to have breakfast and lunch in one—or, rather, several breakfasts and lunches in one—as the Famous Five pulled up to Old Windsor Lock.

Ordered Off!

"THIS is all right!"

Bob Cherry made that remark, and his friends agreed that it was all right. Indeed, Hurree Jamset Ram Singh declared that the all-rightfulness was terrific.

Even Billy Bunter was not grouching.

A glorious day had ended in a beautiful evening. The Water-Lily was tied up; the crew had camped in a pretty little glade that opened from a wood on the river. Supper had been disposed of, the washing-up was done, and the chums of Greyfriars sat in rich grass, leaning on tree-trunks, as the moon came up over the Thames valley.

It was a gorgeous moon, full and bright, and it sailed in the deep blue sky like a silver bowl, streaming down light on the rolling river and the dusky woods.

In the dusky silence and solitude, the juniors might have supposed themselves in some distant untrodden land, far from the banks of the busy Thames.

"Reminds me of something in Shakespeare!" said Bob, apparently

in a poetic mood. "How sweet the moonlight sleeps on yonder bank!"

Billy Bunter blinked round.

"What rot!" he said. "Datchet ain't far away, but we ain't near enough for you to see a bank, I can't see any bank."

"You unpoetical frog!" said Bob. "There are banks and banks! This isn't the best part of the river, but we've hit on a jolly nice spot. I believe there's a house on the other side of that wood—I think I saw a chimney when we landed. Chap who lives here is very likely a poet."

"The poetfulness is probably terrific!" agreed Hurree Jamset Ram Singh. "The communefulness with beautiful Nature softens the heart, and inspires the esteemed mind with poetic imagefulness."

"You young rascals!"

It was a sudden sharp voice, and it quite startled the campers. They all looked round at once.

From a dusky path in the wood a stranger appeared.

He was a stout gentleman, with a purple complexion, and a waistcoat compared with which Billy Bunter's was almost slim. He came into the glade, glaring at the campers, and making threatening motions with a large stick he held in a plump hand. He did not seem pleased to see them there.

Harry Wharton & Co. rose to their feet and politely raised their hats.

Billy Bunter, too lazy to move, just blinked.

The stout gentleman's mode of address was not polite. Still, politeness was never wasted, so they capped him politely.

"Good-evening, sir!" said Bob Cherry cheerfully. "Nice evening!"

"You trespassing young scoundrel!"

Bob looked at him.

"I don't want to jump to hasty conclusions, you fellows," he remarked, "but I get a sort of impression that this party isn't pleased to meet us. What do you think?"

"Sort of!" grinned Johnny Bull.

"How dare you land and camp here?" bawled the stout gentleman, shaking his stick at the campers.

"That's an easy one!" answered Bob. "As Shakespeare says, I dare do all that may become a man! Ever read Shakespeare?"

"Go away this instant!" The stout gentleman did not seem disposed to discuss Shakespeare. "This is private land. You know it is private land! You must have seen the notice-board!"

"We've seen lots of notice-boards since we started up the Thames," answered Bob affably. "Every pig in the Thames valley seems to have stuck up a board!"

"Shut up, you ass!" murmured Harry Wharton. "My dear sir, if you are the owner of this place—"

"I am the owner of this place! I am Colonel Bullock!" hooted the stout man. "This is Bullock Court, as I dare say you know very well."

"How should we know?" argued Bob Cherry, who seemed to be in a humorous mood. "We've only landed here an hour or so ago, so we never saw the bullock caught—"

"What?"

"Did you catch him?" asked Bob.

Colonel Bullock stared at him. His complexion, which was purple to begin with, grew more and more purple.

"You impudent young rascal!" he gasped. "I tell you that this is Bullock Court—"

"And I tell you that it's all right if the bullock's caught!" answered Bob. "If he was still loose, it would make a difference, of course!"

Colonel Bullock gurgled, and pointed to the boat with his stick.

"Go!" he roared.

The juniors looked at him. Bob's surmise that the dweller in that pretty spot must be a poet was evidently wide of the mark. There was absolutely nothing poetical in Colonel Bullock's aspect.

"I say, you fellows, we can't go," said Billy Bunter. "We're just going to bed! I certainly shan't go! Tell that old donkey to clear off!"

"Shut up, Bunter!"

"I'm not going!" roared Bunter. "Who's that old ass to order people off? I don't suppose it's his land at all, really. He doesn't look to me like a colonel—I should take him for a pork butcher!"

"I—I—I—" gurgled the proprietor of Bullock Court.

"You buzz off!" said Bunter. "You can't pull our leg, making out you're the owner of this place! You can come again in the morning, if you like, and bring us some mutton chops from your shop in Datchet!"

"You fat ass, shut up!" gasped Harry Wharton.

"Shan't! Think I'm going to shift?" hooted Bunter. "Suppose it is his land, what harm are we doing, sitting on it? We're not going to eat it, or carry it off in the boat, are we? Chuck a saucepan at him if he doesn't buzz off!"

Colonel Bullock concentrated his attention on Bunter. He seemed at a loss for words, and he went into action.

He made a sudden rush at the fat junior, with his stick in the air.

Bunter, who had stated that he was not going to shift, shifted quite promptly at that. He made a wild bound.

"I say, you fellows, keep him off!" he roared.

Swipe!

"Too-hoop!" roared Bunter, as the colonel's stick landed on the tightest trousers between London Bridge and Oxford.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Nugent. "Here, stop that, old bean!"

Swipe, swipe, swipe!

"Yarook! Help! Rescue!" yelled Bunter.

Swipe, swipe!

How many the stout gentleman would have given Bunter cannot be said. But he was interrupted at that point.

The Famous Five really could not stand by and see Bunter swiped and swiped and swiped. Neither could they very well punch a man old enough to be their father, ferocious as he was.

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They gathered round the enraged proprietor of Bullock Court, and grasped him—as gently as the circumstances permitted. They restrained his enthusiasm, in the matter of swiping Bunter, by holding on to his arms.

"Scoundrels!" roared Colonel Bullock. "Trespassing ruffians! I will have you all given into custody! I will let the bulldog loose! I will—Gurrrgh! Will you release my arms? I will lay my stick round all of you, one after another, immediately you release my arms!"

"What an inducement!" murmured Bob.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Colonel Bullock struggled frantically in restraining hands. He dragged his right arm loose suddenly and the stick swept round.

There was a frantic yell from Johnny Bull, as he caught it with his ear.

The next moment Bob Cherry jerked it away, and spun it into the tree-tops. Then, the ferocious stout gentleman being disarmed, the juniors released him.

"I say, you fellows, boot him!" roared Billy Bunter. "Jump on him! Pitch him into the river! Duck him! Drown him! Ow! Wow!"

"You—you—you—you—" spluttered Colonel Bullock. He glared round for his stick, but it had vanished in the foliage. "You—you—trespassing young rascals—poaching young scoundrels—wait—wait till I

get back to the house—I will let the bulldog loose, and then—"

Spluttering wrath, Colonel Bullock rolled away by the dusky path from which he had emerged.

That path evidently led to the distant house. At the house, it seemed, there was a bulldog—probably even more disagreeable at close quarters than his master.

The Greyfriars campers looked at one another.

"Better shift!" remarked Bob Cherry. "I was quite mistaken about the chap who lives here being a poet—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I don't know whether he could legally shift us," remarked Johnny Bull, "but it's not much use arguing legal points with a bulldog. Bulldogs don't know anything about the law."

"Get moving!" said Harry. "Can't be helped!"

"I'm not going!" roared Bunter. "I want to go to bed. I'm jolly well not going!"

"Like to stay here and see the bulldog?" asked Nugent.

"Yah! I'm not afraid of a bulldog if you fellows are! I jolly well ain't going!" howled the indignant Owl.

"Gurrrrrrrgh!" came suddenly from Bob Cherry, behind Bunter—quite a lifelike imitation of a bulldog's growl.

"Yaroooh!"

Billy Bunter forgot on the spot that he was not afraid of bulldogs.

He bounded clear of Bullock Court.

"Keep it off!" he yelled. "I say, you fellows, keep that dog off! I say—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Billy Bunter headed for the boat. He headed quick. It was left to the other fellows to get the impedimenta aboard—in so great a hurry was Bunter to get afloat!

There was no help for it—the Greyfriars campers had to look for another camp on a less inhospitable shore.

They lost no time in packing on board—it was obviously wise to go while the going was good.

Hardly five minutes after Colonel Bullock had stamped off towards his mansion, the Water-Lily was pulling up the Thames.

Pon On The Spot!

"KEEP quiet, Gaddy, you fool!" "Oh, shut up, Pon!"

"Don't rag, you two!" muttered Monson. "If they wake up, we're more likely to get the trouble than they are!"

The Highcliffe boat was pulling under shadowy branches that overhung the water.

Ponsonby peered into the shadows, able to see little.

Where a little glade opened to the river the moonlight fell clear; but on either side of that open glade thick trees overhung the water, and the shadows were dark.

Gadsby's oar had bumped on a trailing root in the water. Hence Pon's snap. It was necessary to be very quiet.

Pon's face was dark and bitter. Pon was on the trail of vengeance. His comrades were not very keen on the enterprise; but they followed Pon's lead. But caution, it was clear, was much needed—when three fellows raided five—or six, counting Billy Bunter, strategy was indicated.

"Sure this is the place?" muttered Gadsby sulkily.

"Of course I am, you fool! I watched them land at sunset. I know this place—Bullock Court. We're right on them now."

"Can't see anything of their boat?"

"Neither can I, as I'm not a cat, and can't see in the dark," snapped Ponsonby. "It's tied up under these trees somewhere—goodness knows where they've shoved it. No good looking for it in a place as black as a hat. Anyhow, it's their camp we want."

The boat glided from the shadows into the bright moonlight again.

Ponsonby stood up and scanned the open glade. That, he knew, was where the Greyfriars party had landed.

By this time he had little doubt that they had turned in. There was no glimmer of a light, and no sign of a movement; no sound of a voice.

"Can't see their tent," muttered Gadsby.

"It must be somewhere about—this is the place!" said Ponsonby positively. "We shall spot it all right, once we get ashore. Pull in without making a thundering row!"

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The Highcliffe boat rocked softly to the rushes.

Monson jumped ashore with the painter, and tied it on to a bush. His comrades followed him, and stood staring into the glade that opened in the wood.

Bright as it was in the moonlight there were plenty of patches of dark shadow from the trees. The tent, if it was there, must have been hidden in one of those dark patches, for it could not be seen.

"They're not there, you bet?" muttered Gaddy.

"Don't be a fool! They camped here—think they would clear off again after dark, after camping for the night?"

Gadsby grunted. Really, it did not seem likely—as the Highcliffians knew nothing about Colonel Bullock and his spot of trouble with the Greyfriars campers.

"It won't take us long to spot their tent," muttered Ponsonby. "Don't trouble to pull out tent-pegs—cut the ropes. That will be quicker, and the more damage we do the better. Get the tent down on top of that crew and I shall have a chance with this stick."

"Look here, Pon——"

"Shut up, Gaddy, you ninny!"

Gaddy grunted again, and the three crept up from the bank into the moonlit glade, staring round them for the Greyfriars camp.

Pon had a stick under his arm. When the enemy had been thrown into confusion by the tent crashing down on them as they lay in slumber, Pon hoped to get in a good few with that stick before he had to scuttle. That was Pon's happy idea of retaliation for what he had had that day.

But that programme, which Pon had mapped out so carefully, seemed difficult to carry out. The Greyfriars camp was not to be seen—the tent was invisible.

That, if Pon had only known it, was accounted for by the fact that it was packed up on board the Water-Lily, now out on the Thames. But Pon did not know that.

Peering on all sides in the shadows the three moved farther up the glade from the river.

Ponsonby stopped suddenly at the sound of a rustling in the bushes close at hand.

"What's that?" he muttered uneasily. "Are the cads up after all?"

The three stood listening.

The rustle was repeated; but it seemed more like an animal than a human being, from the sound. A few moments more, and Pon & Co. knew that it was an animal—as a fearsome quadruped scuttled out from the shadows into the bright moonlight, and a low, horrid, nerve-racking growl was heard.

For a single instant Pon & Co. stared in blank horror at the bulldog. But it was a brief instant.

Then they were running.

"Gurrrrggh!" came from the bulldog.

He looked too heavy and clumsy an animal to put on much speed. In spite of his looks he did, however. He

charged after the three, and a backward glance showed glinting little eyes and terrifying jaws.

"Oh! Run!" gasped Gadsby.

He flew! Monson flew! Pon flew! What would happen, if those jaws got within snapping distance, they did not dare to think. They raced!

From somewhere in the dark wood came a puffing voice:

"Seize them, Brutus! Seize them!"

Colonel Bullock was somewhere in the offing.

The stout colonel was coming back to clear off those cheeky trespassers with the help of his bulldog. He was not aware that the party had already cleared off, and that another party had arrived in their place.

Brutus was chasing the new party—and the new party were giving him a run for his money!

Gadsby was the first to reach the boat and bound in. Monson followed him, and stumbled over Gadsby. Pon was not so lucky. His foot caught in a root, and he stumbled and went down, with a bump, on hands and knees. He was yards behind when his comrades gained the boat.

He howled with terror at the patter behind him as he scrambled wildly up. He gave a wild glare round—Brutus was not a yard behind him.

Ponsonby tore on madly.

Snap!

A fine set of teeth barely missed Pon—and fastened on the seat of his trousers.

Ponsonby gave a frantic yell.

"Yaroop! He's got me! Oh, help!"

He staggered on, yelling. A heavy weight was hanging behind him. It was Brutus! Brutus, having got a hold, was keeping it, after the manner of bulldogs. Pon did the last few yards with Brutus as a passenger!

Then there was a tearing, rending sound. Brutus' teeth did not give way—but a section of trousering did!

Ponsonby leaped into the boat, leaving a patch of trousers in the bulldog's jaws!

He was only just in time.

Monson and Gadsby were already shoving off.

Pon landed in the boat and sprawled as it rocked away from the bank. A spluttering voice came from shoreward.

"Good dog! Young rascals—trespassing young scoundrels! Good dog! Huh!"

The Highcliffe boat rocked out on the Thames, Pon & Co. digging at the water anyhow with the oars.

Colonel Bullock brandished a stick after it—Brutus watched it, with his share of Ponsonby's trousers still in his jaws.

Pon & Co. were quite glad to float clear of Bullock Court!

Very Wet!

"HALLO, hallo, hallo!" murmured Bob Cherry. "Look!" "And listen!" grinned Johnny Bull.

The Greyfriars crew chuckled as they rested on their oars.

The Water-Lily was nosing along

the bank, the crew looking for a landing place beyond the confines of Bullock Court. At that spot, the tow-path being on the other side of the river, trees came down to the edge of the water and great branches jutted over the Thames, wrapping the boat in deep shadow.

Beyond that bar of shadow the moonlight lay on the river in a sheet of glistening silver. Into that sheet of silver surged a boat, with one fellow pulling and two fellows arguing. Familiar voices floated to the ears of the Greyfriars crew.

"Hold your silly, cheeky tongue, Gaddy!"

"Hold yours, Pon, you silly chump! I tell you I'm fed up! Let's get back to Datchet and go to bed!"

"I'm not going to bed, and you're not, till I've run down those Greyfriars cads! I know they're not far away!"

Harry Wharton & Co. suppressed their chuckles. They were not, indeed, far away—being much nearer than Pon guessed.

"Look here, Pon," said Monson. "I've had enough of bulldogs! The brute nearly got the lot of us! He got you!"

"I'll make them pay for it!" snarled Pon. "I jolly well know what must have happened now, and why we didn't find them. They were turned off, and went farther up. I believe that old fool and his dog were after them——"

The Greyfriars fellows gurgled. They had heard sounds floating from astern on the night wind. It dawned on them now that Pon & Co. had been on their trail, and had butted in on Colonel Bullock and his bulldog!

"They couldn't have been gone long when we got there," went on Ponsonby. "I know they were there—and they must have been there when that old fool got going with his dog! I can feel the brute's jaws yet—he's got a mouthful of my trousers—— What was that? Did you fellows hear anything?"

"Sounded like somebody giggling!" said Monson, staring round. "Nobody on the river."

"Get hold of an oar, Gaddy! I tell you we're going on!" snarled Ponsonby. "We shall spot their camp all right—it stands to reason they won't go very far, as late as this!"

"Oh, I'm fed up with your stunts!" growled Gadsby. "A precious night we're having of it!"

"Will you shut up? Pull an oar, you lazy slacker, and don't leave it all to Monson! I expect we shall spot them when we get past these trees."

In the darkness under the branches, the Greyfriars fellows grinned at one another. Billy Bunter was nodding off to sleep on the folded tent, but the Famous Five were very wide awake.

Bob Cherry put his finger to his lips.

"Not a sound!" he whispered. "They're after us—but we won't keep them waiting till we camp! Hold on, and keep mum!"

Bob groped in the hamper. He

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drew therefrom a siphon of soda-water. His comrades suppressed their chuckles as they saw it.

The Highcliffe boat was now floating almost abreast of the Water-Lily, but farther out on the river, and clearly seen in the bright moonlight—the Greyfriars boat still invisible in the shadow of the branches overhead.

"Pull out!" breathed Bob.

Four fellows dipped their oars into the water again.

Bob Cherry stood up in the bows, with the soda siphon in his hands.

There was a startled exclamation from the Highcliffe boat.

"What's that?"

"Sounds like a boat!"

"That Greyfriars lot, perhaps!"

"The perhapsfulness is terrific!" murmured Hurrec Jamset Ram Singh.

"Look!" yelled Gadsby, as the Greyfriars boat, under four oars, shot out of the shadows of the bank into the bright moonlight.

"Oh gad!" ejaculated Ponsonby.

Squish!

The two boats were hardly a yard apart as the Greyfriars crew rested on their oars.

Bob Cherry opened fire with the soda siphon.

"Grrrrggh!" came a gurgling yell

from Ponsonby, as the first jet of soda-water caught him under the chin.

"Ha, ha, ha!" yelled the Greyfriars crew.

Squish!

Monson got the second jet in his ear.

Squish! went the siphon again, and Gadsby uttered a loud howl as he got it in the neck.

"Looking for us, you men?" roared Bob. "Here we are, if you want us! Keep alongside, you fellows!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh! Oh gad! Keep off—stop that!" yelled Ponsonby. "We—yarrrooh! Ooooh!"

"Grrrrrogh!" spluttered Monson.

"Oh crikey—ooooogh!" howled Gadsby.

"Ha, ha, ha!" shrieked the Greyfriars crew as Bob, swinging the siphon to and fro, fairly raked the enemy fore and aft.

Soda-water rained into the Highcliffe boat! Pon got most of it—but his friends had a fair share.

Drenched and dripping, they grabbed at the oars to get away.

The siphon gave a last gurgle—it was empty! Bob swung it in the air by the neck.

"Coming!" he shouted.

Bob certainly did not intend to hurl the siphon after the soda-water. But it looked as if he did—and Pon & Co. did not wait to see whether he was in jest or earnest. The Highcliffe boat rocked away as fast as Pon and Monson and Gaddy could dig up the Thames with the oars.

A roar of laughter from the Greyfriars boat followed them.

Bob Cherry dropped the empty siphon back into the hamper.

"I shouldn't wonder if Pon's fed up with tracking us like a giddy Chingachgook!" he remarked. "They seemed in rather a hurry to go!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Greyfriars crew, gurgling with merriment, pulled on. They looked for a landing-place, and found one—and camped; but they did not see anything more of Pon & Co. Pon, for the present at least, was tired of the trail of vengeance, and the crew of the Water-Lily camped in peace—untroubled by any more ructions on the river.

THE END.

(The chums of Greyfriars are in the thick of fun and adventure again next week. Look out for "SIX BOYS IN A BOAT!"—on sale Saturday. Book your MAGNET in advance.)



COME INTO the OFFICE, BOYS—AND GIRLS!

Your Editor is always pleased to hear from his readers. Write to him: Editor of the "Magnet," The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

THE first letter that I opened this morning contains three queries. John Compton, of Liverpool, wants me to tell him something about flying-fishes, flying-foxes, and flying-squirrels.

The flying-fish, John, is sometimes a kind of gurnard—sea fish with large heads and mailed cheeks—and sometimes a kind of herring. In flight the fins of the flying-fish do not flap up and down like a bird's, but remain still. They can travel much faster than a ship, but usually not farther than 500 feet at a time. They have been said to leap on to the decks of ships, but this only happens when they are carried up by a rough wind.

The flying-fox, as it is called, is really a bat. In the day-time this curious creature hangs head downwards in the trees, and looks like a bunch of withered leaves or fruit. At night they wake up and get busy, eating any fruit they can find. In some parts of the East the natives catch them while they're asleep in the trees, take them home, and cook them in butter and spices. I've never tasted these bats when cooked, but I am told they taste like hare.

In appearance, flying-squirrels are very much like ordinary squirrels, except that they have a parachute-like arrangement stretching between their fore-claws and their bodies. This enables them to make flying leaps from the top of trees to the ground.

NOW we come to a query from John Massey, of Wolverhampton, who asks:

WHAT IS THE "SWORD OF DAMOCLES"

so often mentioned by Frank Richards?

Four hundred years before Christ, Sicily was governed by a cruel monarch, Dionysius, whom the people greatly feared. Though hated, Dionysius, was clever, rich, learned, and powerful, and he had many flatterers around him. One of them, named Damocles, said to him one day that he must be the happiest man in the world. "Do you believe it?" asked the tyrant, and then he added: "Take my place for a time and enjoy the happiness of a monarch." So saying, he left the throne to Damocles, who seated himself cheer-

fully in his sovereign's place. The courtier thought he would now have plenty of time to enjoy his rich state. He began admiring the splendour of everything around. He examined the rich details of the throne, but then there came a sudden terror in his eyes, for he saw that a sword hung over his head, tied with a horsehair. Poor Damocles was so terrified that all his blessings vanished; he hastened down to Dionysius and implored the monarch to deliver him from a position exposed to such constant danger. The expression "a sword of Damocles" is used to describe an ever-threatening danger, or any situation recalling that of the shallow-minded courtier who did not realise the uncertainty of power.

"SIX BOYS IN A BOAT!"

That is the title of Frank Richards' next sparkling, extra-long story of Harry Wharton & Co.'s holiday adventures on Old Father Thames. The chums of Greyfriars are finding that a life on the river is full of fun and excitement—especially with Ponsonby & Co. in the offing and Mr. Shifty Spooner trailing the Water-Lily. Loder & Co. of the Sixth also appear on the scene in next Saturday's yarn, adding to the fun and adventure of Harry Wharton & Co., but not to the pleasure of Loder & Co.

The good old "Herald" will again be well up to its usual high standard, with another amazing instalment of Dicky Nugent's serial of the chums of St. Sam's on a cannibal island, and there will be many other Greyfriars items of amusement and interest. Don't forget to see that your MAGNET is reserved for you, chums!

THE EDITOR.

The GREYFRIARS HERALD

(Continued from page 2.)

Would Jack Jolly be in time? Unless rescue came soon the Head would be in the soup with a vengeance! (Look out next week for the rib-tickling sequel to this yarn—"The Head Turns Up Trumps!")

HE'LL NEVER REST TILL HE CLIMBS EVEREST!

By TOM BROWN

Hazeldene likes mountaineering. That's putting it far too mildly. According to what he told me when I stayed with him last week, mountaineering with him is a consuming passion.

In fact, I gather that he will never rest till he has climbed to the top of Everest!

It was in the garden of his house, swinging gently in a hammock, that Hazel confided his lofty ambitions to me.

"Anything flat bores me stiff," he said. "But give me a hill to climb, and I'm your man!"

"There's no thrill to compare with that of coming up from the ordinary world into the great vastnesses of the hilltops and mountain heights. With every step upwards you feel more free—more vital!"

"Mountaineering will be my hobby when I'm a little older, I can tell you! I shall start in a small way with the home products—Snowdon and Ben Nevis, and so on, you know. Then I shall proceed to the Pyrenees and the Alps. After that I hope to get a chance to scale some of the bigger mountains in the Rockies; and, finally, I expect I shall make my assault on the Himalayas—and Everest!"

"My hat! You certainly do aim high, Hazel!" I said admiringly. "I suppose you're getting your hand in as much as you can already?"

"You bet I am! Why, I never miss an opportunity of climbing—"

Mrs. Hazeldene appeared on the lawn from the house at that moment and interrupted the budding mountaineer's discourse. Hazeldene, I should mention, is rather a spoilt pet with Mrs. Hazeldene. She trotted up and said:

"Peter dear, how would you like to take a message for me up to the rectory?"

Hazel's jaw dropped.

"The—the rectory, mater? That's the house at the top of the hill, isn't it?"

"Yes, but it's not much to climb; you'll get to the top in ten minutes."

"Sorry, mater." Hazel shook his head firmly. "I wouldn't mind in the ordinary way, but it's much too hot today for hill-climbing."

"Let me go instead, Mrs. Hazeldene," I grinned. "Don't mind, Hazel, do you? When I get back, you can finish what you were saying about being so fond of climbing mountains."

And I duly climbed up the very small hill leading to the rectory—leaving Hazel to bottle up his enthusiasm for hill-climbing till I returned.

The moral of this is—

But I'll leave you to work it out for yourselves!

GREYFRIARS HUNTER USED BOW AND ARROWS!

Says G. BLUNDELL

A stroll through a Surrey wood in mid-August is not an occupation you would normally expect to be fraught with dire peril. It was with surprise and consternation, therefore, while I was enjoying such a stroll last week that I heard something whistle past my ear and saw an arrow bury itself in a tree-trunk before me.

"What the thump—" I cried indignantly.

I turned round to see who was responsible. I had another surprise when my eyes fell on my own Form-master serenely strolling across the glade with a bow in his hand and a quiverful of arrows at his side!

Mr. Prout jumped when he spotted me. He registered embarrassment.

"Blundell, what are you doing here?"



"I think I might ask the same of you, sir," I remarked warmly. "If my ear was the target, sir, it may interest you to know that you very nearly scored a bull!"

Mr. Prout coughed.

"I am extremely sorry, Blundell; I had no idea there would be anybody in the vicinity. I suppose you are—er—wondering what I am doing with a bow and arrows?"

"Well, it is rather unusual, sir," I grinned. "Isn't a Winchester repeater more in your line?"

"Very much more, Blundell, I can assure you," said Mr. Prout, with a sigh. "Unfortunately, I had perforce to leave that useful weapon at Greyfriars. I happen to be staying, you see, with a naturalist who is a very strong opponent of blood sports. He is a great outdoor man, but he loathes hunting and fishing and simply abominates shooting."

"My hat!"

"So it would have been impossible to bring my gun with me," explained Mr. Prout. "But the old hankering remains, you see, Blundell. My host's small son left the bow and arrows in the grounds this morning, and I thought I would try them out."

"Jolly good idea, sir!" I chuckled. "Had any luck?"

"Not yet; but this primitive little weapon has distinct possibilities," said Mr. Prout judicially. "I nearly bagged a wood pigeon with it a few minutes ago. An old hand like myself makes the most of such opportunities as offer, Blundell. Quiet!"

The old sportsman pointed excitedly across the glade. I looked and saw a rabbit frisking under the trees.

"Don't move, Blundell, please," Mr. Prout breathed. "From this distance I may easily pot the little beggar. Just watch!"

"But suppose your host comes along, sir!" I breathed back. "Won't he object?"

In actual fact, I had just caught sight of a figure with its back turned to us through the trees; but Mr. Prout was too deeply engrossed in the movements of the rabbit to see anything else. He drew back his bow-string and let fly. Ping!

Alas! Shooting with a bow and arrow was not the same proposition as shooting with a Winchester repeater. Mr. Prout missed the rabbit—missed it by yards! But he did hit something—something very much larger.

What he hit was the figure through the trees—his arrow piercing the unfortunate stranger's plus fours!

Mr. Prout's victim gave a yell. Mr. Prout and I dived for cover, then fled.

"Thank goodness he had no time to see me!" panted our sporting Form-master, as we emerged from the woods. "That was the gentleman I told you about, Blundell—my host!"

I parted from Mr. Prout a few minutes later, and what happened afterwards is unknown to me. But there is one thing certain—he will not venture again this vac to go shooting rabbits with a bow and arrows!

SNAPPY HOLIDAY TOUR OF GREYFRIARS!

By BOB CHERRY

Well, here we are at Greyfriars, folks, and that's the porter's lodge over there. Are the railings in the gate thin with age? Not really; they're only what Gosling has worn through by gripping them every evening ready to shut the gate the moment the clock chimes the hour!

Yes, sir, that's the tuckshop. What's the carpenter doing in the doorway? Just re-making it. Bunter had a snack at the counter on breaking-up day and got jammed half-way through, coming out.

This is the School House. Yes, sonny, the flowers in front are rather withered, aren't they? Loder looked at them just before he went for his holiday. And here we are in Big Hall. The well-worn track at the sides has been made by murmurs of excitement running round when the Head makes important announcements.

Those tables are where we sit when we have tea in Hall. Quite true, madam, it is a nasty dent in the floor, isn't it? It's where I dropped a slice of bread-and-butter two terms ago.

We are now in Masters' Passage, and this is Mr. Quelch's sanctum. No, he isn't setting up as a wholesale waste-paper merchant. There are the last fifty chapters of his celebrated "History of Greyfriars."

Steady on the stairs, folks, or you'll slip. Coker usually slides down them, you see, after visiting us—yes, without the option! True, O King, Study No. 7

is Bunter's. That waistcoat? Oh, that's what they found buried in Bunter when they gave him a compulsory bath!

Quite correct, young man. This is where Smithy lives—Study No. 4. Yes, and there is rather a lot of soot in the grate, as you say. Eh? Well, it didn't occur to me, but perhaps it is what Smithy uses when he gives people black looks!

No, that's only a duster left by one of the housemaids; it's not the Rag! The Rag is the Junior Common-room to which we are now descending. The marks round the door have been made by things thrown at the prefect who pokes his head round each night to say "Bed-time, you kids!"

Back into the quad, for your chara, folks—sorry there's no time for more! Come again when the fellows are all here! Au revoir!

TWO SHARED BIKE— ONE WHEEL EACH!

By TOM BROWN

Last term, two Third Formers, Bolter and Paget, bought a bike between them. Bolter used it when Paget didn't want it, and Paget used it when Bolter didn't want it. And, altogether, they managed very well—in fact, it was quite a striking argument in favour of co-operative ownership: to see how harmoniously they shared it!

Bolter would stroll into the bike-shed and say:

"Using my bike this afternoon?"

"Whose bike?" Paget would ask sharply.

"My bike!"

"You mean MY bike, don't you?"

And then they would smile politely and say "OUR bike, then!" together. It was quite touching to see them!

Of course, differences did arise occasionally; but they were mere ripples on the surface of the water, so to speak. One time, Paget wanted to go to a cricket match at Lantham on the same afternoon as Bolter wanted to visit a friend at Redclyffe, and there was admittedly a certain amount of warmth on both sides in the course of the argument. Paget acquired a cut lip and a swollen nose during the

debate, and Bolter had the use of the machine.

On another occasion, both wanted it to ride in the Courtfield Fancy Dress Cycle Carnival. Paget won it on this occasion by leaving his co-partner locked up in a box-room while he used the machine; and the partnership was slightly strained for several days after.

But these incidents were exceptions. On the whole, the arrangement worked very smoothly—till breaking-up day arrived.

Then it was awkward. Bolter was going to spend most of the vac with an aunt in Wales. Paget was going home to his people in Hampshire. Each wanted the bike, and each was fully determined to get it.

Friends interceded to end the deadlock in vain. Tubb even offered to lend one of them his own bike to settle it; but they wanted their own bike, not Tubb's, and the Third Form leader's generous offer was declined—without thanks!

Cars arrived for Bolter and Paget simultaneously on breaking-up day, and the co-operative bike-owners adjourned to the bike-shed at the same moment to get their mutual "jigger." And then the fun began!

Bolter said "Mine, I think!" Paget said "Your mistake—mine!" Then both said "Look here—" and grabbed.

For the next five minutes, the bike-shed was the scene of a thrilling and hectic tug-of-war. Bolter had a firm grip on one wheel, and Paget had an equally firm grip on the other, and they tugged for all they were worth, while the crowd yelled "Heave!" and "Go it!"

That mutual bike had had a lot of rough treatment during the term, and it had a lot of still rougher treatment now. It creaked and groaned and jingled alarmingly as its owners tugged and heaved, and then suddenly there was a sharp report.

The next instant the frame of the bike was lying several feet away, and Bolter and Paget were lying on their backs, holding one wheel each.

Mutual ownership had ended and the co-operative owners had gone back to individual holdings.

Bolter and Paget gave it up as a bad job after that. They parted on good terms and went on their respective holidays bikeless. And as each found

a present of a brand new bike awaiting him at the other end, everything turned out for the best after all.

The remains of the Bolter-Paget jigger are still in the bike-shed.

I suggest they should be hung up outside the shed as a horrible example to cyclists of the evils of joint ownership!

HARRY WHARTON CALLING!

"Why not change your summer game from cricket to baseball?" asks a Canadian chum. "It's snappier and heaps more exciting. You'd love it!"

Quite possibly I would, old bean! I have seen it played and like the look of it immensely. There must be a rare thrill in wielding one of those clubs and knocking the ball sky-high. It would be a pleasant change from the sedate bowling used in cricket to indulge in a spot of that frenzied throwing that baseball pitchers affect!

A game of baseball on Little Side now and again would certainly not come amiss, and if ever there is a move in favour of it, I shall support it. But a permanent change-over from cricket to baseball is a different proposition. I could never agree to that!

Cricket happens to be the most English of all English games, and the fact that baseball is snappier and more exciting will never lessen our affection for our own native game. The attractions of cricket are not to be found in the book of rules. They lie rather in the appearance of the field and the peculiarly friendly and enjoyable atmosphere surrounding the game.

Imagine the Greyfriars playing fields on a fine summer's afternoon laid out in the form of baseball pitches, with gun-chewing spectators howling "Atta-boy!" And how strange the queerly-garbed and padded players would look against the background of our ancient school! It would be a melancholy sight for any true-blue Greyfriars man, and even my Canadian correspondent would probably not altogether appreciate the change!

Baseball is a ripping game, undoubtedly, and I hope to play it one of these days. But I shall never feel like swapping it for cricket!

All the best, chums.

HARRY WHARTON.

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